



Shabbat Weddings

By Rabbi Reeve Brenner

It is not that there are no reasons to avoid or refuse to officiate at Saturday evening weddings before sundown. It is that these reasons are so flimsy and lame and these reasons, discussed below, are outweighed by far in my mind by several firmer reasons to agree to officiate on Shabbat (with pleasure), welcome the custom of late Sabbath day weddings already entrenched and established and see it as an opportunity to connect with many lives – most especially with a young couple. And, if the professional dynamics are well played out, it will serve to connect a few lives to the experience of the Sabbath's special sacredness.

Here are some of my reasons. I acknowledge that when you provide a number of reasons, it's likely because there is no one good reason or there are no particularly good reasons. This applies to the traditional *machmir* reasons offered as well as the *meikhil* reasons offered by the permissive side. Let the reader judge the reasons provided by both sides. But first as in all good legal questions, a case study is the proper place to begin.

Jean converted to Judaism and will wed Jonathan. She has a large number of elderly guests coming to the wedding. Among whom are her Christian grandparents, one in a wheelchair. She wants to accommodate their needs which calls for a wedding as early as possible in the evening that they not have to choose between staying up late or

miss a part of the event. For various good reasons including work and vacation time, a summertime wedding is clearly advisable. Having the ceremony after the party is aesthetically a turn-off and none of her friends that have been married recently were required to have their wedding ceremonies later, after the party and dinner. To this family, such an arrangement would be preposterous. In their minds it would turn everything planned upside down, celebrating the simcha event before the event. The Jewish side of the family would spend the evening being apologetic and rather embarrassed. And Jews and Judaism would, in their words, look bad inconveniencing so many over a dubious ruling.

The wedding had to be on a Saturday night for the out-of-towners, and in that case, Sunday would be an additional opportunity to interact with loved ones who come from afar. Sunday is a day off requiring no rush to work. Besides all her friends, mostly Jewish, had their weddings on Saturday before sunset – every wedding at about 6pm. That is the custom, the *minhag*. The family feels strongly that the ceremony precede the party celebration which is intended to celebrate the marriage and because all friends on both sides have had Saturday weddings, toward evening, they wished the same. Also important is that sleeping over after the celebration Saturday night, without going to work the next day along with travel arrangement – for some a long drive of many hours -

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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.



require a Saturday night/Sunday free event, giving the family an entire weekend. Any other time will, otherwise, keep some family members from a distant location from coming altogether.

One of the reasons against Sabbath weddings is that it's just not done. It is a habit or a *minhag* based legally on the notion that unlike other life cycle events, a wedding, as reflected in the ketubah, was once a business arrangement. The ketubah reflected dowries of goods and cash and other financial considerations. That is not the text of the ketubah today. Today for Reform Judaism the language is of love, sacred bonds, covenant, relationship, commitments, responsibilities – without reference to finances.

We learn from the *shulchan aruch* [yoreh De'ah 179:2] that at one time weddings were to be conducted only on a full moon and that we are told was the *minhag*, “customary,” then. Obviously that *minhag* is no longer our *minhag* today. *Minhagim* change with good reason.

In the Reform traditional *halachic* texts I consulted there is cited invariably the case of the woman who was involved in an exceptional wedding. The exception was that the rabbi, Isserlis, agreed to officiate late Friday night, after Sabbath began out of economical considerations and sensitivity to the bride. This sensitivity translated itself into the working out of financial matters on her behalf. Most important, the ketubah was in that day and age clearly a business arrangement (among other things, to be sure) as the rabbi explained (unlike the ketubah in non-Orthodox use today). Sensitivity to the feelings and needs of the bride was the justification for the leniency which allowed Rabbi Isserlis to officiate on the Sabbath. The rabbi did not wish to shame the girl and he therefore performed the marriage on the Sabbath. The rabbi could have said you should have worked this out long before you came to me today. I will not officiate. Besides it is the Sabbath and this is a business arrangement. He did not invoke such reasoning and

wisely made things happen by way of a radical departure from tradition. His departure from tradition is notable precisely because of money-matters on Shabbat. And he married the couple anyway. *Kal v'chomer*, no such consideration need deter a non-Orthodox wedding officiant inasmuch as business and finances are not reflected in their ketubah. All *poskim* admit that the prohibitions are not biblically based but were issued by the rabbis. All admit “rabbinic arguments against a marriage on Shabbat rests on weak foundations. They fall in the category which includes swimming on the Sabbath as a prohibition. The rabbinic prohibition was made only to keep individuals from writing the ketubah on Shabbat or the acquisition of property.” There also was no question that any wedding conducted on Shabbat was to be considered valid in every sense. The ketubah today in Reform congregations are not business arrangements but love and marriage covenants. There are no last minute financial negotiations.

