

The Synagogue Journal

1856-2006

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Shabbat Rosh Hashanah

View the Contents of Issue 38 at www.kanestreet.org/historical_journal.html

Issue 38

Rosh Hashanah

In this issue ...

The journal looks at ways the congregation and individuals have prepared for the High Holy Days and observed Rosh Hashanah. Archives refer to "S'lichos" services held at midnight on the Saturday before Rosh Hashanah; announcements illustrate how tickets were sold; records show the assignment of seats and aliyahs, and preparations made to ready the sanctuary for the holiday prayer books and white vestments; Joseph Goldfarb describes the establishment where clergy purchased new liturgical vestments

Brooklyn Eagle articles inform readers about how Baith Israel observed Rosh Hashanah during the nineteenth century. An article of 1875 compares services at six Brooklyn synagogues. The 1878 item makes observations on the differences between the "Reform" and "Orthodox" Jews. The texts of sermons by Rabbi E.M.Meyers and Rabbi Marcus Friedlander reflect the preaching styles of two Baith Israel rabbis and the concerns of the years 1879 and 1892. The Eagle reported that services in 1879 lasted from ten to noon - considerably shorter than Kane Street Synagogue's current practice. During the renovation of the Goldman Educational Center a long-locked safe was opened, and among the treasures found was a daily prayer book from 1893. This book "Praises of God, Daily Prayers of the Israelites, has sections for all the festivals and holidays. Apparently, at that time the congregation did not use a special prayer book for the high holidays as we do now.

"Kane Street Memoir" by Rabbi Ray Scheindlin, the synagogue's Ba'al Mussaf, conveys the spirit of this synagogue as the congregation grew during the past thirty years. Beth Steinberg complements Ray's memoir with "Melodic Inspirations," a discussion about the voices who have shaped High Holiday music at the synagogue, including the De Rossi Singers. In "Sound the Great Shofar," Barbara Zahler-Gringer profiles our shofar blower Rena Schklowsky. Carol Levin writes about the congregation's tradition to walk together from the synagogue to Fulton Ferry landing for Tashlich, and the story behind how she wrote the children's book "A Rosh Hashanah Walk." Fred Terna discusses recent S'licot evening programs held before the midnight penitential services.

For many in the congregation today, the most memorable Rosh Hashanah was five years ago; In 2001 Rosh Hashanah came just a few days after 9/11. The journal features this historic sermon by Rabbi Samuel Weintraub, in which he related timeless lessons from our liturgy to the events of the day.

Many thanks to all who contributed articles to this journal; to the keen readers who helped with its editing; to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle Online™, Brooklyn Public Library; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle

L'Shanah Tovah.

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Rosh Hashanah. The Celebration of the Jewish New Year, September 30, 1875. Provides information on holiday observances at Brooklyn's six synagogues.

The Jewish New Year, September 27, 1878. Article specifies differences in the observation of the day between the "Reform" and "Orthodox" Jews.

Rosh Hashana – Celebration of the Hebrew New Year. Services in Synagogue Beth Israel – Sermon by Rabbi Meyer, September 18, 1879, Services lasted from ten to noon. Rabbi Meyer's sermon is printed.

The Jewish New Year, September 8, 1888. Rabbi Friedlander spoke at services about "subscriptions for the building of a new synagogue...and ended his discourse with an appeal in behalf of the Jewish orphans."

Sermons of a New Year, September 22, 1892. "Rabbi Friedlander of Congregation Baith Israel preaches on "The True Sacrifice"

Baith Israel's Prayer book from 1893 "Praises of God" An English and Hebrew prayer book by R. Vulture, published in Budapest in 1893, was found in the safe opened during the renovation of the Goldman Center. We include a page of the book with the following prayers: the "Kiddish for the new-year," "Evening service for the new-year" and "Order of Tashlich."

Seats for the High Holidays 5688 – 1927 Each year announcements are distributed for the sale of seats. This notice included a special appeal to non-members whose children attended the school free, to purchase tickets for the holidays.

Rental of Seats: 5693 – 1932 The Seat Committee held sessions at the synagogue, selling holiday seats for two weeks prior to holidays.

