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America The Beautiful with All Her Flaws

By Rabbi Jeffrey Lipschultz

When we approach our three-day week-end this month we often forget what is special about July 4th. It is more than just a celebration of our independence but a chance to recognize the importance our country has had in forming our faith. Every Saturday we say the prayer for our country often not recognizing how important the USA has been in the development of Judaism in the world. There are times in our lives when we see the world through the lens of our Jewish struggle but we must also recognize that we are members of the community that makes up America. On July 4th we recognize the beauty and miracle that is our beloved country.

America is a special place not only for us Jews but also for what it can give the world. I truly believe that America is a blessed land. America can be right and special because of the challenge she faces from members of its family. We are citizens, not subjects, so the greatness that comes from this country is the sole responsibility of those who live here. Thus, what is right is to be celebrated and what is wrong is to be corrected. America gives us many blessings so my words of Torah focus on two distinct levels that make our country a truly holy place. This year, as we are about to elect a president we need to think about what we are grateful for and how we can be active in making our country better.

Out of Many-One

In America we recognize freedom to dissent. We are stronger because of our disagreements, not weaker. We don't have any government-sponsored rallies which people must attend. You come to shul because you want to come, not because it is forced by the government. If you did not care to come, you wouldn't be here or be a member of this temple.

We don't have a state religion so if one does not like how religious services are performed they can leave and find a place that will be more fulfilling for them. Religious growth is better when it's from choice of the heart rather than coerced from outside forces.

We are a free people, guaranteed the right of dissent and disagreement and through this dissent we learn more about our country and ourselves. This year the need for dissent has become something very special to all of us especially when it involves war and elections. I am proud we have an ability to disagree because I believe it makes us stronger as a temple and nation.

Government of the People

In America we have developed a new and different concept of government. It was best stated by Abraham Lincoln over 100 years ago. He said that ours was a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. What he meant is that government is the

IFR Mission Statement

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.

America the Beautiful.....

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servant, not the master of our society. The policeman, the postman, the tax collector are civil servants--they work for you. The mayor, the governor, the congressman, our president are all elected officials. We put them there, they work for us, and they are answerable to us. If we are pleased with their performance, they get our votes at the next election. If we don't like how they are doing their jobs, we get into that polling booth and vote against them--for we are a free people.

Our government works for us. We are its master, and it is our servant. With all the problems we face in our system in the end it still works without bloodshed and every year we try and improve it so it becomes more represented. Having lived in a country where elections could get violent, it is truly beautiful that even when the results are not what we like we accept them and embrace our country as one.

We will get the opportunity to see democracy in action in November when we face elections. We recognize that we may not always agree with what happens on Election Day but we embrace our new leaders because the people choose them.

Our people have fought and died for our freedoms and for others who have sought our help when their freedoms were threatened. We mourn the losses of those in Iraq right now and I pray that we will ever remain a proud people with our heads erect, and a strong people--with our backs straight, and a generous people--with our hearts and courage as great as our imagination and inventiveness. I pray that we remain the friends and allies of freedom everywhere. I pray that we continue to be the land of freedom and opportunity, the hope of oppressed peoples everywhere and when we make a mistake we will learn from it, correct it, and try and make it better.

Finally, I pray that an end may come to all wars especially this one in Iraq. We are currently engaged in a war that is divisive in our country. Daily men and women are being killed in a far off land. At a time like this we need to recognize how tragic war is for everyone; regardless of the reasons, is never an ideal state in the world.

We look to our prophets for guidance and pray that man does learn to live in peace with his neighbor on this troubled planet--that swords will be turned into plowshares and tanks into tractors, spears into pruning hooks and warships into hospital ships.

I pray that the earth be full of the awareness of the Lord, and that peace reign supreme for all time. This is the prayer for my country I wish to celebrate this July 4th.

Rabbi Jeffrey Lipshultz is a newly elected Board member of IFR and the spiritual leader of Temple Beth Shlom-Chula Vista-Rabbi Lipshultz lost his beloved brother, David Lipshultz Z'L January 3, 2004 in a ski accident. For some personal thoughts on his loss, see the story on page 4.

IFR DUES 2004-2005

Now is the time to renew your membership in the IFR. Please make your check for \$150.00 payable to:

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Bruchim Ha'Baim

New and returning IFR members

Rabbi David Abrahams

Rabbi Charna Klein

Rabbi Stuart Marks

Rabbi Robert Schriebman

Rabbi Barbara Aiello

IFR Rabbis News & Shmooze

Rabbi Richard Allen and Valerie Allen celebrated their 50th anniversary twice. They went to Sicily for three weeks last November and then their four children, along with their families, took them to the Dominican Republic in December, to the Punta Cana resort for a week, as the family's anniversary present.