Walter Jacob points out that “the traditional prohibition against on Shabbat in the *Shulchan Aruch* rests on foundations in the Talmudic tradition which we, as Reforms Jews, no longer observe.” The prohibition also rests on “weak foundations” (Jacob) and “technically such a marriage may reflect only a minor infringement of Shabbat.” It can no longer be argued that it just is not done, seeing that in the community where the couple lives, and many other communities, the custom of not conducting weddings on the Sabbath does not exist; rather all, Jewish and non-Jewish, follow a *minhag* of permission and in fact with good reason including concern for the elderly and for others who would otherwise not attend (and be separated from the community), these provide far better reasons to follow the *minhag*, the custom of late Saturday afternoon – usually 6:00 pm weddings. If custom carries weight and it does according to the Talmud [we are instructed to observe and conform to the customs of the community], the *minhag* of prohibition has turned into a *minhag* of

observance. And there is no question that the sanctity of the Sabbath could be enhanced just as a bar and bat mitzvah and *brit* (and baby-naming) provide opportunity to sanctify the Sabbath.

A wedding on the Sabbath can become a moment of sanctity of the Sabbath with a little effort and imagination. It may include conducting a Sabbath afternoon *mincha* service before the wedding should that occasion arise.

Economic reasons dictate consideration of Saturday weddings simply because if all Jewish weddings were postponed for the following day, Sunday, the impact financially would be great upon caterers, their employees, other staff people, all of whom would find their revenues more than halved and many forced out of business including several Jewish caterers, photographers and musicians for whom a Sabbath evening prohibition would be disastrous. It is plausibly argued that a Sabbath wedding requires work on the Sabbath. It does. Rabbis also work on the Sabbath. One might suggest however that this is an individual choice concerning the Sabbath and *parnasah*.

And we must not make decisions for others which may be causing hardship on other people's lives by compelling Sabbath observance on business people and workers for whom the prohibition would impact terribly on their lives. This consideration invariably is ignored and often renounced or denounced.

Walter Jacob would prefer discouraging weddings being held even on Saturday evening for they involve preparations on Shabbat. Perhaps there is justification that such weddings be discouraged but should that affect our participation and officiation if the discouragement is outweighed by more immediate considerations and other valid reasons already named, especially Jewish attitudes concerning respect and regard for the needs of *nechim* and *k'shishim*?

Another reason given to discourage if not prohibit Reform Rabbis from officiating at weddings before sundown is because other rabbinical bodies will look askance at our anti-traditionalism.

They do so anyway. Do we not officiate at cremations? And at gatherings where non-kosher food is served? Automobiles and electricity?

Disregard for the clock at other events and religious occasions? Patrilineal descent? And a large number of other Reform adjustments to reality as reflected in progressive Reform *Halachic* traditions so well documented by the most gifted *poskim* of our time including S. Freehof, Walter Jacob, M. Washofsky to whom we owe our gratitude.

The capitulation to the *minhag* in the matter of twilight Sabbath weddings will not change the attitude of *Klal Yisrael* despite our desire to "advance the unity of the Jewish people."

When a number of reasons are provided for a ruling, as has been said, it is often a sign that there is no valid reason or that reasons have to be conjured up with little justification for their existence.

Such is the case in connection with weddings on Shabbat or Yom Tov (*American Reform Responsa: Jewish Questions, Rabbinic Answers*, edited by Walter Jacob).

Of the five reasons Walter Jacob and the Responsa committee provide, economic considerations get the most space. Isserlis chose to proceed with a Sabbath Friday night chatunah precisely for economic considerations.

On the Sabbath. Also, as has been said, most importantly, for reasons of sensitivity toward the feelings of the bride – as in the above case for the bride, Jean – saving her discomfort and embarrassment. But in truth today financial matters are not dealt with at the time of the wedding.

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No nuptial or pre-nuptial financial legal details get worked out at the wedding. The wedding is pure celebration, a life cycle event like a bar/bat mitzvah.

One can also argue that a bar mitzvah has financial considerations as does almost every life cycle event.

The weddings I have conducted for some 50 years have never been financial except to pay the bills for the wedding itself – after the sabbath.

In short, Sabbath twilight weddings have attained the status of *minhag*, “normal standard of conduct.”

They are no longer mere convenience. They bring families together and do not overlook the needs of the elderly and infirm and indeed other needs of the family including the heartfelt wishes of a couple.

And this is not even bringing up the subject of determining the many different ways and procedures connected with how a Sabbath / holiday wedding may in fact be conducted to enhance rather than detract from a sacred Jewish Sabbath and festival day.

For many it will be their only exposure to anything Jewish that day or any day. What else might be built upon that reality?

Should it ever occur that a couple asks a rabbi to officiate or participate in a Sabbath *morning* wedding, (has never happened in my experience) the rabbi is obviously busy at Sabbath services but, under certain circumstances, might consider officiating during services or directly afterwards at shul.

Or if asked for a Sabbath afternoon, the rabbi might say yes or decline as have I because after services I need the Sabbath rest having been on my feet if not on my toes all morning. Try a younger more energetic rabbi.

But after *mincha*, before sunset after a long summer Sabbath day of rest and family and study? I'll be there for the late Sabbath *simcha*.

Rabbi Reeve Robert Brenner is a native of New York City. Since his ordination at the New York campus of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion in 1964, he has been a U.S. Army chaplain stationed in West Germany, senior staff chaplain at the clinical center of The National Institutes of Health (NIH), and served a number of congregations, including Bet Chesed in Maryland.



