

**בני מצוה**  
B'nai Mitzvah

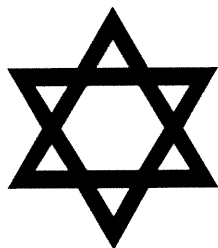
Kathryn Edna Cooperman : **חיה עדנה**

Gail Weiner Korval : **מרים**

Martin Stewart Clarke : **משה סיון**

Rhonda Jacobs Ginsberg : **רחל חיה שרה**

Susan Marla Clarke : **שרה מלכה**

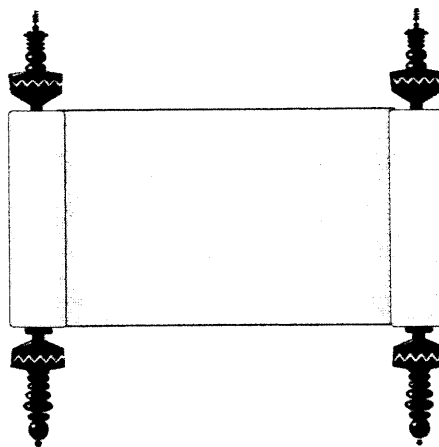


January 3rd, 1998

ה' **טבת** תשנ"ח : 5 Tevet, 5758

Temple Beth El  
Stamford, Connecticut

**סדרה ויגש** : Sidra Vayigash



It is almost exactly two years ago that we began our classes. The initial group was diverse and much larger, yet we were all joined in our desire to study Hebrew, and discuss Jewish prayers, history, and philosophy.

Before the end of our first year, the class had dwindled to the five of us who are seated here before you. With the small size, we felt a strong commitment to work together--even one person's absence for one class was felt. These weekly meetings were not only a time to study together, but to share our lives. The bonds we formed should last far beyond this B'nai Mitzvah day.

Two already overworked individuals took the responsibility for our education. We want to thank Rabbi Hammerman for his efforts in designing a curriculum that took into account our interests, and understanding our droopy eyes at 9:45 p.m. Hazzan Rabinowitz not only taught us Hebrew, prayers, and cantillation, he had numerous individual sessions with us so that we might be ready for today. In addition, he took the time to help us deal with details such as menus and floral arrangements. All of this gave us an appreciation for the Hazzan's sense of humor and never-ending patience.

Our families are helping us participate in this service and we want to recognize their support as we went through this process.

We are delighted that so many of you could join with us today and wish you all Shabbat Shalom.

## Order of Service

### SHACHARIT: Morning Service

- ☆ Introduction, *Ba-r'chu* and *Sh'ma* (pages 88-120) - Hazzan Rabinowitz
- ☆ *Shacharit Amida for Shabbat* (pages 122-133) - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ *Yi-h'yu L'ratzon* (page 134) - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ *Kaddish Shalem* (page 136) - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ *The Blessings of Shabbat* (page 138) - Emily and Adam Korval

### K'RIAT HA-TORAH: Torah Service

#### Removal of the Torah from the Ark

- ☆ Opening and Closing the Ark - Gail and Arnie Korval, Rhonda and Larry Ginsberg
- ☆ *Eyn ka-mocha* (page 180) - Martin Clarke
- ☆ *Bey ana racheytz* (page 184) - Martin Clarke
- ☆ *Prayer before the Ark* - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ Taking out the Torah - Alan Freeman
- ☆ *Sh'ma Yisrael* (page 188) - Martin Clarke

Reading of the Torah portion of Vayigash: Genesis, Chapter 47, Verses 1 to 27 (pages 175-177 of the Hertz Chumash)<sup>1</sup>

- ☆ Gabbaim - Paul Bashan, David Gordon
- ☆ Introduction to Vayigash and D'var Torah - Rhonda Ginsberg
- ☆ Aliyah #1 - Congregant
- ☆ Aliyah #2 - Congregant
- ☆ Aliyah #3 and Ba-al K'riah (verses 7 to 10) - Gail Korval
- ☆ Aliyah #4 and Ba-al K'riah (verses 11 to 13) - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ D'var Torah - Gail Korval
- ☆ Aliyah #5 and Ba-al K'riah (verses 14 to 16) - Susan Clarke
- ☆ D'var Torah - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ Aliyah #6 and Ba-al K'riah (verses 17 to 19) - Rhonda Ginsberg
- ☆ D'var Torah - Susan Clarke
- ☆ Aliyah #7 - Ari, Jared, and Joelle Tannenbaum
- ☆ *Chatzi Kaddish* (page 192) - Martin Clarke
- ☆ Maftir Aliyah and Ba-al K'riah (verses 25 to 27) - Martin Clarke
- ☆ Hagbahah - Elliot Tuckel
- ☆ G'lilah - Candice Cooperman
- ☆ Sitting with the Torah - Spencer Ginsberg

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<sup>1</sup> The full portion for Vayigash starts at Chapter 44, Verse 18. Here at Beth El, we follow the ancient custom of reading the Torah according to the triennial cycle, which is a third of each portion per year. This year, we are completing a cycle, and are thus reading the last third of the portion here today.

Reading of the Haftarah for Vayigash:      Ezekiel, Chapter 37, Verses 15 to 28 (pages 178-179 of the Hertz Chumash)

- ☆ D'var Torah and Introduction to the Haftarah - Martin Clarke
- ☆ Blessings Before the Haftarah - B'nai Mitzvah Group
- ☆ Verses 15 to 17 - Susan Clarke
- ☆ Verses 18 to 20 - Martin Clarke
- ☆ Verses 21 to 22 - Kathy Cooperman
- ☆ Verses 23 to 24 - Rhonda Ginsberg
- ☆ Verses 25 to 27 - Gail Korval
- ☆ Final verse and Blessings After the Haftarah - B'nai Mitzvah Group

Prayers Before Returning the Torah to the Ark

- ☆ *Y'kum Purkan* (page 198) - Hazzan Rabinowitz
- ☆ *Prayer for our country* (page 200) - Cynthia Cooperman
- ☆ *For Medinat Yisrael* (page 200) - Sarah Korval
- ☆ *Mishebeirach* (at the back of this booklet) - Hazzan Rabinowitz
- ☆ *Ashrey* (pages 204-206) - Rhonda Ginsberg

Returning the Torah to the Ark

- ☆ *Y'hallelu* (page 206) - Susan Clarke
- ☆ *Psalm 29* (page 208) - Susan Clarke
- ☆ Opening and Closing the Ark - B'nai Mitzvah parents and David Ginsberg
- ☆ *U-v'nucho* (page 212) - Susan Clarke
- ☆ Putting back the Torah - Rabbi Goldman

### Speeches

- ☆ Gail Korval (on behalf of the B'nai Mitzvah Group)
- ☆ Rabbi Hammerman

### MUSAF: Additional Service

- ☆ *Chatzi Kaddish* (page 280) - Gail Korval
- ☆ *Interpretive Amida for Shabbat* (pages 282-299) - Gail Korval
- ☆ *Grant Peace to all Your Children* (page 299) - Jonathan Ginsberg
- ☆ *Kaddish Shalem* (page 324) - Gail Korval
- ☆ *Eyn Keyloheynu* (page 326) - B'nai Mitzvah sons and daughters
- ☆ Opening and Closing the Ark for Aleinu - B'nai Mitzvah Group
- ☆ *Aleinu, Mourner's Kaddish and Adon Olam* (pages 328-339) - Hazzan Rabinowitz and Rabbi Hammerman

### Congregational Lunch

- ☆ Kiddush and Hamotzi - Rhonda Ginsberg
- ☆ Birkat Hamazon - Rhonda Ginsberg and rest of the B'nai Mitzvah Group

## Special Prayer

Eternal God, reverently we stand before the Scroll of Your Torah, the Holy Scriptures, which our ancestors learned, taught, and preserved for us, a heritage unto all generations. You have bequeathed this sacred heritage to us, and have lovingly called all of us to study your word, seeking inspiration and renewal at a time in our lives when we are well beyond the traditional age of the B'nai Mitzvah. May the teachings of Your Torah and our studies endow us with the wisdom to understand its precepts. May our lives be guided by its commandments. May your word be a "lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path," showing us the way to righteous living, as worthy inheritors of your Law of Love. May we inspire our children and our children's children to seek your word and find new ways to understand and apply its timeless teachings. We thank you and ask your blessing on this congregation, on our dedicated teachers, Rabbi Hammerman and Hassan Rabinowitz, and especially on our dear friends and families who have traveled from near and far to be with us this day. We ask a very special blessing for those who have supported us and encouraged us to continue our commitment during the easy and difficult times. May the sanctity and splendor of Shabbat abide with us during all the days of our lives. May we renew our links to our heritage, strengthen our loyalty to our people and deepen our faith in your sustaining power. May we draw ever nearer to You in righteousness and in truth. Amen.