Rabbi Richard Allen and family

Rabbi Marc Ben-Meir announces the engagement of his son, Ron Ben-Meir, to Ms. Jodi Bratter. Ron is a student at Touro University of Medicine in San Francisco, CA. Jodi is a special ed. teacher with the city of New York. They plan an October 2004 wedding in New York City.



Inscribe a leaf on our Tree of Life...



From Rabbi David Degani, spiritual leader of Congregation Shirat Shalom, Boca Raton, Florida.....

We have a new, beautiful, portable Tree of Life created by the artist Chaim Rosov. This unique work of sculptured art carved from walnut and brass will be taken to our Friday evening and High Holy Day Services.

From Rabbi Dave Roller in Livermore, California...

The Jewish War Veterans runs a program to assist Jewish service personnel in Iraq, called "Operation SOS." Friends and families writing the JWV send care packages to soldiers who identify themselves as Jewish to the JWV or are identified. Other supplies are sent to Jewish chaplains for distribution to soldiers. You can contact Operation SOS by writing Jewish War Veterans, 1811 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20009

Thoughts....

Rabbi Jeffrey Lipschultz

As I sit here at my computer compiling thoughts of the month of February I can't lie that this is difficult. The day that I started as your Rabbi I promised to stand with all in this congregation at the most difficult times of all your lives. Today many of you have to stand with me as I go through one of the more difficult experiences a person can face, the tragic death of a loved one.

This month I end the month long mourning of my Brother David, who was killed Jan 3rd. Losing a sibling that I was so close with is unimaginable but the unimaginable has happened my brother is gone and the pain from the hole missing in my life is forever. The standard phrase given when someone is in mourning is the phrase *HaMakom yinachem etchem b'toch shear avlay Zion v'Yerushalayim* translated as May God comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

This is a phrase meant to imply that you are counted among all those in our history who have experienced great tragedy. The use of Jerusalem and Zion being mentioned is to explain that all pain is great, even if it seems small to the outside the tragedy may be as great to the person as compared to the great city of Jerusalem being destroyed and the country placed in exile.

The example of personal loss is great to all that are faced with it and thus we give the example of Zion and Jerusalem to explain that when one of our people experiences losses we experience it as a group. This is to show that all who experience this terrible loss are not alone and can face the intense pain and the amputation of your life with friends and a community who understands what is now missing from your life.

This loss is hard for me and I am grateful to many in the community of Temple Beth Shalom are here to stand with me and help me and my family through this difficult time.



Rabbi Jeff Lipschultz at his wedding, his brother David ZL is on the right.

There were times in my young life as a Rabbi that I stood with mourners such as myself saying the exact same words that were said to me this past month. I never truly felt it then as I do now, facing tragedy can be a lonely experience. Thus the need for community and the Jewish faith is extremely important.

There will be times in the year when I will not feel much like the strong Rabbi you see before you in services, that is to be expected, but I now feel that I can say the words of meaning through the mourning process with a little better meaning.

I have learned this past month that life is short and the holiday of Tu B'Shvat (New Year for Trees) standing at the door reminds us of the importance of birth and rebirth when we see death at our door. On Tu B'Shvat it is customary to eat fruits from the 'seven species' for which the Land of Israel is praised: '...a land of wheat and barley, vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and dates'. There is a tradition in Kabala that includes a special service, '*Pri Etz Hadar*'. In this tradition it is said that the mystical aspects of fruits and their place in Creation are revealed. That is the rebirth of the land and the fruits we enjoy.

As I prepare to say goodbye to my brother David February 7th thoughts of the first fruits stand in my mind. I recognize better now that through the existence of life there is death and thus the life of every day needs to be cherished and celebrated.

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Thoughts.... By Rabbi Jeff Lipshultz

For those who have experienced loss we understand that the short time we have together is important and needs to be celebrated every day. Thus we look to the birth of trees and nature to recognize this importance. Let us use this time to renew life and celebrate this special time. I thank this community for standing by me in this difficult time for myself and my family this is something no should experience but maybe all of my congregation can teach me something about healing in the face of tragedy. We are stronger when we stand together I hope the congregation can help me stand with them in this difficult time. That would be the greatest gift one can give someone who feels the pain of loss, the feeling of community.



Rabbi Stuart (Shlomo) Marks

Kid Centered

By Rabbi Stuart Marks

I seem to spend much of my time these days penning articles for one magazine or another. Don't get me wrong I love sharing. And as lover of story telling I have a lot to share.