Meet your new IFR Colleague - IFR Member Rabbi Ilana Axel

When I was nine years old I had my parents leave me in my Reform synagogue all day long on Yom Kippur so I could fast and read the siddur while waiting for Ne'ilah.

What else could a weird little kid like this do but become a rabbi? Still, it took me another 54 years to achieve this goal. In the meantime, I fell in love with music, and then, I fell in love with Israel. After completing my undergraduate degree in music education from the Eastman School of Music and exploring Orthodox Judaism briefly, I made *aliyah* to Israel.

Thoughts of rabbinical school were postponed for the lures of all-in Zionism. Choral singing and creative music-making in Israel, in my beloved Hebrew, gave both a much deeper meaning than ever before. I lived on *kibbutz* for 17 years, married my Australian-Israeli spouse Mark, gave birth to our 3 children Yonatan, Timna and Tahel, and worked as a *tarbutnik* – creating Jewish holiday experiences for largely atheistic Israeli members of *kibbutz*. High Holiday stress for me was leading the Passover *seder* for about 600 people.

I brought my young family to America, for personal reasons, in 1997, and became the Music Director of a Reconstructionist synagogue in the suburbs of Chicago.

My specialty in this area is growing multi-generational, all-volunteer organizations that bring great music to congregational life. I especially love making Israeli music more accessible to English speakers through sung translations and arrangements.

My published arrangement of Yair Rosenblum's *Un'taneh Tokef*, combining English and the original Hebrew, was lauded by his daughter, Keren Rosenblum, as being "important even for Israelis to hear".

Still, I felt my soul from childhood calling me deeper into *avodah*/service. I was hired to be the full-time Cantorial Leader – un-ordained, yet half of a 2-clergy team – at a



Reform synagogue, where I continue to serve, now in my 13th year. While I consider myself a pluralistic Jew I love my present congregation very much as they are a very special group of people whom I am blessed to serve with devotion.

RSI helped make my lifelong dream of finally becoming a rabbi possible and I feel very fortunate to have been touched by the heart wisdom of Judaism through the teachings of Rabbi Gelberman and the rabbis of my *beit din*.

I was fortunate to be ordained with a soulful cohort of new rabbis in June 2019. It now seems to me that my delay of rabbinical school brought me to the clear waters of a fresh stream of Judaism that I would not have otherwise encountered, *Baruch HaShem*.

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Meet your new IFR Colleague - IFR Member Rabbi Michael Baum

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Rabbi Ilana Axel

Although I continue at this time serving as the cantor at Beth Tikvah Congregation in Hoffman Estates, Illinois, I have begun looking outwardly towards new opportunities to impact the world through a Jewish lens.

Besides being a life cycle officiant, I am developing teaching modules that bring Jewish text and thought to areas of interfaith engagement, implicit bias awareness, and restorative justice.

In the complex world we live in I often find myself called to challenge a culture of zero-sum paradigms, choosing instead to focus on both/and thinking and win-win resolutions. I am firmly convinced that Torah offers us many models for this work.

I welcome connection and dialogue with members of IFR and am grateful for this opportunity to introduce myself to colleagues near and nearer.



Rabbi Michael Baum ("Rabbi Mickey") was appointed Director of Education at Temple Beth Am of Merrick & Bellmore in July 2007, Assistant Rabbi/Director of Education in 2009 and Rabbi/Educator in July 2017.

He has been involved in Jewish education since 1987. He attended Hofstra University and was ordained from Tiferet Yisrael



Yeshivah in 2006. He started teaching at Temple Beth Am in 1995. Through the years, he has taught all grades (K-12), helped train Bar/Bat Mitzvah students and has led P.A.C.T. (Parents and Children Together) workshops as well as teacher training sessions. Rabbi Mickey has taught adult education and adult bar/bat mitzvah classes. He also currently serves as the Immediate Past Chairman of LITE (Long Island Temple Educators). Rabbi Mickey is proud to be a member of the New York State Chaplains Task Force and to serve on the advisory board of Island Harvest. Prior to becoming director of education, he taught at Temple Emanu-El of East Meadow where he also served as youth director and was also youth director at the Suburban Temple of Wantagh.

In his role as director of education, he is thrilled to be able to combine his energy with his passion for Judaism. "Our curriculum provides a wonderful balance of study time and hands-on activities to allow our children to learn "the 3 h's"—Hebrew, holidays and heritage.

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Meet your new IFR Colleague - IFR Member Rabbi Adrienne Rubin

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Rabbi Michael Baum

In our Torah it is written and in our prayers we recite “and you will teach them diligently to your children.” It is the scriptural basis that provides the inspiration for our school. Learning is not the mere acquisition of subject matter. Real learning is a process of growth and transformation of personality and values.

Temple Beth Am’s religious school is a caring community where everyone learns and participates in a wide variety of age appropriate programs and activities. It is our goal to develop within each of our students a sense of Derech Eretz (the proper way of treating other human beings), a love of Judaism and a body of knowledge that allows each student to see the world through Jewish eyes. Rabbi Mickey brings that caring community to the entire congregation as well.

From September 2008-June 2009 Rabbi Mickey served as Sabbatical Rabbi when Rabbi Brown was on his Sabbatical. In July 2009, Rabbi Mickey was named assistant Rabbi. Rabbi Mickey has taught adult education including three very successful Adult Bat Mitzvah classes, led services, given sermons at High Holiday services, officiated Bar/Bat Mitzvah s as well as other life cycle events at Beth Am.