1936 Announcement of Seats The Seat Committee sectioned off seating areas with placards to clarify and expedite the sale of tickets.

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Rabbi Samuel Weintraub offered this sermon a few days after 9/11.

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Cox Sons and Vining, Tailors to the Clergy

Joseph Goldfarb recalls how his father Rabbi Goldfarb prepared for the High Holidays in the 1930s, including the expeditions to purchase liturgical vestments. From a conversation with Joseph on June 6, 2002.

“All the rabbis including the Orthodox rabbis, and the cantors, bearded and unbearded ... you know where they all went for their vestments for the High Holy days? Visiting that place in late August before the High Holy days was like no other market on earth. You’d find all the cantors and all the rabbis at a non-Jewish, a Christian firm called Cox Sons and Vine. They were tailors to the clergy. There would be Catholic priests and bishops and Protestant clergymen of all denominations and Jewish officials too. They were in New York someplace in a nice section in Manhattan. And there was some other store that came up in competition with them, also very anglo-saxon. It’s interesting that with all the interest that the Jews had in the garment trade, they didn’t make the gowns for them.

In those years, a gown would cost two or three hundred dollars. Now it’s usually probably twelve to fifteen hundred dollars. [Gowns were] heavy material, heavy clothing, nicely tailored. Hats with a higher or lower crown, whatever kind you wanted ... designed to order. And a sweatband because you sweat plenty whenever you’re up there functioning. He didn’t get new vestments every year; he went every two three years. He had hatbands that sweated out or dried out and cracked. Sometimes the gown would get lost or worn.”



Kane Street Memoir

by Rabbi Ray Scheindlin

Rabbi Ray Scheindlin is a member of the faculty of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, has served as Kane Street's Rabbi, has led our High Holiday services for many years and continues to be our devoted friend

I never meant to become a rabbi. What I wanted to be—and what I am—was a Hebrew scholar; but in 1961, when I graduated college, the only way to learn to be that was to go to rabbinical school. Being a product of a Conservative synagogue and of Camp Ramah, it was natural for me to go to the Jewish Theological Seminary after college. (How I was to make a living as a Hebrew scholar was something that worried my parents, but not me.) While at JTS, I began a doctoral program at Columbia in a related but better-established academic field—Arabic—which I imagined would qualify me for a university position. But in the course of the 1960s, Jewish studies itself became a recognized academic field, and thanks to my rabbinical school credentials, I was able to get a position in the brand-new Jewish studies program of McGill University.

Five years later, having been invited to join the faculty at JTS, I moved with my young family to Brooklyn Heights, and first entered the Kane Street shul on a Saturday morning in June 1974. At the pulpit was Rabbi Elliot Rosen, whose tenure at Kane Street was due to conclude a couple of weeks later. Scattered among the pews of the imposing sanctuary were a about twenty people: a sprinkling of “immortals”—men and women who, I would learn, had attended the shul since its golden age in the 1930s; a few of the brownstoners who had already initiated the shul’s revival; and the Torah reader, a young man hired to walk from his home in Williamsburg to Cobble Hill each week for this purpose. It was not an altogether encouraging scene, but there was a friendliness and an appealing informality. I felt right at home.

The shul was obviously a struggling operation, and I realized I could save it some money by reading the Torah myself. I began reading the Torah regularly in September, when the new rabbi, Shael Siegel, came onto the scene, and did it nearly every week for about seven years. On the High Holidays of my first year at Kane Street, a hired cantorial student made an appearance; I resolved to save the shul his fee by volunteering to be the cantor for the following year; thus I first “did” the High Holidays at Kane Street in 1975, and have done so ever since. (Being the cantor on the High Holidays permitted me to live out a childhood fantasy, as I have explained elsewhere.) Before long, I found myself serving as a trustee of the congregation and as the “other” member of the cemetery committee, under the committee’s chairman, Julius Kahn. Mr. Kahn, who had been a member of the shul since the 1920s and had been the shul’s treasurer for decades, provided me with a moment of glory at the annual business meeting in the spring of 1976, when, in his treasurer’s report, he declared that the shul was in the black that year thanks solely to my Torah reading and davvening on the High Holidays. (I continued to serve on a volunteer basis until moving to Manhattan in the 1980s.)

