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Appologies for any typos;
no time to proof this month.
Regrets from your Editor.

URJ Biennial Closes with Audacious Agenda for Reform Movement

Youth engagement, partnerships, inclusion, Israel-Diaspora relations and religious pluralism were key themes

December 16, 2013, San Diego, CA -- The Union for Reform Judaism's 72nd Biennial conference concluded today in San Diego after five days of intensive learning, praying and community-building. Over the course of the Biennial, attendees engaged in important conversations about Israel engagement, the challenges facing the advancement of women, worship innovations, managing congregations, and much more.

In his keynote address to the Biennial, URJ President Rabbi Jacobs discussed the power of practicing audacious hospitality, inclusion and outreach; new youth engagement initiatives; the importance of social justice; intensified Israel-Diaspora relations; and perseverance of our efforts for religious pluralism in Israel. He challenged the nearly 5,000 Jewish leaders in attendance to look to the future with confidence "to build a more vibrant, richer Jewish life for our people and communities." He implored the gathering "to articulate an audacious vision of the way the world can become."

Audacity was indeed the word of the week with several bold new initiatives unveiled for congregations including one focused on inclusion, in partnership with the Ruderman Family Foundation and another focused on Israel, with the Shalom Hartman Institute.

Rabbi Jacobs also unveiled bold plans for youth engagement, beginning with outreach to families with young children through a new, robust project with PJ Library, supported by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and several new endeavors to engage children and teens including:

Integrating, expanding and deepening all youth programs -- including 14 overnight camps, NFTY, and Israel initiatives -- into year-round offerings with on-ramps for all teens, including those whose families are not members of URJ congregations.

Expanding NFTY, the Reform youth movement, to include 6th, 7th and 8th graders, partnering with congregations to build a vital bridge to post-b'nai mitzvah involvement. [Continued on page 4](#)



Saturday morning Torah service
- 5,000 strong!

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From Rabbi Louis



We have just finished the Book of Bereishit (Genesis) and started the book of Shemot (Exodus). At the end of Bereishit we (the Hebrews or the Children of Israel, not yet Jews) were in the ascendant in Egypt. Joseph was second in command of the whole country and had come up with a plan to survive seven years of famine. We were safely living in a special part of the country and protected by Joseph's power.

How quickly things change! "There arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph". There were too many of us. Maybe we would join with their enemies and overthrow them. There was resentment (justified, in my opinion) of how Joseph's policies had made many people landless and indebted to the state. In no time at all we were made slaves for hundreds of years until finally released at great cost to the Egyptians and to ourselves.

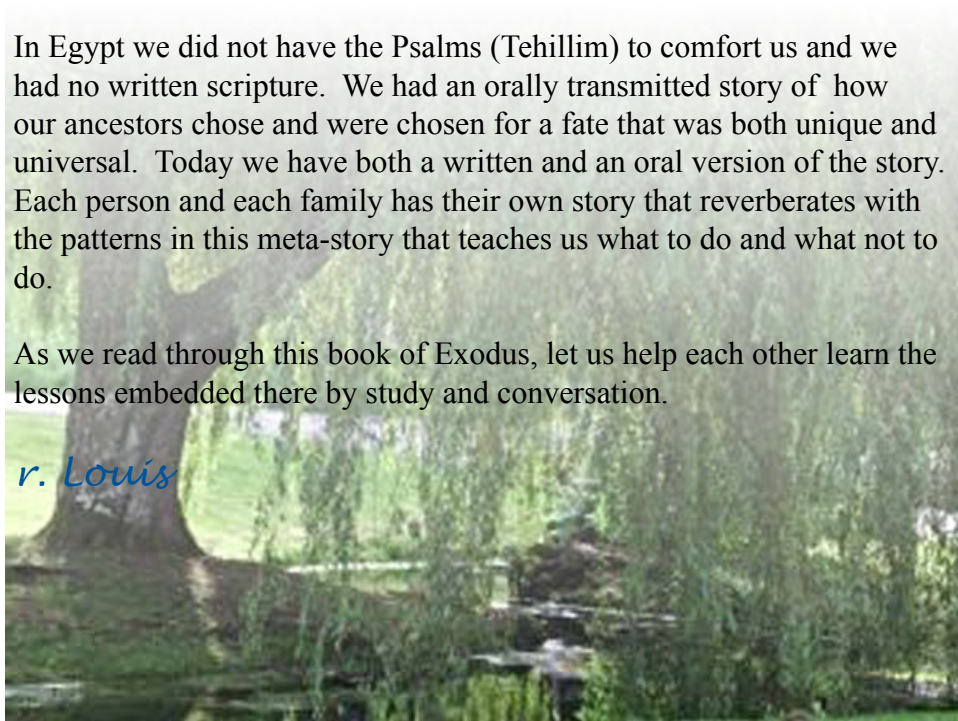
Torah teaches us how to live our lives. Torah teaches us that our lives, our triumphs and tragedies, have precedents in the stories of our people.