In addition, since 2009, Rabbi Mickey has been taking the confirmation classes as well as other congregants who wish to join them every 2 years on a trip to Israel.

Rabbi Mickey served once again as head Rabbi from January-June 2014 when Rabbi Brown took another sabbatical.

On July 1, 2017, Rabbi Mickey became the Rabbi/Educator upon Rabbi Brown’s retirement.

**Rabbi Adrienne Rubin**

Rabbi Adrienne Rubin has been bringing meaning into people’s lives at synagogues for over 30 years and received s’micha last June through Rabbinical Seminary International.

A trained opera singer, Rabbi Adrienne has served for over 22 years as the Cantorial Soloist at Temple Micah in Lawrenceville, NJ, an unaffiliated, egalitarian synagogue.

At Temple Micah, she has officiated and co-officiated at hundreds of services, prepared students for B’nei Mitzvah, taught children in the religious school, led adult and teen Torah and text study, and tended to the pastoral care and life cycle needs of the congregation.

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Meet your new IFR Colleague-IFR Member Rabbi Adrienne Rubin**Continued from page 7****Rabbi Adrienne Rubin**

She has continued as the Cantorial Soloist at Temple Micah following her ordination and is focusing her rabbinical work on private teaching, working with interfaith families, and officiating at life cycle events.

Rabbi Adrienne brings her warmth, knowledge and passion for Jewish values and traditions to help people connect to what brings them the most joy and meaning in their lives.

She is well-known for bringing beautiful music to services and enjoys leading worship in a way that encourages members of the congregation to participate.

She delights in assisting interfaith couples in finding the right role for Judaism in their families and in serving the LGBTQIA+ community. And she loves customizing the educational process for students of all ages, levels and backgrounds, so that they develop deep connections to Jewish learning and the Jewish community.

Rabbi Adrienne graduated from Princeton University with a B.A. in Music Theory and Composition. She studied voice and opera with Peter Elvins and coached with Thom Christoph of the Opera Company of Boston. She has sung numerous operatic roles and has performed as a soloist in a wide variety of choral works.

She is an Associate Rabbi at the New Synagogue in New York City, the Chaplain of Scouts BSA Troop 40, and a member of the International Federation of Rabbis, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, the Women Cantors' Network, and InterFaith-Family.



Rabbi Adrienne lives in Princeton, NJ, with her husband Doug. They have one son, Elian, who attends Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences.

In addition to her rabbinical work, she is an active volunteer and nonprofit professional. She is currently a Board member of Send Hunger Packing Princeton, an organization that provides food on the weekends and school vacations for children who are food insecure.

She has volunteered and/or worked with the Princeton Public Schools, the Princeton Education Foundation, VolunteerConnect, SAVE, A Friend to Homeless Animals, Women in Development and the local Pack, Troop and Council of the Boy Scouts of America. She also consults independently with nonprofits and presents workshops and webinars on various aspects of nonprofit and volunteer management.



Meet your IFR Colleagues - IFR Member Rabbi Jill Hausman



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The Actors' Temple: Inside the synagogue where Broadway's biggest stars used to pray

NEW YORK (JTA) — On a recent Friday night, about 20 people gathered for Shabbat services at the Actors' Temple, a synagogue just a few blocks from Times Square. Rabbi Jill Hausman greeted each one by name with a kiss on the cheek and a "Good Shabbos." Some sang along and others listened as she led the small crowd in a service using a prayer book and a packet she had printed out just minutes earlier in her upstairs office.

It's a far cry from the era when some of the biggest celebrities in the country used to gather at the West 47th Street shul. The Three Stooges, actors Shelley Winters and Aaron Chwatt (better known as Red Buttons), baseball stars Sandy Koufax and Hank Greenberg, and TV host Ed Sullivan all prayed there.

Sullivan, whose wife was Jewish, also hosted the annual temple benefit at The Majestic Theater. Headshots of stars who frequented the synagogue hang on a wall.

The synagogue was founded in 1917 for a much different crowd: Orthodox shopkeepers who worked in Hell's Kitchen, a neighborhood lined today with bars and restaurants catering to the pre-theater crowd—but at the time was rife with gangs. I

n the 1920s, the synagogue, formerly known as Congregation Ezrath Israel, hired Bernard Birstein as its first rabbi. Birstein had his eyes on Broadway, which was home to many Jewish actors and actresses but few regular synagogue-goers. "They weren't socially acceptable, their morals were questionable because they were all in vaudeville, and they toured all around the country and



they weren't really welcome in the large wealthy synagogues," Hausman said.

One of Birstein's first recruits was the popular Ukrainian-born entertainer Sophie Tucker. At first she resisted his advances, but after multiple visits the rabbi swayed her with a heavy load of Jewish guilt.

"He said to her, 'Sofele, who's going to say Kaddish for your Yiddishe mama?' And that was one of her big numbers, and he really touched her in the heart," Hausman said. After Tucker, other stars started flowing in and the synagogue became known as the Actors' Temple. In addition to the famous members, a number of other big names would perform at its annual gala, including Barbra Streisand, Bert Lahr, Danny Kaye and Jimmy Durante.