My Family Tree

Great, Grandparents, Maternal

Johnson (Search) Keefe, Bucks County, PA  
Jane Ann Egbert, Greenpond, NJ

Grandparents

Charles Egbert Keefe, Woodstock, NY

Parents

James Flanagan, County Slygo, Ireland  
Margaret Mary Butler, London, England

Catherine Frances Flanagan,  
New York City

Dorothy Frances Keefe  
Saugerties, NY

Me

Kathryn Edna Lacey Cooperman  
Kingston, NY

My Children

Cynthia Sue Cooperman

Candice Lynn Cooperman  
Reading, PA

[ Alvin Cooperman -Ex-husband ]  
Patterson, NJ

Great Grandparents, Paternal

Unknown

Grandparents

John Joseph Lacey, New York City  
Ingar Johnson, New York City  
John Joseph Lacey  
Port Jervis, NY

Parents

## Kathryn Cooperman

I read and studied about Judaism many years ago (twenty-eight – I can hardly believe how the years have flown by) with Rabbi Alan Weitzman of Temple Oheb Shalom in Reading, PA. At the time, I did not believe in any structured religion, but had a deep spiritual belief in God, an admiration for his handiwork, and commitment to do my best to be a positive person, valued friend, companion, loving parent and daughter. As I learned more about Judaism, how to celebrate the holidays, understand services, the history of the Jewish people, the basic tenants of the religion, the more comfortable I felt with them. . Everything felt ‘right’. After months of discussions, I was no longer content to just know about Judaism, I wanted to convert ... become Jewish.... I felt that that was where I belonged. I have embraced the Torah, the festivals, the holidays and family celebrations. Many dear friends helped me understand family holiday traditions by sharing their own - their wonderful family stories, recipes, and memories. For many years, I followed the Hebrew prayers in services by reading and singing alliterations. When my little daughters came home from Religious School with their first Hebrew Primer, they were immediately way ahead of Mom. They inspired me in the way they both led our congregation in their Bat Mitzvahs. I wanted to be able to participate in services myself by being able to read and understand Hebrew. As I began to attend services with Elliott here at Beth El, my lack of knowledge of Hebrew became more troublesome. We both had talked about studying Hebrew. We wanted to be more knowledgeable of the parts of the services. When the opportunity to participate in a B’nai Mitzvah class presented itself, special friends in and out of class, my beautiful and loving children and my very special companion, Elliott, all encouraged me to follow my desire. It was a daunting task - Hebrew letters, trope, prayers, the service, Torah, chanting, Haftarah and learning much more about Jewish philosophy and history. Cynthia and Candice, (I know I’ve said this before) you were my inspiration as I worked to learn the Hebrew and chant the prayers. I pray that I may have the right words to guide you when you ask for guidance, the wisdom to know when to offer that advice and the energy and spirit to inspire, encourage and provide deep Jewish “roots” as you spread your wings and carry our heritage to future generations.

December 1997

Dear Kathy,

A little over two and one half years ago, after Rosh Hashonah services in Reading, PA, we drove out to a beautiful and quiet spot at Daniel Boone Homestead and talked about some of our goals for the New Year. One of yours was to learn Hebrew so you could better follow the services.

What a pleasant surprise when you informed me that you were going to become a Bat Mitzvah along with several other adults at Temple Beth El. Each week for over two years you met with the Rabbi for an hour and then Hassan for a second hour.

With a very busy work schedule along with taking classes at the Wharton School, I don't know how you manage to squeeze everything in. But somehow you have.

Kathy, I am very proud of your achieving this special goal and look forward to our future together.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elliott".

Elliott



**Subject: bat mitzfah note**

**Date:** Mon, 22 Dec 1997 02:45:19 -0800

**From:** Russ Ackerman <rfarms@pacbell.net>

**To:** etuckel@ix.netcom.com

Dearest Mom,

I was not sure what kind of forum this newsletter is, but i wrote a short note of congratulations to you on behalf of Candy and myself:

Congratulations!

We are very proud of you, Mom.

You have accepted the Jewish faith for your own for almost 30 years, yet continue to pursue more knowledge. This is a very admirable quality.

You are a highly motivated individual. For 2 years you have managed to balance your career, your continued education, your family, and your Hebrew studies. This is also very admirable.

We wish you much love and happiness on this special day and continued success in achieving the goals you set for yourself. You are a very special woman. We are very happy to share this milestone experience with you and proud to be your daughters. Health, happiness, and peace.