Rabbi Siegel was followed by Rabbi Howard Goren, who was likewise in his first rabbinical position, and in 1979, we were again seeking a new rabbi. The congregation was growing, but we were still not large or prosperous enough to support a full-time, full-grown rabbi. As a member of the search committee who was also on the faculty of the institution that provided the candidates, I was able to see for myself the difficulty of filling the position. The idea grew on some members of the committee that since I was a rabbi, was so active in the shul anyway, and already lived in the community, I might be able to do the job on a part-time basis for a few years.

I had serious reservations about this idea. I loved being an active lay member. Moreover, I had never thought of the rabbinate as my career. I had gotten through rabbinical school without taking a single course in homiletics, pastoral psychology, or education, taking exclusively courses on ancient texts and history. And although I loved Jewish rituals and was steeped in Hebrew books, I had always—even as a rabbinical student—been a freethinker, never feeling myself bound by any single established intellectual or religious system. I was and am still in constant internal dialogue with the Jewish religious tradition, but I had trouble imagining how I could guide a congregation in the ways of Judaism when my own beliefs and attitudes were in a constant state of free development and in many ways diverged from accepted canons. Nor, for all my years of Talmud study, did I believe in the authority of halakhah. There were lots of reasons for turning the job down.

But the position offered opportunity, as well—particularly, opportunity to find out whether I could translate my specialized training in Judaica into preaching and teaching that would be suitable for a college-educated laity traditional in its public ritual practices but not, for the most part, committed to traditional doctrines or the consistent observance of traditional religious practices. In most Conservative congregations, the rabbi is the representative of “official” Jewish doctrines and practices to a congregation that expects him to be different from themselves in this regard. I would be in the unusual position of being rabbi to my fellow congregants, my friends and peers, a congregation made up of people like myself in most respects except for my having a more advanced Jewish education. They would not expect me to be anything but myself. That would give me a rare degree of freedom. In exchange, I would have a responsibility: accustomed to teaching ancient and medieval texts for their own sake and to explicating the meaning they had for their ancient and medieval authors and readers, I would have to figure out how to teach Jewish books, ideas, and rituals in such a way as to offer contemporary meaning to my congregants. But what meaning was available to me, a freethinker, to teach? The challenge of figuring that out seemed worthwhile.

On a practical level, I was also apprehensive about subjecting myself to the pressure of adding a part-time position at Kane Street to my full-time position at JTS. The board helped by defining my duties in such a way that I was able to handle them, and individual members were very cooperative throughout my tenure in filling in whenever necessary. My life became more crowded with activity, but I don’t remember being overwhelmed except on rare occasions. The generosity of congregants in volunteering their services to the community—a strong Kane Street tradition to this day—was ultimately what made it possible for me to handle the position, my JTS work, and my family responsibilities.

The small size of the congregation also helped me. Between 1974 and 1979, we had grown considerably, but we were nowhere near our size today. I can measure the growth since then by my memory of the first Rosh Hashanah after I became rabbi. Since I continued to serve as High Holiday cantor throughout my rabbinical tenure, my back was to the congregation during Musaf. When I turned around at the end of the service on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, I was astonished to see the downstairs pews full. I had never seen so many people in the shul before, and I couldn’t help commenting on this when making the final announcements by saying, “Next year in the balcony!” People laughed, for the balcony hadn’t been used in decades; it was still piled with old books, furniture, and boxes of Sunday School song books composed by Rabbi Goldfarb in the 1920s—but of course today, the balcony is not only in full use but is often itself full.

At that time, most of the congregation’s children were quite young, but we were just beginning to have regular bar and bat mitzvahs, which involved me in a certain amount of tutoring. There was a bris or two (where the rabbi is not the principal officiant) and a number of weddings; one of my greatest High Holiday pleasures is the sight of some of the couples I married still attending Kane Street, now with grown children. Rabbi Henry Michelman told me that when he was rabbi, in the 1960s, he was constantly performing funerals, but the generation of brownstoners who dominated in my time was so young that only three funerals came up in my three-year tenure, and one was not even for a congregant but for the father of a nonaffiliated friend. Fortunately, the funeral of the noncongregant was my first—I had to make an emergency phone call to my JTS colleague who taught practical rabbinics for a hasty lesson in funeral practice!—and it prepared me for the other two.