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Meet your IFR Colleagues - IFR Member Rabbi Jill Hausman

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At some point after Tucker joined, the synagogue became Conservative. Hausman isn't sure of the year, but she says that at one Shabbat service, a wealthy woman decided to sit in the men's section with her husband rather than in the women's balcony, as is the Orthodox custom. She was joined by Tucker and eventually the rest of the women. Today the synagogue is nondenominational and welcomes interfaith couples and members of the LGBTQ community. The synagogue continued to attract Broadway stars through the 1960s, when membership started declining. When Hausman, who is in her 60s, came on board 14 years ago, the temple had only 12 members and was struggling financially. The board thought it may be time to close its doors, the rabbi recalled. But Hausman was able to turn things around by returning the synagogue to its show business roots. She took out the pews and converted the sanctuary into a space that she rented out as a dance studio. Shortly after, she met a theater manager who suggested that she rent out the synagogue as an off-Broadway performance

space. The manager helped install a stage and put theater lights in the balcony where the women once sat. "It was economic necessity because our dues are \$180 per person per year," Hausman said. "We're not built on a dues model."

The first show opened in the fall of 2006, and since then the synagogue has been renting out its stage for performances almost every week. It can host up to eight performances a week — only Friday nights and High Holidays are out. The synagogue also rents out space to a program that provides enrichment classes for children who are homeschooled.

Hausman estimates that there are between 150 and 200 members today and about 20 show up on a typical Friday night. She said around 40 percent of regulars are involved in show business in some way.

"We are not a family congregation the way most congregations are," she said. "Not that we don't like families, but our membership is mostly singles and couples from early through late middle age."

Though most shows have nothing to do with Judaism, for some the setting resonates. For four months this spring and summer, the Actors' Temple hosted performances of "The Last Jew of Boyle Heights," a play by Steve Greenstein about a Los Angeles neighborhood that once was home to a large Jewish population and now is predominantly Latino. Greenstein, who is a member of Actors' Temple, said that putting on his play in a Jewish setting carried special meaning.

The ner tamid, the eternal light hanging above the synagogue ark, peaked out behind the stage during performances and the stained glass windows were visible when one of the characters recalled an old synagogue in Boyle Heights.

"The space fit the play," Greenstein said. "And that's important when you're creating a piece of theater."



Meet your IFR Colleagues - IFR Member Rabbi Barbara Aiello

**At the Ferramonti Concentration Camp - Three Synagogues, High Holy Days and Bed Sheet Brides****Rabbi Barbara Aiello***Used by permission of Times of Israel where the article first appeared*

A wedding gown fashioned from a bed sheet and a veil crafted from mosquito netting - these were shared among the 24 Jewish brides who married under the chuppah in, of all places, a WW II Concentration Camp.

It happened in southern Italy at the Ferramonti Concentration Camp where two rabbis who were also camp inmates officiated at the weddings that were held in the camp itself from its establishment in June, 1940 through September, 1943 when the camp was liberated by units of the British Army as they advanced northward through Calabria.

When they weren't officiating at wedding ceremonies or naming one of the 21 babies born in the camp, the rabbis were leading Shabbat and festival services in one of the three synagogues that operated freely within the confines of concentration camp itself.

"It is a little known story that needs to be told," says Simona Ciliberti, administrator of the Ferramonti museum, which boasts an extensive collection of artifacts and photographs that offer visitors a glimpse of camp life - a life that included a Hebrew school, a camp newspaper,

social organizations, family vegetable gardens, a drama society, soccer teams and the three synagogues - orthodox, reform and Zionist.

Inspired by a New York Times article by Ralph Blumenthal, (9/21/19) "An Improbable Relic of Auschwitz: a Shofar That Defied the Nazis," that featured the moving story of a shofar that was secretly sounded at the Auschwitz death camp,

it seemed that the remarkable story of the public sounding of the shofar at the

Ferramonti Concentration Camp was an event that needed to be highlighted and replicated.

On Saturday evening October 6, 2019, seventy-five years after the Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services that were held openly at the camp, the shofar sounded again - this time in recognition of and in gratitude for the Italian soldiers and local villagers who supported and protected the Eastern European Jews and Jewish Pentcho survivors who comprised the

Ferramonti prisoner population.

"If Jews could worship in the Ferramonti camp, then we should demonstrate just what they were doing," said Angela Yael Amato, concert violinist and board member of Congregation Ner Tamid del Sud, a synagogue located near the camp that serves southern Italy as the first active synagogue in Calabria in 500 years.

Along with her son, Alessandro who is an award-winning cellist, Ms. Amato arranged and performed traditional music that would have been played at the camp wedding ceremonies.

The program concluded with the duo's moving performance of the Kol Nidre melody and Avinu Malkeinu, musical selections that are among the most familiar of High Holy Day melodies.

Serving as Ba'alat Tekiah, I had the honor of sounding the shofar.

As the long low blasts filled the meeting hall, many guests were moved to tears.

We sensed that each of the shofar's four distinct tones represented a celebration of life, love, courage and the religious freedom afforded nearly 4,000 inmate Jews seventy-five years ago.