Love,  
Cindy and Candy

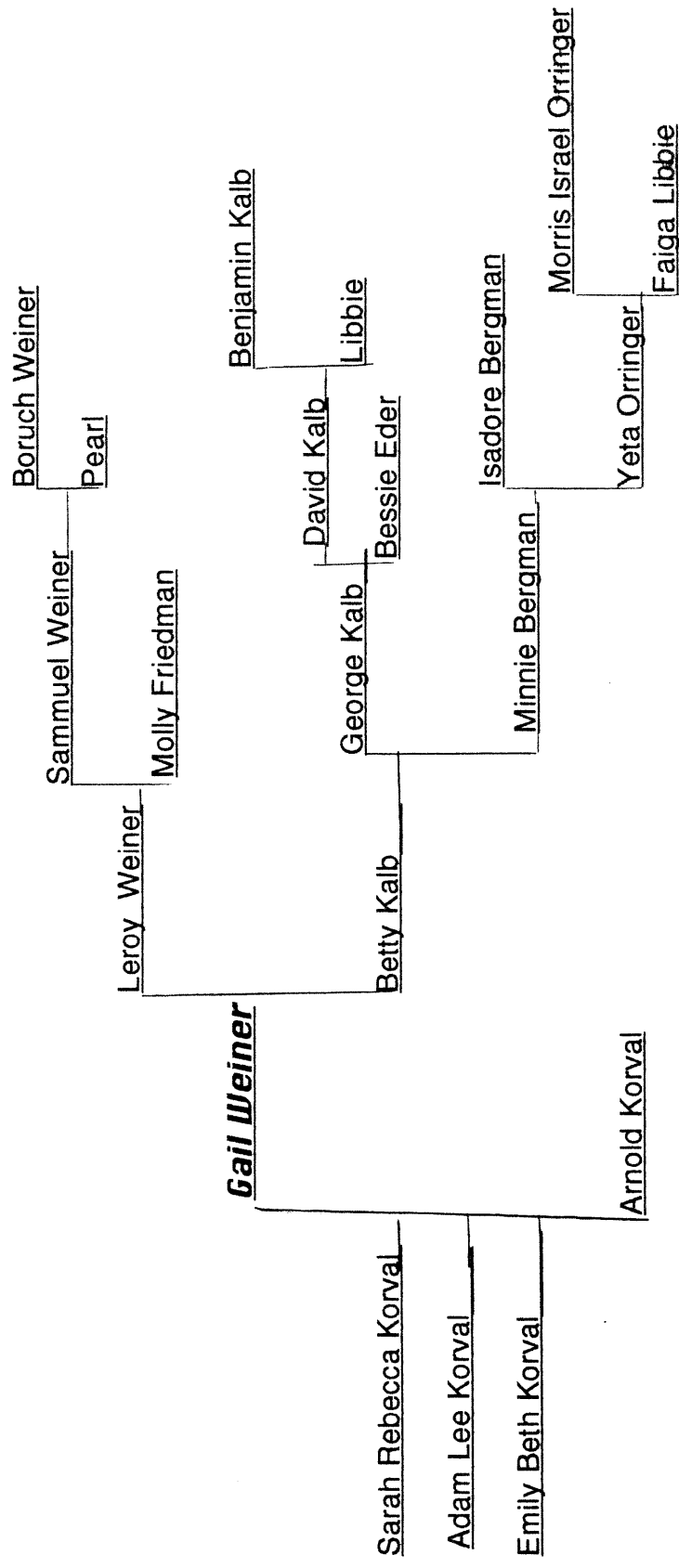
SHALOM

I will call you tonite to work out transportation from the airport.

I love you and will see you soon!

Cindy

# Family Tree Gail Weiner Korval

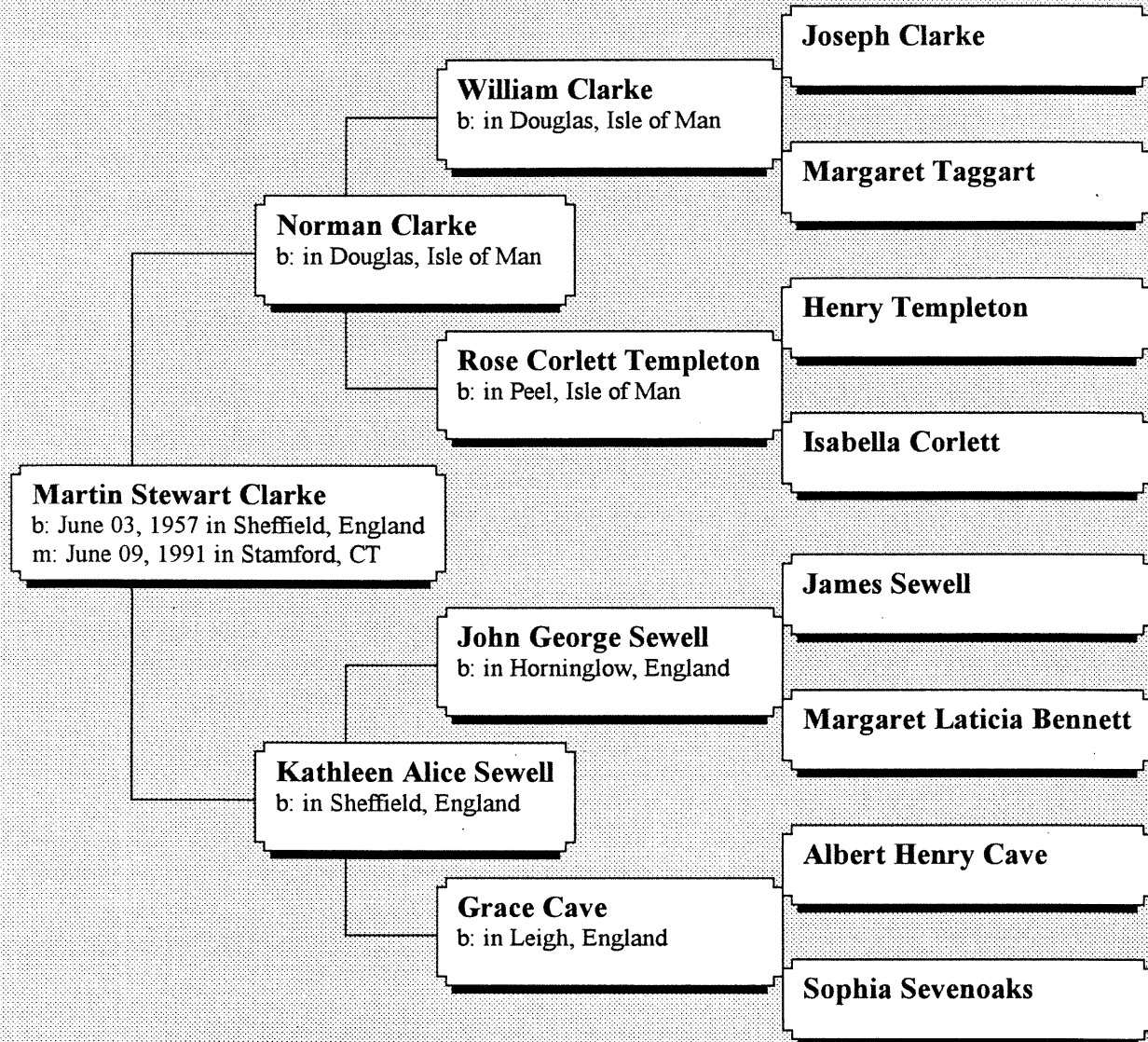


## Gail Weiner Korval

As a preteen of twelve, my parents gave me the option of having a Bat Mitzvah. I thought about the time I would need to spend with our rather strict, authoritative Rabbi and was quite comfortable with my no response. The first indication that this might not be the right decision came near my thirteenth birthday. My Grandpa Weiner asked me the date of my Bat Mitzvah and I saw the disappointment in his eyes when he discovered I would not be having one. Not only was I the first grandchild to not participate in this religious ceremony, I think I was also the first Temple Israel Religious /Hebrew School graduate to stop short of the Bat Mitzvah!

During my adult life, a few friends have chosen to participate in an adult ceremony and each time I attended one, there was this nagging thought that I should also be doing this. My three children attended religious school, and each became more knowledgeable, and more proficient in the services than I. Sarah's Bat Mitzvah was especially meaningful and I realized that while my children were going through the process, so should I. Thus, I joined the class in January, 1996 realizing that there would never be an ideal time to fit this process into our busy schedules. And I now find myself participating in this service less than three months after Adam's Bar Mitzvah.

## *Family Tree for Martin Clarke*



## Martin Clarke

Something is very gently,  
invisibly, silently,  
pulling at me - a thread  
or net of threads  
finer than cobweb and as  
elastic. I haven't tried  
the strength of it. No barbed hook  
pierced and tore me. Was it  
not long ago this thread

began to draw me? Or  
way back? Was I  
born with its knot about my  
neck, a bridle? Not fear  
but a stirring  
of wonder makes me  
catch my breath when I feel  
the tug of it when I thought  
it had loosened itself and gone.<sup>1</sup>

Judaism fascinates me (seventeen feet of bookshelves and growing!). I am drawn to the richness of my adopted Tradition, particularly the midrash and legends of the early rabbis, and the depth of thought that has gone into Judaism's struggle to explore its relationship with G-d over the centuries. I am also impressed by the practicality, optimism, structure and wide range of theological possibilities that Judaism encompasses.

My favourite home-based Jewish observances are welcoming Shabbat and leading our Passover seder each year (the kids are getting used to my ever-growing handouts!). My favourite Jewish experience to date was our (Susan and my) trip to Israel this spring organized by BiCultural. The beauty, history and connection that we found there was breathtaking. I will never forget standing at the Western Wall with the wind blowing and the birds flying around.