Not only am I new to the rabbinate I am also new to the U.S.; we have only been here four years. Although it seems in some ways that we have never lived anywhere else.

My wife and I were born and grew up in the U.K. in the London area and about 25 years ago we made Aliyah. Barbara and I have 4 boys ranging in age from 15-24 years old. All our sons were born in Israel. In fact we lived in Israel for 20 years. We met nearly 30 years ago in college.

We are both teachers and in one way or another we have both been in this profession for more than 25 years. We both taught public school in the U.K. I taught English and history in Junior high and Barbara is an elementary school teacher.

In Israel I ended up as the head of an English in a Religious High School and in another Religious High School a teacher of Judaics to English speakers. This is by way of an introduction.

For the last 2 years I have been the Principal of a Conservative supplemental school with over 300 students. I love my work despite it sometimes be-

ing very frustrating! Take for example Junior Congregation, because as with many schools of this type it went 2 days some 8 years ago it was decided that Junior Congregation had to be a CLASS. You can imagine its effect, over time. As a teacher and a rabbinical type and a Principal I am always asked what about RUACH? Yeh, what about it! I believe that it's almost impossible for kids to feel that they have a place of their own if (1) junior Congregation is a class, (2) if it's lead by adult teacher types and (3) if it runs for over 2 hours.

This year we removed the teachers and replaced them with High School prayer Shlechim, adults are around but are not the visible leaders and the service is no longer than 75 minutes. The kids really lead and their role models are now 15 and 16 year olds. This has two effects (1) it keeps the high schoolers connected to the community after B'nei Mizvah and (2) it provides the right kind of role model for the kids and can help spark that elusive thing called ruach. Of course this has been known to spark the question. What about decorum? Well I prefer a relaxed atmosphere in our Sanctuary and a kid centered service. This is not rocket science.

So let's have a camp atmosphere if it brings them in and keeps them coming back.

B'shalom

Rabbi Shlomo S. Marks

IFR Conference May 2004-Harvard Mass



B'todah to Rabbi David Sirull and Rabbi Monte Sugarman who contributed these photos.



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Finding common ground on prayer

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Columnist Jeff Schweers recently wrote about the Manatee County Commission, School Board and Bradenton City Council and their use of The Lord's Prayer to open meetings. I would like to respond at the request of members of my congregation.

All clergy -- ministers, priests and rabbis -- have a vested interest in prayer. As the "retail arm of religion," clergy bring prayer and worship to the people. We are in the business of encouraging everyone everywhere to pray.

So prayer in and of itself is not the problem. From where I sit, prayer is the solution. The real problem surfaces when prayer becomes a part of public life. Schweers made this point when he reported on how public meetings held in Manatee County routinely begin with the reciting of The Lord's Prayer. In fact, a Bradenton resident who described himself as "Jewish but not religious" objected so strongly that he wrote a letter of complaint to School Board Chairwoman Barbara Harvey.

Actually, we Jews and Christians share the tradition called The Lord's Prayer, in more ways than we might think. Jesus, who was born, lived and died a religious Jew, was observed in prayer by his good friends. They said, "Teach us how to pray." Jesus readily obliged and taught his friends what he knew best -- a Jewish prayer.

Let's take a look at the first paragraph of what's called The Lord's Prayer or The Disciples' Prayer. We know it as "Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Now, let's look at the prayer in its original Hebrew:

Avinu shebashmayim yitkadesh shimcha tamlik malchutcha ye'aseh retsoncha basham- ayim uva'aretz

These words, represented here in an English transliteration, are the Hebrew words from the "Kaddish," one of the oldest Jewish prayers. The Kaddish was said in ancient times by teachers and preachers when they concluded a lesson. The Hebrew words mean:

Our Father, who is in heaven May your name be

sanctified, May you continue establishing your kingship, May your will be accomplished in heaven And on earth.

In modern vernacular these original Hebrew words are the opening words of the "Our Father."

The prayer continues in its original Hebrew with the same words that, when translated into English, have become a central part of the Christian tradition. They have always been a part of Jewish worship as well. We find the very same words in the Kaddish prayers, three of the "Shemonah Esreh" benedictions and in the Rosh HaShanah prayers for the Jewish New Year ("Avinu Malkeinu," "Our Father, Our King").

The issue then, is not the prayer itself, but its use in the public venue. So recently I asked Ms. Harvey why School Board meetings begin with The Lord's Prayer.