"Nothing can absolve Italy from its unholy alliance with Hitler," said Caterina, a young mother who brought her two children to participate in the reenactment of the original

Ferramonti High Holy Day services. "But the world must know that even though Italy's leadership aligned with the devil, the villagers who lived here would not permit any harm to come to the Jews."

Ferramonti Di Tarsia Italy - Mauthausen Concentration Camp Austria



Reprinted From Yad Vashem
yadvashem.org

Ferramonti Di Tarsia Internment camp for Jews in southern Italy.

Ferramonti, officially a concentration camp, was the largest of 15 internment camps established by Italian Fascist leader, Benito Mussolini, during the summer of 1940.

The Italians began building Ferramonti on June 4, less than a week before Italy entered World War II.

The arrest of Jews began on June 15, and prisoners began arriving at the camp on June 20. From 1940--1943, over 3,800 Jews were imprisoned at the camp: 3,682 were foreign-born Jews, and 141 were Italians.

In general, Italian-born Jews were not imprisoned unless they participated in anti-Fascist activities.

At first, the physical conditions at the camp were not that bad. However, as the situation of the Jews went downhill, so did the living conditions.

Despite all this, Ferramonti was never a concentration camp like those that the Nazis ran: the relationship between the prisoners and camp staff was rather peaceful, the prisoners were not tortured or executed, and they were allowed to receive packages of food, visit sick relatives, and participate in cultural activities.

In fact, four couples got married at the camp and 21 children were born.

The prisoners at Ferramonti were released on September 4, 1943, six weeks after Mussolini was overthrown by his own Fascist Grand Council.

Ferramonti Camp, Cosenza Italy 1941



Mauthausen Concentration Camp

NOTE: my late father Edmund Wasserberger (Carter) ז"ל was interned in Mauthausen. He was from Obersilesia (Austria - Hungary) spoke German, Polish, Czech, Russian, (later) English and read Hebrew. His parents were gassed at Auschwitz Birkenau in 1942. After surviving Mauthausen Concentration Camp, he joined the Polish Army under General Anders. Ultimately he immigrated to the USA under the name "Karter" and naturalized in 1954. - Rabbi Suzanne H Carter "shosh"

Mauthausen Concentration camp located near an unused stone quarry about three miles from the town of Mauthausen in Upper Austria. Mauthausen commenced functioning in August 1938, a few months after the Anschluss [the annexing of Austria by Germany.]

The first prisoners to arrive were forced to build the camp and work in the quarry. The work in the quarry proved deadly for many inmates. During its initial year, the 1,100 prisoners brought to Mauthausen were common criminals, people deemed "asocial" and unfit to live in German society.



Mauthausen Concentration Camp - Shoah Education



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Additionally, political opponents of the Reich, including a group of political prisoners transferred from Dachau – were brought to Mauthausen. Throughout the war, the camp was mainly used for political or ideological opponents of the Nazi regime. Mauthausen was divided into three sections: the prison camp, administrative area and SS housing. The prison camp was Mauthausen's main area, and was made up of 3 sections. Prisoners lived in the 20 huts of Camp No. 1. Each hut was built to hold 300 prisoners, but in most cases more than 600 were forced into the space. Four of the huts were quarantine huts, where new prisoners lived for 3 weeks. Afterwards, they were moved into other huts. Camp No. 2 was a workshop area, which contained 4 huts. From the beginning of 1944, it was also used as a quarantine area. Camp No. 3, built in the spring of 1944, originally contained six huts. Beginning in the summer of 1944, sick and weak prisoners were brought there prior to being killed. The camp complex was guarded by the brutal SS "Death's Head Units." Prisoners held various positions of authority such as; camp elder, the elder's deputies and camp registrar. The work in the camp was overseen by Kapos whilst the camp blocks were handled by the block elder, block registrar, and room elders. All prisoners in positions of authority were given special privileges. Until World War II broke out, Mauthausen was similar to other concentration camps in Germany. German prisoners were incarcerated for harsh forced labor but the conditions at the camp were not as brutal as they would become ^{המרקזי} later. When the war began, things changed at Mauthausen. It expanded to become both a concentration camp and a killing center for political and ideological opponents from within the Reich and from other Nazi-occupied countries. Food rations

were decreased and the prisoners lived in extremely crowded and unsanitary conditions. This led to the outbreak of typhus and dysentery epidemics, weakening and killing many. By the end of 1939, the camp had more than doubled its prisoner population to 2,666. During 1940, the number of prisoners arriving grew exponentially. About 11,000 new inmates were sent to Mauthausen, leading the camp authorities to establish the first of several satellite camps nearby. Among the prisoners who arrived in 1940 was a group of Republican Spaniards who had fled Spain after General Francisco Franco won the Spanish Civil War. They had sought refuge in France only to be arrested there by the Nazis after the German invasion in May 1940. A total of 18,000 new prisoners arrived at Mauthausen in 1941, including the camp's first group of Jews, who came in May from the Netherlands. Other new arrivals included many new Spanish prisoners, Czech political prisoners, and more than 4,000 Soviet prisoners of war. Most of the Czech prisoners were murdered that summer, in retaliation for the death of SS leader Reinhard Heydrich at the hands of Czech resistance fighters. The Soviet prisoners lived in separate huts called the "Russian camp."