Most of my work consisted of speaking at services on Sabbaths and festivals. My Saturday morning talks—I hesitate to call them sermons because they were so free—gave me much concern. At first, I would isolate myself for on Fridays in my room and doodle notes on a pad, getting nowhere as the hours passed. Eventually, I realized that if I would just read through the week’s Torah reading and brood on it, something would eventually come to me that I could use. My approach came to be to use literary tools on the sacred texts to show what beauty, wisdom, or interest could be observed in them if they were analyzed in their own terms and subjected to the criterion of personal experience. What did not work for me was to try to construct a sermon by expounding a text with a view toward extracting a useful moral. I found I had more success with sermons if I simply allowed myself (and thereby the congregation) to notice what was noteworthy and could have some personal application. I came to see myself as a guide rather than as a preacher.

Once I found my stride, the text of the Torah itself provided me with plenty of material—in the first year. But in the second year, I found myself in danger of repeating myself. For further inspiration, I found myself making my starting point Rashi’s

commentary or the haftarah rather than the Torah text itself. By the third year, I was finding it harder and harder to say anything new. It seemed to me like camping: the first night or two, you find firewood nearby, but then you have to roam farther, and in the end, it can take quite a long walk to find a suitable piece of wood. Sometimes I would draw on other Jewish texts, including the medieval poetry that is my academic specialty, if I could find something in it that was relevant. I even used some non-Jewish literary materials. I remember giving a sermon based on Herman Melville's *Typee*—I no longer remember why. I also remember making it a congregational project one winter to read through Thomas Mann's tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers* simultaneously with the parashot that tell his story, and I based some sermons on that. I saw myself not as the bearer of a specific religious message, but as a resource person, someone who had the Jewish tradition at disposal and whose job was to display it attractively, to encourage the congregation to explore it and to make whatever use of it seemed appropriate to them.

I made it a principle never to tell anyone to do anything—except to learn Hebrew and to study the traditional books. On the one or two occasions when I fell into making an exception to this principle, my voice sounded false to my own ears. Not every congregant was completely happy with this policy; one castigated me for not engaging sufficiently with theological problems, and another for being aloof from political subjects. But I did what I felt I could do best.

My brief rabbinical experience transformed my teaching at JTS, giving me a completely different idea of what and how rabbinical students need to be taught. I began making a clear differentiation between rabbinical school teaching and my graduate school teaching, both as to the contents of the syllabi, my own style of presentation, and the kinds of assignments and testing I required. I continue to argue for this differentiation within my department (the Department of Jewish Literature) and within the institution. As provost of JTS in the mid-eighties, I instituted faculty discussions on the subject, but many of my colleagues remain unconvinced a quarter of a century later.

The pulpit also trained me in a looser, more personal form of presentation than the academic lecture. While this subjectivism is inappropriate as training for graduate students, in rabbinical school classes I am no longer afraid to draw upon my life experience in explicating texts. In teaching my academic subject to rabbinical students, I try to show them by example how these materials can be used with a lay audience, and I hope that some of these techniques rub off on the other subjects that they study while they are with us.

Being rabbi brought me into close contact with many people whom I would otherwise hardly have known and gave me greater insight into the lives of people whom I thought I already knew pretty well. It was also interesting to deal with individuals who were not part of the congregation but who sought out a rabbi for advice or information. It pleased me that in a society replete with professional counselors such as social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists, so many people sought out a clergyman for counseling based simply on his own wits as informed by tradition. Occasionally, I did find a traditional perspective helpful in such counseling, but many cases made me wish I had taken those pastoral psychology courses when I was a rabbinical student, and I referred them to the appropriate professionals.