Her answer was that given by the Jewish milkman, Tevye, in "Fiddler on the Roof." Tevye is asked why certain people do things in certain ways. Tevye responds, "It's tradition!" Like Tevye, Ms. Harvey pointed out that an opening prayer has become a symbol of remembering that the greater good is more important than selfish pursuits. Ms. Harvey feels that the Lord's Prayer has always been a way of keeping us on track and helping us remember what's really important.

Together we explored options and based upon what I perceived as Ms. Harvey's clear desire to acknowledge the diversity that has come to characterize Manatee County in recent years, we discussed several alternatives. The School Board could initiate a moment of silence that all present could use as each one wished. Pray silently. Meditate. Daydream. But take a moment to settle your spirit or your conscience so that you are better prepared to conduct the business of the public whom you are trusted to represent.

We talked about how we might find inspirational words that come from different sources. Are there appropriate passages, spiritual or secular, that might help School Board members focus on the principles to which they've dedicated themselves? Ms. Harvey asked this question in the spirit of open mindedness and then invited me to the next School Board meeting to share my suggestions.

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How do I feel about The Lord's Prayer in Manatee County? After our talk, I know this: Clearly it is not the intent of the School Board under Ms. Harvey's leadership to disregard the feelings of those with secular beliefs or those of different faiths. Simply put, it's been tradition to recite the Lord's Prayer. But I'm pleased to know

that in a spirit of sensitivity and understanding, the School Board is responsive to its citizens. I am hopeful that they, and other governmental agencies, may consider opening their proceedings with words of wisdom that reflect the rich diversity that now characterizes our community.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello was spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Bradenton for 5 years, and host of "The Radio Rabbi" program, Sunday mornings, 8-9 am, on WLSS AM 930.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello was a founding member of IFR, and was a former editor of the IFR newsletter As of June 20th 2004, Rabbi Aiello will be leading a congregation in Milan Italy, and has recently re-joined the IFR.

My Friend Gila

By Rabbi Suzanne H. Carter

In 1969 I flew up from Cincinnati, Ohio to Cleveland on a youth fare ticket to visit with my dear friend Jill (Gila) Dobrin. Jill lived in Beachwood Ohio, with her sister Diane and parents Dick and Florence Dobrin.

Jill and I had been friends since 1966, we met at Habonim Camp Tavor in Three Rivers Michigan, as *Habonimnikim*, we were programed from an early age to make aliyah to Kibbutz, marry Israelis and have Israeli children.

That weekend in 1969 we were "hippy wannabes", not kibbutznikim. Diane bought tickets to the Moody Blues concert and Jill and I donned long white satin dresses, purple velvet capes, and lots of eye make-up. Diane drove us to the concert hall, which was filled with similarly dressed teenagers, and acrid smoke we all remember from those days.

Two years later, on 7/7/1971 Jill and I boarded the second El Al 747 to leave NY's Kennedy airport headed for Tel-Aviv.

We left behind the white satin, purple velvet and the Moody Blues and headed to Kibbutz Ein HaChoresh to become Kibbutznikim.

Jill was 5 ft 10, with long *straight* blond flowing hair and the longest legs I had ever seen attached to a Yiddishe meideleh. I was, at the time 4 ft 11, curly brown *straightened* hair and legs typical of a Yiddishe meideleh, we made quite the pair.

Jill's Hebrew name was Gila, so we called her *Gila Monster* after the venomous lizard. In those days we had no idea what the Hebrew word Gila meant, nor did we really care, we were young, silly, and without a care in the world.

Once, while on the Netanya Beach two Israeli boys used the "hello baby" line...we sang Sakura in high pitched voices, giggling and pretending to speak only Japanese, the boys, frustrated left us alone. We laughed about that escapade for at least another 10 years.

After two months on Kibbutz Ein Hachoreh, Jill returned to Cleveland, and I remained in Israel and left for Kibbutz Matzuva in the western Galil for ulpan.

Jill returned to Israel a year or two later and entered ulpan at Kibbutz Givat Oz, there she met a wonderful young man who settled on Givat Oz with Youth Aliyah, he was a handsome Yemenite, named Yechiel Menachem with black curly hair and flashing white teeth. Yechiel and Jill married in the mid seventies.

In 1978, my late mother was visiting us in Israel, she was eager to see Jill, who had recently had a son, so we traveled with my son Ari in tow, to Kibbutz Givat Oz, and visited with Jill, her husband Yechiel and their new son Yoav, who was just six months old.

Jill was still as tall, blond, and funny, as she had always been, but now she radiated the joy of motherhood. It was a joyful reunion, and we laughed while sharing funny stories of our early kibbutz days with my mother.