My primary objective in undertaking to be Bar Mitzvah'd<sup>2</sup> was to become more competent in davening. While I felt up to the challenge of developing home observance and general knowledge, services were a different matter. I had found them to be pretty inaccessible due to my lack of fluency in Hebrew, and lack of familiarity with the choreography. This was particularly difficult where the Siddur gave no guidance (e.g. it took me several months to identify what words were said with *baruch hu u'varuch sh'mo*)<sup>3</sup>.

Now, after two years of study with Hazzan Rabinowitz and Rabbi Hammerman, I feel that I have achieved basic competence, and will be able to grow from here under my own steam. G-d willing, I am looking forward to participating more in life at Beth El, both in services and in general. I should also be able to spend more time with my family, and have more flexibility in attending my weekly poker game!

Thank you for being here today.

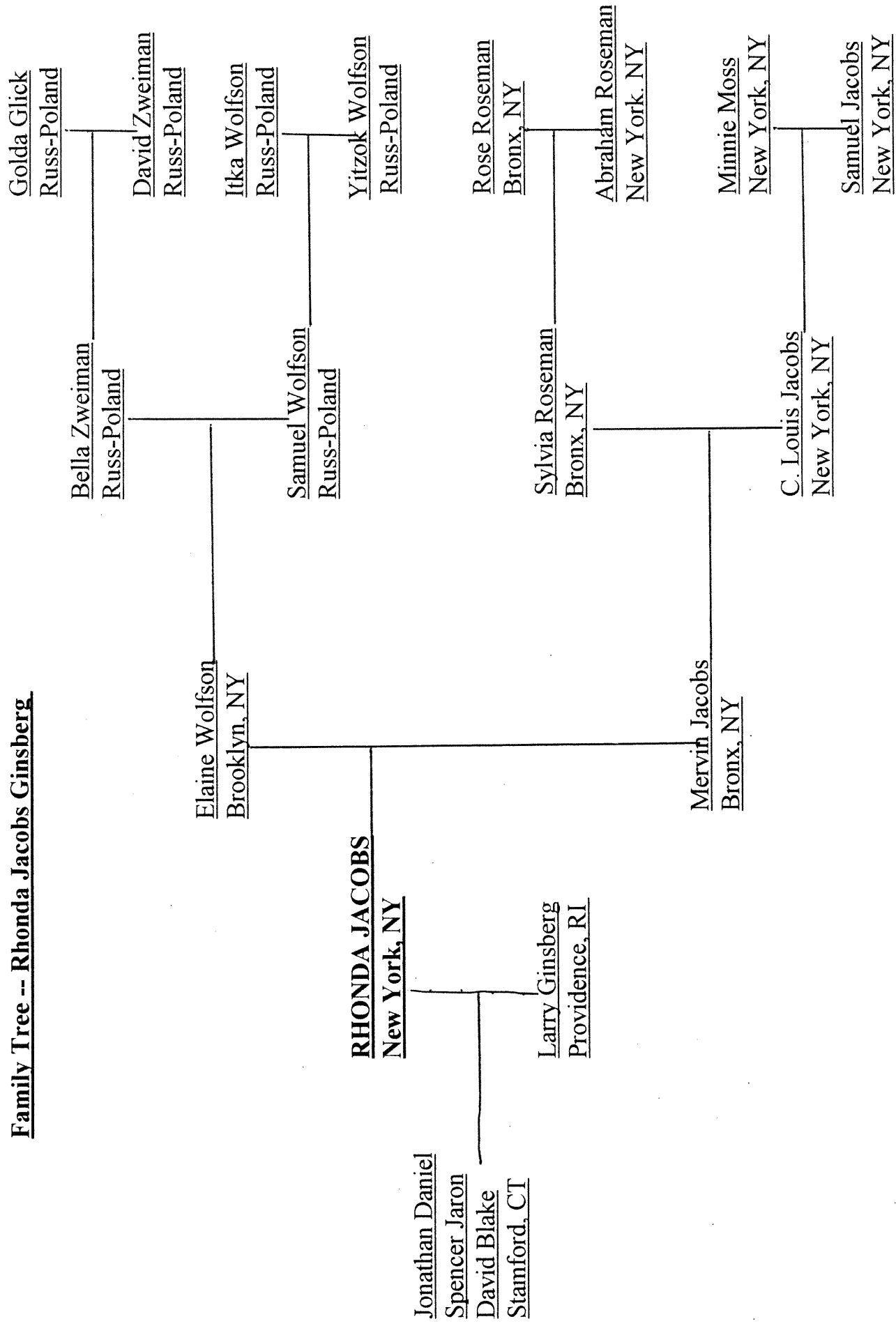
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<sup>1</sup> *The Thread*, by Denise Levertov. Reproduced from *On the Doorposts of Your House* (CCAR Press).

<sup>2</sup> I know that *Bar Mitzvah* isn't supposed to be a verb, but it seems to describe the adult Bar Mitzvah process well.

<sup>3</sup> I found it in *To Pray as a Jew*, by Hayim Halevy Donin.

Family Tree -- Rhonda Jacobs Ginsberg



## Rhonda Ginsberg

Becoming a Bat Mitzvah has long been a dream of mine. Never having gone to Hebrew School as a child, I longed to know more about our people and to understand the service fully. I always attended services, but never really understood them. I started taking Hebrew courses in college, but never seemed to have the right timing or circumstances for the demands of Bat Mitzvah training. Work, children, volunteer work always seemed to get in the way.

About three years ago, I came to the conclusion that no time would ever be completely right, so I vowed to enroll in the next adult Bat Mitzvah class. Convincing my closest friend, with the help of her husband, to take the class made it much easier. Now, none of us could drop out! It has not been easy over the last two years to make the commitment needed to truly learn, but it has been worth it.

I now feel that I can be a fully participating member of our congregation. I can also help my children to perfect their skills. It was very rewarding to be able to help, or at least lend an ear, to Jonathan when he was training to become a Bar Mitzvah. I am looking forward to helping Spencer and David as their time comes closer and am already enjoying helping them with Hebrew School assignments.

I am very happy that so many of you could be here today to join me in this celebration. Thank you for coming. I also want to thank my family for helping me attain this goal, especially Larry for taking over with the boys so I could attend classes and study. And a special thank you to Hazzan Rabinowitz for all his Hebrew and singing help. You really worked miracles with my voice!