After surviving Mauthausen...First Lieutenant Edmund Wasserberger (Carter) z"l Polish Army under General Anders. Circa 1946.



Mathausen Concentration Camp - Shoah Education



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Despite the large number of incoming prisoners, there were only 11,135 left by the end of 1941 due to the camp's extremely high mortality rate. In 1942, prisoners continued to arrive from the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Additionally, transports arrived from France, Belgium, Greece, and Luxembourg. During 1943, 21,028 new internees arrived from all over Europe. Only a few were Jews. That year, more than 8,000 prisoners died in Mauthausen and its sub-camp, Gusen. A large number of new prisoners arrived in 1944. Consequently, the German authorities ordered the construction of several satellite camps to control the overflow. Altogether, more than 65,000 new prisoners were recorded, and the maximum population that year was 114,524. In May 1944, Mauthausen admitted large transports of Jews from Auschwitz. The number of Jews who died in Mauthausen that year topped 3,000. Many groups of Poles also arrived in Mauthausen in 1944, after the Warsaw Polish Uprising was suppressed, in October 1944.

Many Polish students and underground members were killed soon after they arrived. Almost 25,000 new prisoners came to Mauthausen in 1945, including a stream of Jewish prisoners from Hungary who had been previously interned in camps along the Austrian-Hungarian border, and forced to build a line of fortifications.

As the battlefront drew closer, their camps were emptied out and the prisoners were marched on foot to Mauthausen. Many died en route. The Jews interned in Mauthausen were treated much worse than the other prisoners. They were forced to dig tunnels at the sub-camps for underground ammunition factories and were expected to do so at an

unbearably fast pace. After a month or so, the Jewish workers were so physically broken and exhausted they could hardly move.

On May 3, 1945, a police unit from Vienna took over the camp's security. The next day, all work stopped at the camp and the SS officers left. On May 5, American troops arrived and liberated the camp. Altogether, 199,404 prisoners passed through Mauthausen.

Approximately 119,000 of them, including 38,120 Jews, were killed or died from the harsh conditions, exhaustion, malnourishment and overwork.

Furthermore, the sick, weak and "undesirable" prisoners were taken to the nearby Hartheim Castle to be exterminated in the gas chamber during the periods of August 1941 to October 1942 and April to December 1944.

***Edmund Wasserberger (Carter) ז"ל
from Mauthausen to Liberation , to the
Polish Army and ultimately to the United
States and Citizenship in Cincinnati Ohio***



On Fear

Rabbi Frank Tamburello

In 1922, Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein and his wife Tehilla founded the Society of Jewish Science in New York City. This Society was established to bring back thousands of assimilated Jews lost to Christian Science at the beginning of the twentieth century back to Judaism.

Focusing on the idea that spirituality is enhanced by positive thinking, peace of mind and spiritual healing, the Society attracted many Jews back to practicing their faith.

Upon Rabbi Lichtenstein's death in 1939, his wife Tehilla assumed the leadership of the society and was responsible for developing literature and leading services. Although never ordained a rabbi, Tehilla was one of the first women to lead an entire Jewish congregation.

Below is a selection from her book "Applied Judaism" a series of essays broadcasted on New York City in the '50's.

"Now the greatest hindrance to peace of mind is fear. Fear and peace of mind are mortal enemies; the entrance of fear at once destroys peace of mind; but fear cannot enter where faith is strongly entrenched. And fear does not see anyone unless he or she feels alone; Surely it cannot seize anyone who knows that he or she has a kind and loving and mighty Father forever at their right hand. Alone, we are children going through a dense forest, full of shadows in mysterious murmurings, full of lurking, unknown, sinister presences. Our hearts quake within us as we try to make our way through the darkness. With God beside us. And with God's hand firmly in hours, the forest suddenly assumes its true beauty and joy.

Ravenous Ravs

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish Holiday Eats and Treats for your Chanukah dinner



Savory Skillet

Cabbage

1/4 cup olive oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1 medium head cabbage, shredded

2 carrots, sliced

1/2 cup water

Salt and black pepper

1/4 pound Romano cheese, cut in slivers

In a large skillet or frying pan, heat oil and sauté onion for three minutes.

Add shredded cabbage and carrots and sauté for 5 or 8 minutes, turning and stirring frequently.

Pour in water and salt and pepper to taste.

Sprinkle cabbage with cheese slivers, cover and simmer slowly, turning occasionally until cabbage is tender 20 to 30 minutes. Serves 6 to 8.



Ravenous Ravens

Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish Holiday Eats and Treats - And for your Chanukah dinner:



Chanukah Holiday Fritters

- 1 cup sifted flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 1 qt vegetable oil
- 1 large apple, peeled, cored, cut into eighths
- 8 dried figs, cut in half
- 8 cauliflowerets, cooked

In a large bowl, sift dry ingredients together. Combine egg, milk, and melted butter in another bowl. Pour liquid mixture over dry ingredients, stirring well until batter is smooth. Dash about two minutes. Heat oil to 370°.

Dip apple pieces, figs and cauliflower in batter; drop carefully in hot oil, a few at a time, and fry until golden brown, turning once.