I certainly enjoyed being the rabbi of the Kane Street shul, but being the ex-rabbi also has its satisfactions. Returning year after year on the High Holidays, I enjoy seeing how the congregation has flourished, making contact again with many people with whose lives my own crossed during my tenure, and catching up with old friends. I am saddened to note the losses—of old-timers, who were our link with the congregation's past and the pre-immigration history of our community; of younger people who have passed away too soon; and of people who, like me, have left the community, but who, in my memory, are still part of its fabric. At the same time, I am heartened to see so many people I don't know or whom I know only by sight; these are the people who have joined the community in the years since I left it, the living evidence of the congregation's vigor and hope for the future. I hope to retain a connection with that future in the years to come.



Sound the Great Shofar

by Barbara Zahler-Gringer

Barbara and her family have been members of Kane Street for twenty-four years.

Like most traditions in Judaism, there are many reasons offered for the sounding of the shofar. For those sitting in the congregation on the High Holy Days, it can be a remembrance of the sacrifice made by Abraham in lieu of his son Isaac, an awakening call to repent, or a reminder that G-d is the king of the universe, to name but a few of the explanations often given. So, too, there may be multiple reasons that the Ba'al Teki'ah--the person who blows the shofar--chooses to do so. For Rena Schklowsky, who has been enjoying this honor for over fifteen years at Kane Street, it is a truly spiritual experience, the time "when she feels closest to G-d." It also provides the perfect outlet for her lifelong love of music and childhood dream to play the trumpet. While the road leading Rena to Kane Street and the shofar may have its roots in her childhood, it has been a long and circuitous route.

It's not surprising to learn that Rena was a music major in college, having grown up surrounded by music. Her older sister plays the flute, and her middle sister, the accordion. Rena's instrument is the cello, she has been playing it since she was nine and has performed with various chamber ensembles. However, while serious about the cello, from an early age she always wanted to play trumpet—she gushes that, "Haydn's Trumpet Concerto blew me away." At summer camp, she almost got her wish, as three summers in a row, she was an assistant bugler. She still has that bugle she took to camp and used to call her fellow campers to attention for reveille and Taps. Certainly sounds like the perfect warm-up for her present gig.

While music clearly is her first love, during her thirty-four year teaching career, most of that time was devoted to teaching subjects other than music. She has taught at almost every level, from early childhood through eighth grade and beyond, and the subjects have run the gamut, from language arts, to science, to Latin, and to physics and computers. Along the way, she earned a music license and briefly taught music at what was then known as the High School of Music and Art.

Rena grew up in an observant, Conservative household and attended the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, in Manhattan, an egalitarian congregation. She studied for her bat mitzvah with her mother. While a teenager, Rena participated in services, but as a young adult, found herself moving away from religion. While she was drifting away, the rest of her family, both her sisters and her parents, renewed their religious commitment by all eventually making Aliyah.

Rena visited Israel for the first time in 1968 and purchased her first shofar there, in Mea Sherim. At the time Rena bought this shofar, she didn't realize that the mouthpiece had a crack and therefore was considered to be non-Kosher. She is convinced that the shopkeeper in this ultra-Orthodox area only consented to sell to a woman knowing of the defect. Fortunately, she has since purchased additional shofars, all in Israel, that are Kosher.

It wasn't until 1979, when Rena's older son, Pablo, was born, that her own religious ties began to reawaken as she realized that she wanted her son not only to be Jewish, but to know what it meant positively to be a Jew. A search for the right synagogue finally led her to Kane Street. Feeling comfortable here, she began attending services on a regular basis, became active in the religious school and the Synagogue Board, and once again became observant. She soon found herself leading youth services.

As Rena became more involved with Kane Street, she spent more time thinking about the shofar, while at school, around the High Holidays, she blew the shofar to help explain the ritual to her students. When she heard a young congregant blow the shofar, at a youth service, that convinced her to act. In 1990, she consulted Bob Weinstein, auditioned, and he told her that they would try to fit her in.

Rena describes the magnificent Yemenite shofar that she uses nowadays as the "Stradivarius" of shofars. But those of us who have been moved by each haunting *tekiah*, *shevarim* and *teru'ah* know that no matter how fine the instrument, it is the very soul of the Ba'al Teki'ah that we are actually hearing. And, Rena is the real thing.