Torah teaches us how to survive the tragedies and deal with gratitude and kindness with the triumphs. It teaches us not to exploit others and to share our wealth. It teaches us to continue to hope when surrounded by despair and tragedy and to appreciate what we have.

In Egypt we did not have the Psalms (Tehillim) to comfort us and we had no written scripture. We had an orally transmitted story of how our ancestors chose and were chosen for a fate that was both unique and universal. Today we have both a written and an oral version of the story. Each person and each family has their own story that reverberates with the patterns in this meta-story that teaches us what to do and what not to do.

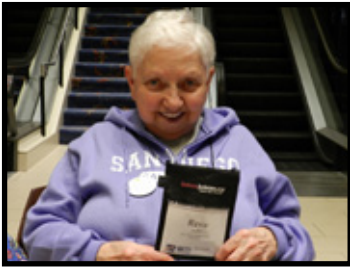
As we read through this book of Exodus, let us help each other learn the lessons embedded there by study and conversation.

r. Louis



President's Message

Shalom Temple family,



It is with sadness that I begin this message with how sad I am at the passing of my friend, Arline Parrish, Rennie's mom. On behalf of the Board and the congregation, I extend our sincere condolences to Rennie and his family, and Alec.

I returned from the Biennial last night, renewed and excited about being our President. I have discovered that we are not the smallest congregation, that each of us counts, and that being in the presence of five thousand Reform Jews is a mind-expanding experience. I cannot

say that our movement is dead or dying, but rather that it is growing and very dynamic. Rabbi Rick Jacobs is the most inspiring speaker, and the prayer services were beyond amazing. Listening to five thousand Jews say the Sh'ma with one voice literally gave me goosebumps.

Israeli Prime Minister, Netanyahu, gave his address via live streaming satellite. Both he and Rabbi Rick Jacobs used the expression, "we should practice audacious hospitality," and that became the catch phrase of the Biennial. *Audacious hospitality!* Netanyahu's talk was inspirational and tinged with humour. *Am Yisroel Chai!*

The Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) celebrated one hundred years. There are not enough words to tell you of their accomplishments. Anat Hoffman, President of IRAC (Israel Religious Action Centre), was at the Biennial where she gave an afternoon seminar, and was awarded the Jane Evans Pursuit of Justice Award by the WRJ. In her acceptance remarks, she said, in part, "I am standing on the shoulders of our incredible institutions, and of the generosity of IRAC supporters over the years. I am standing on the shoulders of women and men who care about Israel about Judaism, and about equality. I felt this throughout the Biennial."

There were other milestones celebrated such as the 75th anniversary of NIFTY, workshops to attend, connections to be made, early mornings and late nights. Now that I am at home, I will let all this settle into my bones, my heart. I will say more in my subsequent messages, but for now, I will end with *hazak hazak v'nitchazek*, from strength to strength.

Our Tzedakah box stands ready to receive your bounty. This is one of the mitzvot that is easy to fulfill. Bring a little something every week; the hungry will be thankful. If we each bring something, it becomes a sizeable donation.

We have recently enjoyed Onegs sponsored by the Marks/Blakely family, and Rennie & Alec. you, too, can sponsor an Oneg. Bring your friends and family to celebrate your event. If they are unaffiliated, this would be a good introduction to the *audacious hospitality* and warmth of Kolot Mayim. You provide the food; we provide the drink, and Rennie's beautiful china helps make this a classy event!

Kolot Mayim-at-Home events are meant to be small gatherings in our homes where we can share ideas, music, films, whatever – depending upon your interests. Finger food and beverages are all that need to be served. This is another way to introduce some of your friends and family to our audacious and welcoming hospitality. *You can't lose when you schmooze!*

Julie and I have returned with things to share, so keep your eyes and ears open for announcements. Remember to check our Website and our Facebook page. The Jewish Federation Website is where you will find the entire community's happenings as well.

Until next time, *Reva*

[URJ Biennial, Continued from page 1.](#) Launching URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy, the URJ's 14th overnight camp, opening this summer outside Boston.