Remove from oil with slotted spoon and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot. Yield 2 dozen



Sicilian Pistachio Cookies

Traditionally served after memorial services.

- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup ground pistachio nuts

Preheat oven to 400°. Grease two baking sheets well. Cream sugar, butter and eggs together. Stir in flour gradually and beat until smooth.

Add vanilla and pistachio nuts; blend.

Break off small pieces of dough, about 1 teaspoon each, and form into kidney shaped beans.

Place 1 inch apart on greased baking sheet and bake until cookies are lightly browned, about 10 minutes.



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish Holiday Eats and Treats for your Chanukah dinner:

**Fried Spaghetti
(Pasta Fritta)**

1/2 lb thin spaghetti
1 2-oz can anchovies
1/4 cup olive oil
3 eggs
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly ground black pepper
Cook spaghetti following directions on package.

When done drain well and set aside. Chop anchovies reserving, three whole fillets for garnish. In a large skillet, heat oil in and cook spaghetti and anchovies. Fry for 8 to 10 minutes over medium heat until spaghetti is golden and crispy on bottom side. Beat eggs slightly with cheese and freshly ground pepper to taste.

Pour over spaghetti and cook until eggs are set. Cover skillet with a plate the same size as the skillet and reverse spaghetti on to play slide back onto skillet to cook bottom side for two minutes. Slide onto a warm serving plate and garnish with anchovy fillets. Cut into wedges, omelette style and serve immediately. Serves 4. You may substitute a 6 ounce can of tuna for the anchovies.



My Story - Rabbi Frank Tamburello

When I was growing up with roots on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in an Italian Catholic family, I was not aware of my family's Jewish roots. In the 1980's, I visited my father's family in Sicily, I was brought to my grandfather's ancestral home, a town called Bisacquino. We visited the Giudecca, the ancient Jewish section of the town.

I was told that before the Inquisition the town had a vibrant Jewish community. My grandfather's family followed there in Sicily the almost exclusive profession of the ancient Sicilian Jews which was wrought iron work. (The word "ghetto" in the Venetian dialect means wrought iron foundry).

In fact, he was called "mastroferraio" or master wrought iron worker. The families of the Giudecca were expelled in 1493, some left the town but most others were converted to Catholicism.

There remains today in the Giudecca a large wrought iron cross, near the piazza where the Jewish merchants had their shops, and where subsequently there was erected a large church. On the crossbar of the cross is written "Anno MCDXCIII". 1493, the date of the expulsion of Jews from that town.

My uncles and other relatives passed down in family lore that we were descended from these families who remained in community even as "neofiti" or new Christians, and our family surnames, connected to those known Sicilian Jewish surnames attest to that fact. On my mom's side, the story is that the grandparents met on the boat coming from Naples at the turn of the last century. Grandpa came from Salerno, but grandma was Jewish and came from Florence. I, myself didn't know she was Jewish until her death.

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She had raised her children Catholic and was quiet about her own background, as there was no Italian Jewish presence in the Little Italy section on the Lower East Side of New York City.

During her funeral, I was shocked to see Al Kurtz, one of the few Jewish shopkeepers in the Little Italy, and a friend of my grandmother, enter my cousin's funeral home, and underneath a large cross hanging over the casket, spread a tallit over the body and recited the mourners' Kaddish.

Of course, everyone was moved by the gesture, but no one knew why he would have done that, until a great aunt told us that grandma came from a Jewish family in Italy, and that that was a Jewish mourning practice.

Years later, when I visited the great synagogue in Florence, I had an extended conversation with the caretaker who told me that he remembered my grandmother's family, but never knew what happened to the family. He also suggested that I visit the cemetery for more information, but unfortunately, it was closed to the public.

As a child, I was profoundly religious, I was sent to Catholic schools and eventually became ordained as a Greek rite Catholic priest.

I loved the ministry, I loved working with people, Catholic dogma, however, not so much.

Eventually, when it became clear that I could no longer preach dogma which I myself did not believe, I left the priesthood.

Although I studied Judaism of course in seminary, even studied Hebrew along with Greek and Latin, I wanted to know more about my Jewish heritage.

I took Jewish study courses with a local rabbi, who considered me a colleague and a good friend.

After a couple of years of study, I formally embraced Judaism, the rabbi suggested that psychologically, it would be good for me to undergo mikvah even though I was technically Jewish on my mother's side.

This I did in 1997, under the auspices of a Conservative and Orthodox Beit Din.

I decided later on that I still wanted a career in the clergy, and I connected with Rabbi Gelberman in 2002. I found that Rabbi Gelberman's approach to spirituality resonated deeply with me and I was ordained by Rabbi Gelberman and the clergy of the Rabbinical Seminary International in 2004.

Presently, I live in Manhattan, and I work as spiritual advisor to the Society of Jewish Science - the Makor Center for Applied Judaism in Manhattan, and the Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism.

I also serve on the boards of the Friends of Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud and the International Federation of Rabbis where, true to my Italian heritage, I endeavor to provide our members with delicious recipes in our newsletters.

"Never instead of, always in addition to"

- Rabbi Dr. Joseph Gelberman z"l

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