When Rena was asked if her father, who died several years ago, had ever heard her blow shofar on the High Holidays, she became teary-eyed and silent for a moment. She then readily conceded that it had been "amazing" to play for him. So, while it may be that little girl who wanted to play the trumpet up on the *bimah*, it is really much more. Rena admits that she is "doing it for that 'Higher power,'" as well as for "family, Father and all who have gone before." Rena also feels strongly that she is part of a continuum, and though none of us is ready to have her pass the torch, the teacher in Rena is seeking that special someone for whom she can serve as mentor and pass on the gift. *Yashir Koach*.



Rosh Hashanah Sermon 2001

Rabbi Samuel Weintraub offered this sermon a few days after 9/11.

Dear friends,

Generally, we spend the week before Rosh Hashanah studying *Hilchot Teshuva*, laws of repentance. But this past week, once we heard of the four disasters, I started to learn other things: I learned that the steel girders of at least the upper floors were not reinforced with concrete so that the building would be light and sway, give a little. I learned that steel melts at 1500 degrees Fahrenheit. I learned that when bodies are in rubble the renal system collapses and exudes harmful toxins threatening those who would seek to rescue. I learned that the Red Cross Headquarters were in the World Trade Center. I didn't know any of this before. But I also know that I end *K'riat Sh'am* twice daily in my prayers with *Hashe Elokeichem Emet*. *Emet*, G-d is the G-d of truth. We worship a G-d who so values truth that one of His Names is Truth.

And I decided that if I was to stand before you this Rosh Hashanah and preach, it would have to be with absolutely recognition of the horrible, horrible truth, which is before us.

First of course, I got very busy, researching the status of Congregants, counseling, organizing prayer services, directing volunteers, arranging Synagogue security with police, organizing support for parents and young children, keeping up with some of the myriad High Holiday details, preparing our teachers for the feelings of their students. And then the last two or three days, I went back to those texts on *Teshuva*. They have such a wholesome view of life, of our relationship to G-d and to each other. They speak not very much of vengeance or justice. They speak of tender compassion. They assume optimistically that people are soft, malleable and desirous of improvement. Over and over they insist not on G-d's severity, but on G-d's loving kindness. The passages about *Teshuva* are some of the beautiful and comforting in the entire Talmud. Come and listen to Midrash on Psalm 122. ... The essential call is always to bring back, to save, to restore, to forgive. How can I understand this optimism now that thousands lie crushed and lifeless.

The Rabbinic writings about *Teshuva* assume normal social conditions. But they also recognize that catastrophes are precipices to *Teshuva*. Indeed, it is the sad state of our nature that tragedies can help us to look very deeply inside and clarify our values, strengthen our *Yetzer Hov*, (good, generous inclination) and return to G-d. One of the first steps, preconditions of *Teshuva* according to Maimonides is a sense of *Charatah*, a deep set visceral sense of disquiet, an overpowering realization that my behavior and our world is askew in a very fundamental way. Catastrophes force this introspection.

I am not G-d forbid saying that there can be any rationalization for this unbelievable tragedy which occurred to all of us, but especially now, some five to six thousand families last week. I am saying that we have a tradition that can help us to find meaning even in horror. And a G-d who stands with us *B'et Tzrah*. Even in the narrow, sorrowful, constricted times. So let us return for guidance to the teachings of *Teshuva* even this year. One aspect of *Teshuva* is that it does not deal in small change. It asserts the possibility of basic change. The Rabbis felt that *Teshuva G'mura* complete repentance was so powerful that it could set the moral clock back. It could turn even the most destructive behavior to kindness and repair. They compared this transformation to a lethal arrow which is shot, but then returns to its quiver free of all suspicion. But to affect this *Teshuva*, we have to set aside the most normal option that which we exercise daily, and that is denial.