Dear Rhonda,

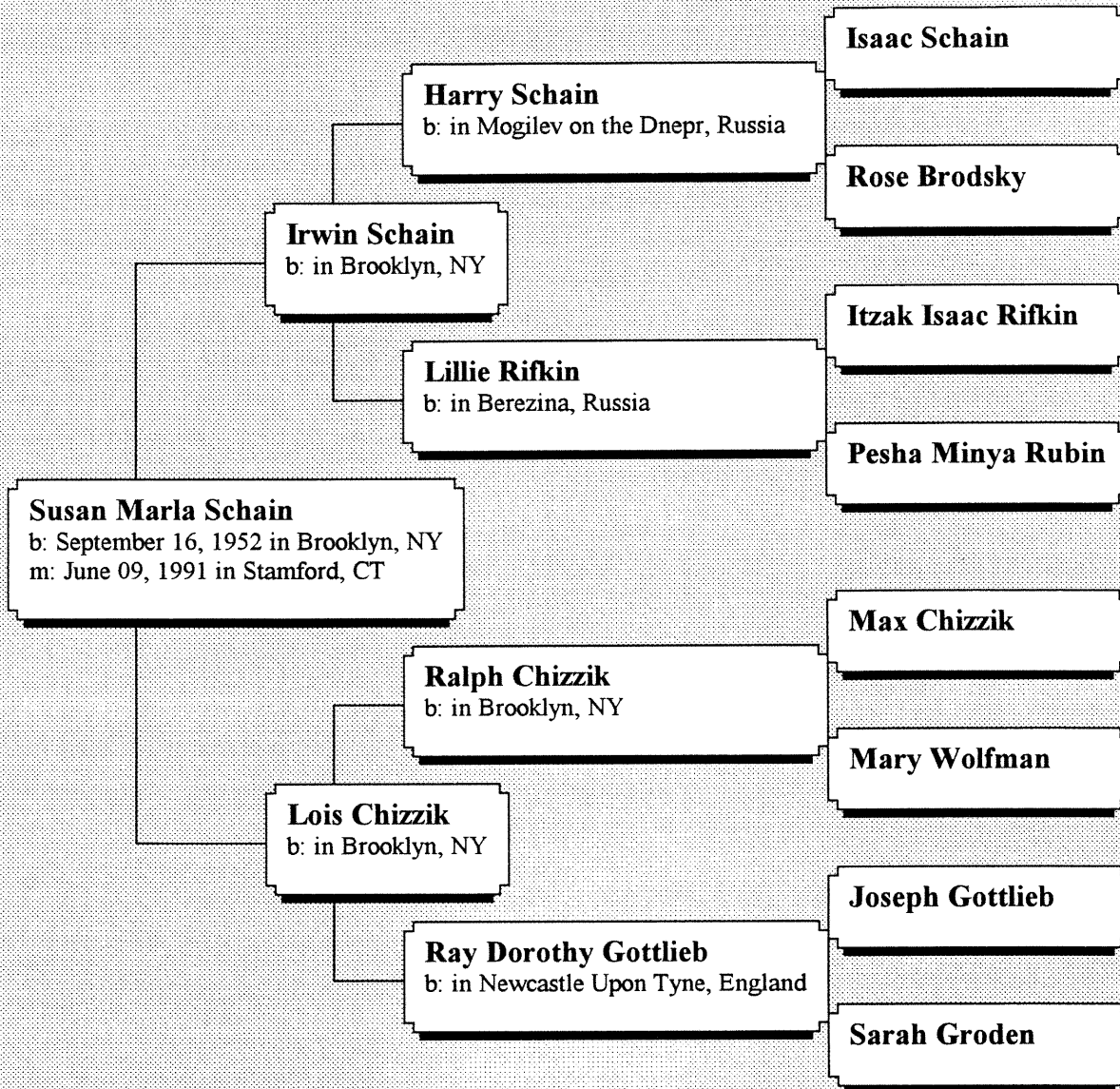
Has it been two years already! I remember those starry eyes (six pointed), when you told me that you were actually going through with your Bat Mitzvah. It seems like only yesterday, though your perseverance through Jon's Bar Mitzvah, Israel, swim committee, children's sports and schooling, Hadassah, and your other Jewish community activities will make this event special in the annals of the Ginsberg Family. If anyone deserves a special moment in Judaism, you, with your religious fervor and abiding sense of family, religion, country, and Israel, warrant it. I will always relish the memories of our Israel trip and the insights your B'nai Mitzvah studies afforded the family.

Your Bat Mitzvah will not be a culmination of your search for Jewish identity, but merely another stepping stone to your voracious search for Jewish knowledge and values. You are one person who truly walks in the path of righteousness and charity. I know that you will continue with your Jewish studies and lend inspiration to your family, your congregation, your community, and your world.

On a lighter note, the boys and I are looking forward to having you home on an occasional Wednesday evening. (or maybe not, we've all bonded)

All my love -- Larry

## *Family Tree for Susan Clarke*



### Susan's Children are:

Ari Jason Tannenbaum, b: August 21, 1977

Jared Ross Tannenbaum, b: March 10, 1980

Joelle Michal Tannenbaum, b: August 29, 1983



## Susan M. Clarke

Why am I here? How could I let my husband learn to be a Bar Mitzvah when I, born into Judaism, had never experienced being a Bat Mitzvah. As I watched Martin learn about our traditions, I felt compelled to accompany him. How easy Temple Beth El made it for us, by customizing a class for me, my husband and my best friend. We made more friends in class as we struggled to conquer reading Hebrew to Hazzan's perfection. The tunes that somehow started out strange and foreign are now ours.

My background from Queens was that of a Jewish family, reform in many ways, living in a neighborhood that had only an orthodox shul. I remember eating an apple and chocolate bar on Sukkot, waving a flag on Simchat Torah, spinning a dreidle and getting a present on the first day of Hanukah, groggers on Purim, and our egg, onion and salt water soup on Passover. I always had a new dress for the High Holy days.

It wasn't until my friend Janet's mother insisted on her going (and taking me) to the reform Temple Emanuel in Elmhurst, and joining their youth group (LIFTY) that my love of Judaism grew. I learned some Hebrew. I was a Marshal in the Israeli day parade. We demonstrated for Soviet Jewry. I went to conclave and camp in upstate New York, Ohio, Massachusetts and Wisconsin. I learned lots of Israeli songs. My favorite song is by Hannah Senesh:

Oh Lord, my G-d,  
We pray that these things never end:  
the sand and the sea,  
the rush of the waters,  
the crash of the heavens,  
the prayers of man.

אל אלהי,  
שלא יגמר לעולם-  
החול וזהם,  
רשרוש של המים,  
ברק השמים,  
תפילת האדם.

I learned what the Reform movement in the 1960's required for a minimum service and then I became "worship chairman" of my group. The "ruach" that they taught me lay dormant until awakened by BiCultural Day School. My children attended for only 9 years each, but I attended for 15 years. The children's songs during the Passover seder were moving, joyous and memorable. What a great example to show my new husband!

This year, Martin and I had the greatest experience in Israel with BiCultural's adult tour, organized by Mr. S. Seeing the Western Wall, and the tunnel along the base of the ancient temple, was awe inspiring. The trip made the Torah come to life.

When Martin had his heart attack in August, we had our recent trip to sustain us. We had our renewed faith that everything would come out for the best. When Rabbi Hammerman asked Martin how he felt about his heart attack, Martin said that he felt lucky to be given a warning and to still be here with us. His first task once he got home was to go with me to Temple on Shabbat to feel the serenity of the service and to give thanks.

Thank you all for sharing our day.

## **D'var Torah Vayigash: Family Relationships**

**by Rhonda Ginsberg**

This week's portion, Vayigash, is the climax of the Joseph story and the next to the last portion in Genesis. In previous weeks, we learned about Joseph's life as the favored son of Jacob. His half-brothers became more and more jealous of him and of Jacob's treatment of him. His dream that they will all bow down to him also did not help to endear him to his brothers. These factors and the character of his brothers led to them selling Joseph into slavery and leading their father, Jacob, into believing that Joseph was dead. We learnt of Joseph's life as a slave and his rise to power in Egypt, through his gift of prophecy, his intelligence, and much luck.

In parallel, the fate of his family and the hardships they encountered, especially due to famine were also related. Eventually, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt in search of food. They unknowingly met Joseph, who is now second to Pharaoh in power. He recognized them, accused them of spying, jailed them and then forced them to return to Canaan for their younger brother, Benjamin, Joseph's only full brother. Through trickery, Benjamin was caught with a stolen silver goblet in his sack and Joseph demanded that Benjamin alone must remain in Egypt as his slave.

Thus we start this week's portion. Judah takes on the responsibility of Benjamin's fate. He pleads for Benjamin, and indirectly for his father's life, in one of the most eloquent and impassioned soliloquies in the entire Torah. Joseph is visibly moved by Judah's plea. He also realizes that his brother has changed, and he reveals himself to his brothers. At first they do not believe him, but he finally convinces them.