Unbeknownst to me at the time, that visit would be the last time I would see or hear from Jill.

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My friend Gila

Although we were no longer in contact, in later conversations with her mother it seemed as if our lives were in parallel.

In 1981, Jill and Yechiel had another son, Yanai, that was the year we returned to the USA. In 1984, the year my mother died, Jill had another child, a daughter Maya, but her happiness was to be bittersweet, Jill was diagnosed with breast cancer. Jill went through radiation, chemotherapy and a mastectomy.

Throughout Jill's ordeal her parents would travel twice a year to see her in Givat Oz, however in the summer of 1990 Jill and her family made a trip to the USA and spent the summer sightseeing and visiting family and friends, on June 24, 1990, Jill's 36th birthday, she and her family smiled for the camera, their last family photo.

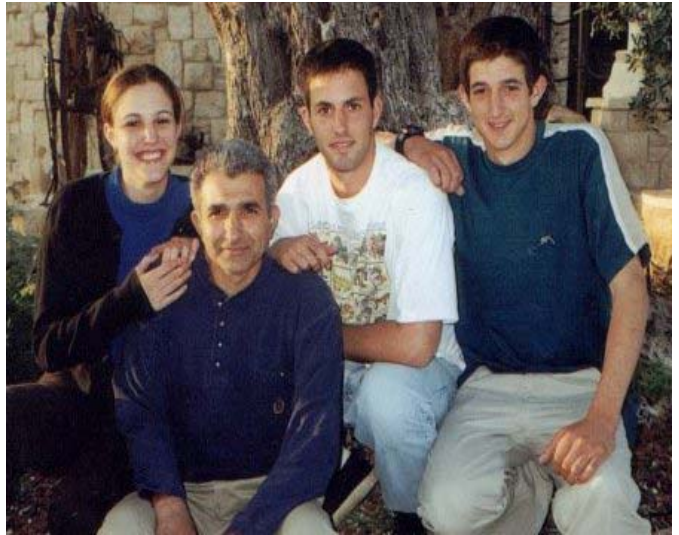
In August 1990 the Menachem family returned to Givat Oz, unfortunately so did the cancer. In the early morning of October 26th 1990, Jill's mother arrived at Ben Gurion airport from the US. She was on her way to be with her daughter, upon arrival at the airport a family member met her with the grim news, Jill Dobrin Menachem lost her 6 year battle with cancer, three hours before her mother's arrival.

Last year I heard that Jill had died in 1990, shocked, I called Jill's mother in Cleveland, she sent me photos, and we talked about the missing years.

Jill's mother promised to stay in touch, and in February 2004 Jill's mother came to South Florida. Although it had been over 35 years since I had seen her, and over 13 years since Jill's death, it was as if the years stood still. We had lunch and laughed and cried.

Jill's second son, Yanai, now 23 was in Florida this past May, at his safta's encouragement he called me, and we spent time chatting about his mother "Gila" and her *joy of life*. I shared all the funny stories, I told him of Gila "*The Badranit*", Gila "*The Monster*" our days in Habonim and on the kibbutz. He seemed to enjoy hearing about a different side of the mother he lost at such a young age. Yanai has promised to stay in touch, I hope he does. I told him that Jill would be proud of her three sabarim children, after all, we were Habonimnikim.

These days as I recite the Sheva Brachot, the name **Gila** always brings a tear and a twinkle in my eye, as I recall the sweet memories of my joyful and playful friend, Gila, of Blessed Memory.



Maya, Yechiel, Yoav and Yanai Mennachem 2002



Yoav, Jill, Yechiel, Maya & Yanai Menachem 1990

Jill Menachem, formerly of Beachwood, Ohio, died on October 26, 1990 in Israel at the age of 36. She earned a degree in early childhood education from the University of Cincinnati. Following an ulpan, where she met her husband-to-be, Yechiel, she married and settled on Kibbutz Givat Oz in Israel.

She was an active member of the kibbutz where she worked as head of a children's house and later in the kibbutz factory offices as translator, bookkeeper and computer operator. She enjoyed playing the piano and her love of art was demonstrated by her one-woman show on the kibbutz.

Surviving in addition to her husband of 14 years are son, Yoav and Yanai; daughter, Maya; parents, Florence and Richard Dobrin of Beachwood, Ohio; and a sister, Diane Grunes of Santa Cruz, California. Contributions in her memory helped to create The Jill Dobrin Menachem Memorial Playground on Kibbutz Givat Oz.