If this tragedy has made us more keenly aware of what is truly valuable in our lives, let us put aside now whatever rationalizations stand in our way and move ahead. If we have been moved by the outpouring of *Chesed*, altruism by the residents of our city, let us decide now to make that volunteerism, acts of *Tikkun Olam*, worldly repair, part of our daily, and Synagogue life. If we have felt now in our bones the terror and isolation of living under siege, let us decide now to visit Israel as soon as possible, and let them know that we understand that this is a time when they sorely needs us, not just our dollar, our sympathy or political influence, but *Gufeni*, our bodies, our presence. If we have had the experience this past week of looking our normal enemies in the eye, understanding how futile our normal conflicts are, then let us resolve this year to put aside the struggle over assets, over status, over old insults, and as Yiddish lovingly puts it, *fargin*. Open up, give space, understand that our hearts and minds are capable of infinitely greater love and patience than we normally assume. Every argument need not be zero-sum. We do not need to be wed to conflict. If this tragedy has brought us to the Synagogue, to G-d, to prayer then let us remember that *Sheera Tefilah*, the gates of prayer, are open 24/7 and make this year a year when we truly learn what it is to care for and love each other here and build this precious community.

If our hearts have opened to the experience of being displaced, desperate, let us decide now to feed and heal the hundreds of thousands of people in this city who live daily without shelter, without proper nutrition, scared and vulnerable. If the fight against terrorism must mean war, then let us keep sight first of the moral equation, and not imperil the human life and values which the terrorists seek to destroy. And if it means war, then let us not imagine short, precise strikes which will be neatly closed in a matter of weeks. Let us be ready for sacrifice of our peace of mind, our time, our assets, and G-d forbid even our lives.

The Rabbis in their writings on *Teshuva*, actually speak in terms of a battle, although thank G-d it is a nonviolent battle that goes on everyday in the heart and soul of human beings. They imagined a battle between what they called the *Yetzer Hatov*, the good inclination, that which drives a person outward, selflessly, and the *Yetzer Hara*, the evil selfish inclination, which was often characterized by the aggressive need to aggrandize oneself and dominate others.

This past week, we heard the voice of aggression and violence, and it was often deafening. But we have also heard the voice of compassion and tenderness. There have been many times this past week when I have seen in the action of many of you seated before me today such *Rachmunis*, such tender care for G-d's creation, that you managed to cover the horrible cloud of smoke and hate. This coming year, we will need each other every day, to sustain that voice of *chesed*, of altruism, and kindness so that we and our children can live in a world which is sane and eventually safe. That is our challenge as we look ahead.

And I want to return to the texts on *Teshuva*, because therein is a very smart strategy which the Rabbis laid out, for strengthening, the *Yetzer Hatov* in its endless battle with the *Yetzer Harah*...

We have seen over the past week wonderful assertions of our common humanity here in New York. The events have produced millions of acts of courage and generosity. We have donated blood, sheltered the displaced, counseled children and revived rescuer workers. There is healing which is occurring already through the resonating invisible lines of connection linking us together as human beings and seeker of the divine. In relation to the magnitude of the *Churban*, this immolation, I know that we feel helpless. We will never bring those who were murdered back to life. But doing *Mitzvot* will give us the power to affirm the life that we still have, and ultimately to redeem the world. We are now in a very dark world. There is destruction hanging over everyone's head. We have known fear and pain and loss. But that is not all there is.

When I was a child, I prayed to G-d to spare me from all the pains that I dreaded. Now I see that that is the prayer of a child. As I man I do not pray for a life without pain. Instead I pray *Hahsem Mkor Ch'ahcayim, Baal Hracham* O G-d source of life, master of mercy. I know that there is pain in life. I know that we suffer sadness and loss. Give us the strength this year, to overcome despondency, to create life together with those whom we love. Then our loss will not be empty, our pain will not be purposeless. Remind us that we are not alone, that you have a stake in our lives and in our freedom. *Zechreinu L'chaim Melech chatz*. Remember us so that we may live, You Our Sovereign who delights in life. Inscribe us in the book of life, for your sake, G-d of Life.

Amen



Subjects of S'lichot remarks

by Frederick Terna

Fred has taught adult education at the synagogue for many years. His focus is Jewish thought and the challenges of moral freedom. Issue 16 of this Journal features his art and writings on the Holocaust.

Because of the late hour of S'lichot the community developed the tradition of a brief program and refreshments before entering the sanctuary.