Joseph sends his brothers back to Canaan to bring Jacob and his entire family, the 70 names listed as the Jewish people at this time, to Egypt to live and survive the famine. Joseph and Jacob are reunited. Then Pharaoh welcomes Jacob and his family, and allows them to settle in Goshen as shepherds.

In studying this portion, we found several prevailing themes. The concepts of Divine destiny, Jewish pride while living in the Diaspora, Forgiving and rebuilding trust, Pluralism and Family relationships were the most compelling major themes of this portion. The theme of family and how various family members relate to each other is a major component of the Joseph story, and actually of all of Genesis. How our founding Fathers related to their families, especially their fathers and brothers played a major role in our History. These relationships comprise most of the stories in Genesis.

The title of this week's portion, Vayigash, means and he draws near. This is a very appropriate title for this portion and indeed can be a very effective means of ensuring good relationships with family or reestablishing a strained family relationship. During his plea on behalf of Benjamin, Judah draws near to Joseph. Joseph draws near to his brothers when he reveals himself, and indeed the entire Jewish people draw near and reunite with Joseph in Egypt.

Sibling rivalry is a major issue in the Joseph story. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son for several reasons. The first was the fact that he was Rachel's first born and Rachel was Jacob's favorite. Also, Joseph was said to be very intelligent and very handsome, even as a child. He also had a strong personality and despite some youthful pranks, he absorbed Jacob's teachings and thrived on them. It was Jacob's moral teachings that helped Joseph to survive in Egypt. His half-brothers hated Joseph due to this preferential treatment. Their hatred and jealousy was fed by Joseph's dream that they would all bow down to him and worship him, regardless of the fact that he was their younger brother. This hatred led to their selling Joseph into slavery. They chose to deal with the problem of their jealousy by getting rid of the cause of their jealousy. Rather than trying to find a way of dealing with the issues and perhaps finding a solution to the problem. Perhaps a simple talk with Jacob about the favoritism would have worked wonders.

But the brothers learned from this error. When Benjamin's freedom is threatened by Joseph, Judah pleads on his behalf. One of his most compelling arguments is that Jacob would not be able to survive the loss of another of Rachel's sons. Judah acknowledges that Benjamin is now the favorite son, but now he can handle this. He thinks of his father's welfare, not a convenient way to deal with any jealousy this might have caused him. Later, when the brothers are confronted with a similar situation when Joseph gives Benjamin a larger portion of supplies and money, the brothers do not complain and do not display any jealousy. Another son of Rachel is being favored, this time by his brother, but the effect is not the same. Joseph has again tested his brothers and this time they have passed. They learned from their mistakes and this time they achieve survival for their families, reconciliation with their brother, and the satisfaction of making their father's last years happy.

Father -- son relationships are also a major part of the Joseph story. Jacob's favoritism of Joseph was the major catalyst for the brothers' actions. Jacob's treatment of his other sons and their treatment of him also played a role in the story. Reuben, as the first-born son should have received the most privileges from Jacob. But, Reuben, through his actions and his character loses parts of his birthright to other brothers. Joseph, Judah and Levi all receive portions of his birthright. It is believed that Judah regained his birthright and even more due to his plea on behalf of Benjamin. Judah had learned from his mistakes and grown as a morally responsible person.

Many of these stories parallel Jacob's own dealings with his father, Isaac and his brother, Esau. Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, while Rebecca favored Jacob. She prevailed upon Isaac to favor Jacob due to his superior morality and intelligence. Jacob used trickery to steal Esau's birthright, but it was his later character that caused him to retain it.

Isaac allowed and encouraged sibling rivalry between his two sons. Jacob learned at an early age to have hatred and envy for his brother, not affection or respect. Was he then to blame when his own sons showed only hatred and envy for Joseph, Jacob's favorite? Jacob did favor Joseph and gave many privileges to him, the younger son, just as Jacob had been given. Was this the parenting method that Jacob had learned and then passed on to his own sons?

Jacob, the deceiver in his youth, is deceived by his own sons. He is so used to deception, that he does not know the truth. Did Jacob not suspect his own sons in Joseph's purported death? Did Jacob doubt their story? Jacob so filled with hatred for Esau in his youth should have recognized the signs in his own sons of their feelings for Joseph. Considering his own feelings of jealousy over Isaac's relationship with Esau, he should have recognized the same feelings in his sons. He could have avoided more bad feelings by not showing such favoritism of Joseph.

Joseph lived in power in Egypt for many years. During that time period he never made any effort to contact his family. He never tried to let Jacob know that he was indeed alive. Why did he continue to let his father suffer? One explanation for why Joseph did not contact his family could be that he was angry at his father for not intervening and stopping his brothers' jealousy before it had gone too far. Another is that Joseph selfishly believed that his father could not have actually survived the shock of his supposed death. This could be a reason for his famous question in the portion -- "Does my father still live." He has already heard many pleas about his father by his brothers to try to resolve their problems. Why else would he now ask about his father after he had just revealed his identity?

As parents, we know how hard it is to prevent sibling rivalry. Children will always have differences, whether actual or perceived. One will always seem to be brighter, more attractive, better behaved, or whatever other character trait. As parents it is our responsibility to teach our children to get along as loving sisters and brothers. This is not always easy. As humans we bring our own preferences into our relationships with our children. Can any parent ever be completely honest and unbiased in their dealings with their children? Unless you only have one child, can any parent ever be completely fair and even-handed with all children, at all times? Neither Isaac nor Jacob could do this. Each caused many family problems through their dealings with their different children. We can only hope to learn from their mistakes and do a better job in raising our own children. This is one of the many messages of this portion and the entire Joseph story.

## D'Var Torah Vayigash: Diaspora

By Gail Weiner Korval

Another theme of this portion, is brought out in Chapter 36, verse 34 where we are informed that "All shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians" Yet this portion shows Joseph carefully preparing his brothers before they speak to Pharaoh and he wants to make certain that they mention their profession--shepherds. Is this because he wants to convey to Pharaoh that they are willing to do this unpopular task . can be useful to the Pharaoh and like Joseph are to be trusted? It is after this that the family is invited to settle in Egypt in the border province of Goshen.

Like many immigrants to this country and Jewish new experiences in host nations, Joseph and his family are willing to take on unpopular work, and show pride in their heritage and duties.

Some consider Joseph's family's life in Egypt "the first Diaspora" Was this an attempt to keep them together, living beside the Egyptians, but not with them? The philosopher Bachya states that by herding sheep in an isolated area the Israelites could maintain their distinct identity and not assimilate into a culture that worshipped sheep, as did the Palestines.

Joseph is somewhat a paradox in all of this. He had an Egyptian name, Egyptian wife, and Egyptian children. Yet here he shows a great desire to keep his heritage separate from the Egyptian culture by helping to settle his family in Goshen.

Many of us as American Jews face this struggle. We attempt to attain a balance between the goal to maintain our heritage, pass it on to our children and yet we desire to be part of the country we are living. I feel the conflict each week. I want to further my commitment to my Jewish heritage and attend services regularly . Yet, I also recognize my work obligations, and my children's needs to participate in community activities, all of which seems to conflict with Sabbath services.

Joseph's plan to have his family settle in Goshen as shepherds may show a recognition of the struggles Jews in the Diaspora face.

## D'var Torah – Deception, Forgiveness and Trust

By Kathryn Cooperman

We are beginning to see that the story of Joseph and his brothers has many important lessons. One that I have chosen to focus on is the process of forgiveness and rebuilding a trust that has been broken. We can see from the story that Joseph initially did not trust his brothers and tested them to satisfy himself of their feelings towards the young brother, Benjamin. Benjamin, like Joseph, is the favorite of their father. Joseph tests them with the deception of placing the “stolen” goods in his sack. The harsh punishment elicits an impassioned plea from Judah to spare the life of the young Benjamin. “Take me instead of Benjamin. For I have guaranteed his life to my father. I have promised to bring him back home.” The genuine concern expressed by Judah, was a key element in helping Joseph to see that these brothers, who were so cruel and wicked to him, had changed. They had matured. Accepted their father’s favoritism – even to the point of pledging their lives to guarantee the safe return of the treasured son - Benjamin. It was Judah’s willingness to offer himself as a slave in place of Benjamin, together with his plea for consideration of their father’s feelings that touched Joseph and gave him the confidence and inspiration to open up and reveal himself to his brothers. Torah interpreters have wondered about how these brothers who hated one another could undergo such ‘dramatic’ reconciliation. They had a long history of bitterness and suspicion to repair. Suddenly the man who treated them like spies, arrested them, and jailed them, reveals that he is the brother they sold into slavery. How can they now build trust and faith in one another? How would they be able to overcome the hostility between them? Part of the secret to the success of the reconciliation may stem from the fact that it was a private family matter. Joseph asked everyone in the court to leave so that he might talk to his brothers alone. When trust has been broken between people, energy and effort and true desire on the part of one and ultimately both parties needs to be created for forgiveness to take place and trust rebuilt. Joseph did not fear his brothers at this point. Rabbi Samuel Nachmani claims that Joseph acted with great sensitivity and wisdom. After overhearing his brothers speaking to one another, he knew that they felt very guilty for selling him into slavery. Seeing how much they regretted what they had done to him, and how they feared now for the welfare of both Benjamin and their father, he gained confidence to trust them. He deceived them when they came to the land of Egypt because they had sold him into slavery. He does not initially trust them. He cannot move to the point of forgiveness until he believes they have changed their ways and if given the chance would not repeat their horrible act. Originally his brothers had been immature, jealous of his position with their father, and not totally cognizant of the devastating effect Joseph’s loss would have on their father. They had made a grave mistake, suffered much guilt and sincerely regretted their deed.

Joseph took the first step. He smoothed the way to reconciliation by helping his brothers focus on the big picture. The positive results of selling him into Egyptian slavery. Their actions led to his becoming second in command in Egypt, a position from which he could now save his entire family. Joseph told them: “Now do not feel bad or guilty because you sold me into slavery. It was actually to save life that God sent me ahead of you.”

Joseph spoke to each of them, showing no preference between them and thus convincing them that he bore no grudge toward any one of them. He assured them that they were safe in his house and that he would make sure that they returned unharmed to their father. It's as if he were answering all the questions that must have been in their mind as they came to recognize and understand that this Prince of Egypt was truly their long lost brother. Saying things that would calm their fears and help them to trust him. He has the power and ability to determine their fate. He uses it to rebuild the bridge of trust between them that had been broken. He goes even further and comforts them by promising to save them from famine by settling them safely in Goshen. Joseph even pledged to them that he would never tell Jacob that they had sold him into slavery. It was to be their secret, not something he used against them.

How many times have we done something, or said something in a cruel or harsh way, to a loved one, dear friend or co-worker. How many times do we walk all over, or virtually trample another's feelings or take advantage. We suffer guilt the moment the words are out of our mouth. We regret the incident. We are truly sorry. Yet it can often be difficult to take the next step, to reach out and ask for forgiveness. Be open, honest, talk about why it happened. Share the moment.. reveal your feelings. Try to forget any pain that person may have caused you. Create an honest dialogue. Look for the 'Big Picture' benefits. For example, if someone angrily reveals his or her discontent with you, the very, best positive spin you can put on this is that that anger allows you to "see" that there is a problem. If that same person keeps their feelings hidden, the resentment, discontent and perhaps misplaced feelings of deception may ruin a wonderful friendship, break up a marriage or cause deep, tears in the fabric of family relationships. Overtures of forgiveness should sing like a sweet melody between friends and family. These melodies will breath life and strength, harmony and rhythm into the living halo of trust that surrounds and our relationships. Even though forgiveness and reconciliation are difficult and challenging melodies, if we can learn to listen to them and sing them in our hearts, our lives can be enriched with the beautiful music of peace and harmony, friendship and love.

## D'var Torah: Pluralism

by Susan M. Clarke

Judah, speaking for his brothers, pleads with Joseph for compassion. He steps forward and offers himself as a slave instead of Benjamin. Judah's speech penetrates Joseph's soul with the passion of the argument. The midrash teaches that the other brothers shrank away as Joseph and Judah confronted one another. They sensed that this was a confrontation, not merely between two strong men, but between two philosophies.

On one hand, Judah could trust his passions, knowing that they would not only protect him from adversity, but would actually guide him to fulfill his role in the unfolding of the Divine Plan, of which he nevertheless remained innocent. On the other hand, Joseph was able to foresee the future from his youth, with those dreams that got him into such trouble when he told them to his brothers and parents, but could never get there directly. Judah is the Lion, Joseph the Ox. Judah is the anarchist, the person who is lead by faith; Joseph is the legalist, and is bound by halachah.

Ultimately, both men triumphed, for Joseph and Judah and the ideas they represent remain integral parts of the Jewish people. They could each be different and yet they respected each others differences. Our world today could use this as an example.

The attempt by some in the Israeli Orthodox community to define who can convert to Judaism, and the effort by some in the U.S. Orthodox community to declare that all other branches of Judaism aren't really practicing Judaism at all, is deeply unsettling to me. I found an article by Rabbi Danny Goldman, entitled "Who is a Jew" that really expresses my opinion:

*Some Orthodox see themselves as the sole possessors of the truth. But throughout history, we see that those who believe that they have the only truth usually do not promote unity and connection, but rather the destruction of ties between people. ... They hope to blackmail the [rest of the] Jewish people into accepting their path on the assumption that ... our Jewish path isn't very serious and doesn't really matter to us very much. But that is a deeply mistaken view. ... There are many of us who are not willing to accept a view that claims that because we follow fewer of the traditional hallachic laws then [they do], we are less committed or less serious.*

Many of our ancestors eagerly fled the constraints of the "old country". Women breathed more freely in the United States. Before long, they were ready to challenge past practices upheld by traditionally constituted male authorities. The rise to prominence of Jewish Conservatism parallels the growth of the women's movement.

Let change come from as many sources as in the past! Let the openness of American society and the voluntary character of its religious life stimulate Jewish imaginations and energize Jewish wills. Perhaps what is really being attacked here is the universalism declaring men and women equal; the radical changes that allow me to wear a Tallit and be on the Bimah today.

I can only hope that the beauty and meaning of Judaism, and the lessons of Judah and Joseph, will bring an end to this obsession with exclusivity. We need to work together to stop building ever-higher barriers to participation and to face common problems. Jerusalem should be for all Jews!



## D'var Torah: Destiny and Haftarah Introduction

by Martin Clarke

Just after Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, he tells them four times that G-d was responsible for bringing him there instead of them:

*And now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for G-d did send me before you to preserve life. ... And G-d sent me before you to give you a remnant on the earth, and to save you alive for a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but G-d; ... Hasten ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him: Thus saith thy son Joseph: G-d hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not.*

The text makes no direct statements as to how G-d accomplished this. In fact, the entire story of Joseph is conspicuously lacking in any mention of G-d. There are, however, a few clues:

- First, Joseph's flair with dreams, initially fueling dislike between him and his brothers, and later providing him with the skills to get out of prison and begin his rise to power in Egypt.
- Next, the coincidences of the timely arrival of merchants and traders who removed Joseph from the pit and took him to Egypt.
- And finally - as Rabbi Lawrence Kushner pointed out here last year - the entire story of Joseph hangs on a conversation overheard by an unnamed man (or angel), for Joseph didn't find his brothers in Shechem, where his father Jacob originally sent him on his fateful journey:

*And a certain man found him, and ... the man asked him ... 'What seekest thou?' And he said 'I seek my brethren. Tell me ... where they are feeding the flock'. And the man said '... I heard them say: Let us go to Dothan'. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them [there].*

Was Joseph thinking of these events? Maybe, and maybe not. But his conclusion stands, especially in light of what we know now, for without their descent into Egypt and settlement in the isolated area of Goshen, the Israelites would not have grown into a separate and populous people. And without their enslavement in Egypt, there would have been no Exodus. And without the Exodus, they would never have received the Torah at Mount Sinai ...