Over a number of years I was given the privilege of speaking on that occasion. It was up to me to pick a subject, and the choice was an easy one. In earlier years I would bring my two projectors and show slides of Art in Jewish Life that seemed appropriate. Eventually I tired of dragging the two projectors, and decided to speak about matters that were on my mind.

These were some of these past topics: Forgiveness, Ethical Wills, Theodicy, Fundamentalism, and Self-Awareness. My aim was a brief introduction that would lead to a discussion. The subject of the 9:30 PM S'lichot program this year was Rituals.



A Rosh Hashanah Walk

by Carol Levin

Carol Levin, a Kane Street Synagogue Trustee, is the editor of this journal. She has been documenting the congregation's history since 2001.

Rabbi Howard Goren's announcement about Tashlich on Rosh Hashanah in 1976 was the first time that I had heard of the custom. This symbolic washing away of ones sins and asking for forgiveness, wasn't my family's practice, and there had been no mention of the ritual at the New Jersey temple where I was confirmed. I listened with interest. After the long morning sitting in services, the thought of the glimmering East River seemed appealing. The rabbi said they would start at four from the synagogue, but folks could join the group at any point along the route -- down Clinton Street, past the park, down Old Fulton Street to the pier under the Brooklyn Bridge. My husband and I lived close to the pier and planned to meet the group there.

Jack and I got to the water's edge before the Kane Street contingent. There was a surprising number of familiar faces at the pier, but no one we knew. Willow Street neighbors introduced themselves and wished us a Happy New Year. I looked around and saw another couple from the block, standing by the railing, flinging crackers into the water. We watched the floating squares bob and swirl. The pier was surprisingly crowded with darting children and dog-walkers, and many, many breadcrumb flingers. It felt like this was the-in-place-to-be. The Kane Street group arrived in stages. For some, it was a healthy twenty-block hike. The rabbi distributed copies of the prayers and we stood in a jagged circle reciting them together. Then the casting and atoning began, adults and children alike, each casting and atoning in their own style. Jack and I divvied-up the stale bread between us. My first toss and admission seemed artificial; the next tosses less awkward. I twisted off one piece after another, until there was none. .

Fast forward to the early 1980's ... Our son Daniel was in kitah alef in Prozdor and Naomi still a toddler. In those years, the parents of the kids organized the holiday programs. Some read holiday books; my shifts featured puppet shows and storytelling. For that first Rosh Hashanah, I adapted the old ditty "let's go on a bear hunt" to "let's go on a Tashlich trip." We made a great circle in the old Belth Room on the second floor, some sitting on the floor and others on chairs. Slapping the floor or our laps, we went fast and slow on our route to the water. We remembered times we were bad and times we were sorry. I was amazed to hear what the kids volunteered: the specific things that they did wrong, and the "I'm sorries" that followed. After several Rosh Hashanah seasons, the raucous sing-song "Let's go on a Tashlich trip" turned into a children's book, "A Rosh Hashanah Walk." Kar-Ben Copies, Inc. Rockville, MD, published the book in 1987. With illustrations by Katherine Janus Kahn that show a group of children wending their way to "our" pier under the Brooklyn Bridge. The New York City skyline includes the World Trade Center towers. The book is dedicated to: "Daniel and Naomi and the children of Kane Street."

In the years since "A Rosh Hashanah Walk" was written, I've heard many personal accounts about Tashlich memories. Brooklyn is blessed with many great spots to cast away ones sins. Joseph Goldfarb and Belle Goldfarb Lehrman recalled that the Goldfarb children always looked forward to their walks. Joseph said, "My father didn't practice the Tashlich custom. It was something that the kids did in the afternoon. I remember there were some years that my sisters and I went to Prospect Park with a picnic. It was a nice way to spend the afternoon." Belle remembered sitting on the Brooklyn Bridge for Tashlich. "That was a special date to walk across the bridge and back."



About the Journal ...

The Synagogue Journal, a one-year online publication designed to highlight prominent individuals and events during the Kane Street Synagogue congregation's past 150 years

We welcome submissions of reminiscences, letters and photographs to help shape the BIAE story for Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes. For a list of upcoming Journal themes or to read past issues, see "Archives" located under the Journal banner

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