The Torah contains many incidents where G-d's involvement isn't actually stated, but monumental consequences ensue. For example, if Laban had been more honest, Jacob might only have had four sons instead of twelve, and Judah and Levi - our ancestors, and in Levi's case the ancestor of Moses - would never have existed. So what are we to make of all this? Does destiny - or G-d - play a part in everyone's lives? According to Rabbi Lawrence Kushner:

*Before we begin our journey, we are one with all Creation. Once life begins, we find ourselves discrete, individuated, autonomous. And after the journey ends, G-d gets the last word: "Welcome". With some luck, we get glimmers of the great unity even during our lifetime. We realize that our life - and everything else - has all been part of the divine organism all along, that things are turning out "just the way G-d intends".*

*That is not to say that G-d is running the world like some overextended, occasionally under-performing puppeteer, depriving us of our freedom or moral responsibility. G-d is simply within all of it. And when we become aware of this, as we do during moments of great meaning or insight, it is as if G-d were the one who unites (and therefore runs) everything. Questions of free will and determinism become meaningless.*

Jewish teachers throughout history have been well aware of these issues. According to Rabbi Akiva in Pirkei Avot: *Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given.* Rabbi Zaddok HaKohen of Lublin taught that: *The first premise of faith is to believe with perfect faith that there is no such thing as happenstance ... Every detail, small or great [is] from the Holy One.*

I leave the final word - and my statement of hope for the future - to another strong influence in my life. In the words of Leonard Nimoy as Captain Spock in the movie Star Trek VI - The Undiscovered Country: *You must have faith ... that the universe will unfold as it should.*



The haftarah for Vayigash is from the prophecies of Ezekiel, who lived in the early sixth century, B.C.E.

One hundred and fifty years earlier, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been conquered by the Assyrians and the 10 tribes living there had been dispersed and lost. Now, the Babylonians have conquered the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroyed the first Temple, and exiled the remaining tribes to Babylon.

Speaking to the exiles in Babylon, Ezekiel uses the image of holding two sticks together as one - a parallel to the reunion of Joseph and his brothers in today's sidra - to forecast the return of the tribes of both kingdoms to the land of Israel, to live there as one people:

*Thus saith the Lord G-d: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations ... and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall ... [not] defile themselves any more with their idols ... nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them ... and will cleanse them ... and ... they shall [follow My] ordinances, and observe My statutes ... My dwelling-place ... shall be over them; and I will be their G-d, and they shall be My people.*

As we know today, history did not bear out the prophet's hope. Only the tribes from the Southern Kingdom returned to Eretz Yisrael, and we are known today as Jews because we trace our ancestry to Judah. Despite the literal failure of Ezekiel's prophecy, it's spiritual promise remains: the unity of B'nai Yisrael in a return to G-d and in faithful performance of G-d's mitzvot.

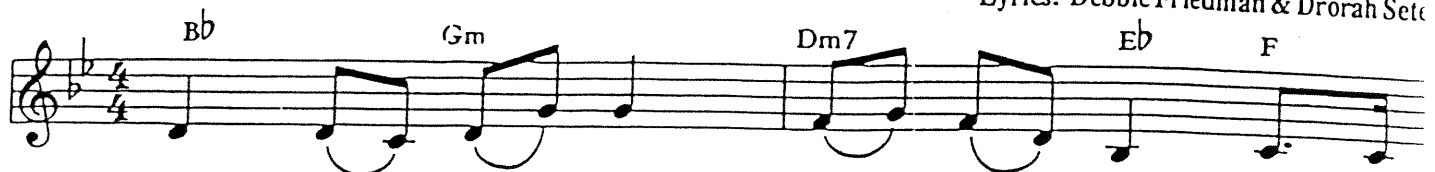


**Primary Sources:** Pentateuch & Haftorahs - Dr J. H. Hertz  
Invisible Lines of Connection - Lawrence Kushner  
The Haftarah Commentary - W. G. Plaut

# MI SHEBEIRACH

*Andante*

Music and Lyrics: Debbie Friedman  
Lyrics: Debbie Friedman & Drorah Setel



Mi she - bei - rach a - vo - tei - nu, m' -



kor ha - bra - cha l' - i - mo - tei - nu



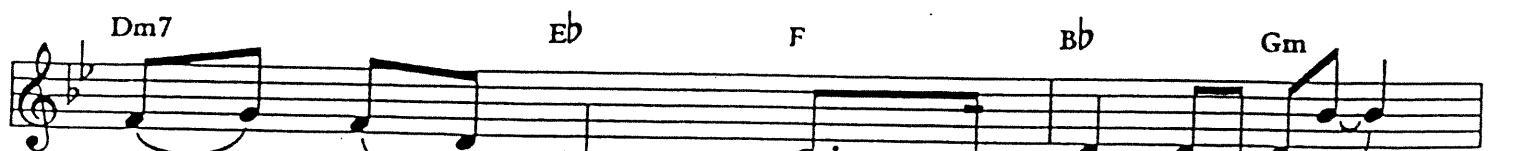
May the source of strength who blessed the ones be - fore us



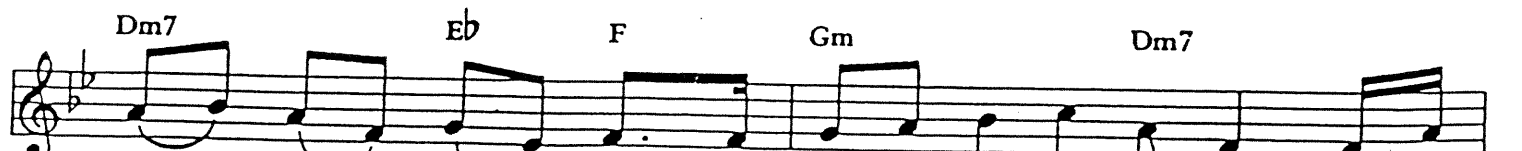
help us find the cour - age to make our lives a bless - ing and



let us say, a - men Mi she - bei - rach



i - mo - tei - nu, m' - kor ha - bra - cha



l'a - vo - tei - nu Bless those in need of heal - ing with r' -



fu - a sh' - lei - ma the re - new - al of bo - dy the re -




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מי שִׁבְּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
 מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לְאֹמוֹתֵינוּ  
 מי שִׁבְּרַךְ אֲמוֹתֵינוּ  
 מְקוֹר הַבְּרָכָה לְאֹבוֹתֵינוּ

*Mi she-bei-rach a-vo-tei-nu*  
*M'kor ha-bra-cha l'i-mo-tei-nu*  
 May the source of strength  
 Who blessed the ones before us  
 Help us find the courage  
 To make our lives a blessing  
 And let us say, Amen

*Mi she-bei-rach i-mo-tei-nu*  
*M'kor ha-bra-cha l'a-vo-tei-nu*  
 Bless those in need of healing  
 With *r'fu-a sh'lei-ma*  
 The renewal of body  
 The renewal of spirit  
 And let us say, Amen

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