He added that "an essential piece of rebooting this system will be to attract, train, and retain a new generation of well-educated, innovative youth professionals. Rabbi Jacobs thanked the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Marcus Foundation, the Crown Family Philanthropies, for their partnership and support in the URJ's youth engagement efforts.

Rabbi Jacobs also announced a new partnership between the URJ and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institutes of Religion (HUC-JIR). "So much of our shared future is in forging new leadership. We will be moving many of our New York-based URJ youth professional's downtown to the first floor of HUC's Greenwich Village campus. The visionaries of our new youth strategy are going to interface every day with HUC's students, faculty, and administrators on all three North American campuses."

Israel-Diaspora relations was a frequent topic of discussion throughout the Biennial. Rabbi Jacobs said: "We don't speak as supplicants but rather as partners, in this redemptive, revitalizing project of the Jewish people. The bonds that link Israel and the Diaspora are mutually strengthening, and must grow even deeper. We will not stop and we will not be stopped."

The bonds between Israel and the Diaspora were underscored when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the plenum this morning via satellite from Jerusalem saying, ""While the Wall may be in Israel," he said, "it belongs to all of you, it belongs to you and to all the Jewish people, and I am committed to making sure that all Jews feel at home in our holiest site."

Prime Minister Netanyahu applauded Rabbi Jacobs for his role in advocating for equality at the Kotel, which he said "is about what Israel has always stood for and what it will always stand for, that Israel is and must continue to be the homeland of the entire Jewish people. That's the place where all Jews, including Reform Jews, experience nothing less than 'audacious hospitality'."

Earlier in the week, Rabbi Jacobs expressed that the Kotel was only the beginning of the fight for religious pluralism in Israel. "The Kotel is symbolically important," he said, "but our appetite for pluralism and religious freedom extends way beyond those ancient stones. The time is long overdue for equality to reign throughout the State of Israel. Because of our deep love for, and commitment to, the ideals of the Jewish State, we insist on equality not just at the Western Wall, but also in rabbinical courts, under the bridal canopy, at funerals, in conversions, in the founding and funding of our congregations," he continued to applause.

For her efforts in fighting for religious pluralism and women's rights in Israel, Israel Religious Action Center Executive Director and Women of the Wall Chairwoman Anat Hoffman was awarded on Saturday night with the Women for Reform Judaism's Jane Evans Social Justice Award.

Delegates also heard from U.S. Vice President Joe Biden through a video message. Vice President Biden embraced the Reform Movement's focus on important issues such as immigration reform, gun control, and disability rights.

Vice President Biden also underscored the Obama Administration's commitment to Israel and stated, "No U.S. president has done more for Israel than President Obama." In a reference to President Obama's shout-out to NFTY during his 2011 Biennial address, Biden opened the video saying that "President Obama asked specifically for NFTY." [Continued on page 5.](#)

[URJ Biennial, Continued from page 4.](#) Throughout the week, delegates shared ideas with one another and heard from experts in a variety of fields to think of bold, new ways to address the challenges and opportunities facing the Reform Movement. Rabbi Jacobs encouraged the body to be audacious in addressing the future of the Jewish people. "I say to you at this beginning of a new chapter of Jewish life: hazak hazak v'nitchazek. Be strong, be strong, and let us all strengthen each other. Look to the future with confidence for ours is an awesome agenda."

In the midst of the "awesome and audacious" Biennial agenda, the 5,000 participants came together to celebrate Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Beginning Friday evening, the tenor of the Biennial changed to one of renewal and sacred worship. A Friday night service and song session, brought attendees to their feet in jubilant prayer, song and dance. The Saturday morning service, led by Rabbi Rick Jacobs and Rabbi/Cantor Angela Buchdahl of Central Synagogue in New York City, and featuring a commentary on the week's Torah portion from retiring HUC-JIR President Rabbi David Ellenson, was more interactive than past Biennials. Congregants were able to approach any of 13 platforms around the plenary hall to read aliyot (blessings over the Torah) and delegates stood in their seats to perform moving prayer as instructed by dancer, choreographer and URJ Faculty Member Liz Lerman.

"It was an incredible week," said Rabbi Jacobs. "I hope the delegates and those who participated at home by watching streaming videos or by interacting on social media feel as invigorated by this conference as I do. I come away from this Biennial feeling more certain than ever before that great things are in store for our Movement"

[For more information and to see video highlights and photos, visit the Biennial website.](#) Comments left on this website are monitored. By posting a comment you are in agreement with [Terms](#)

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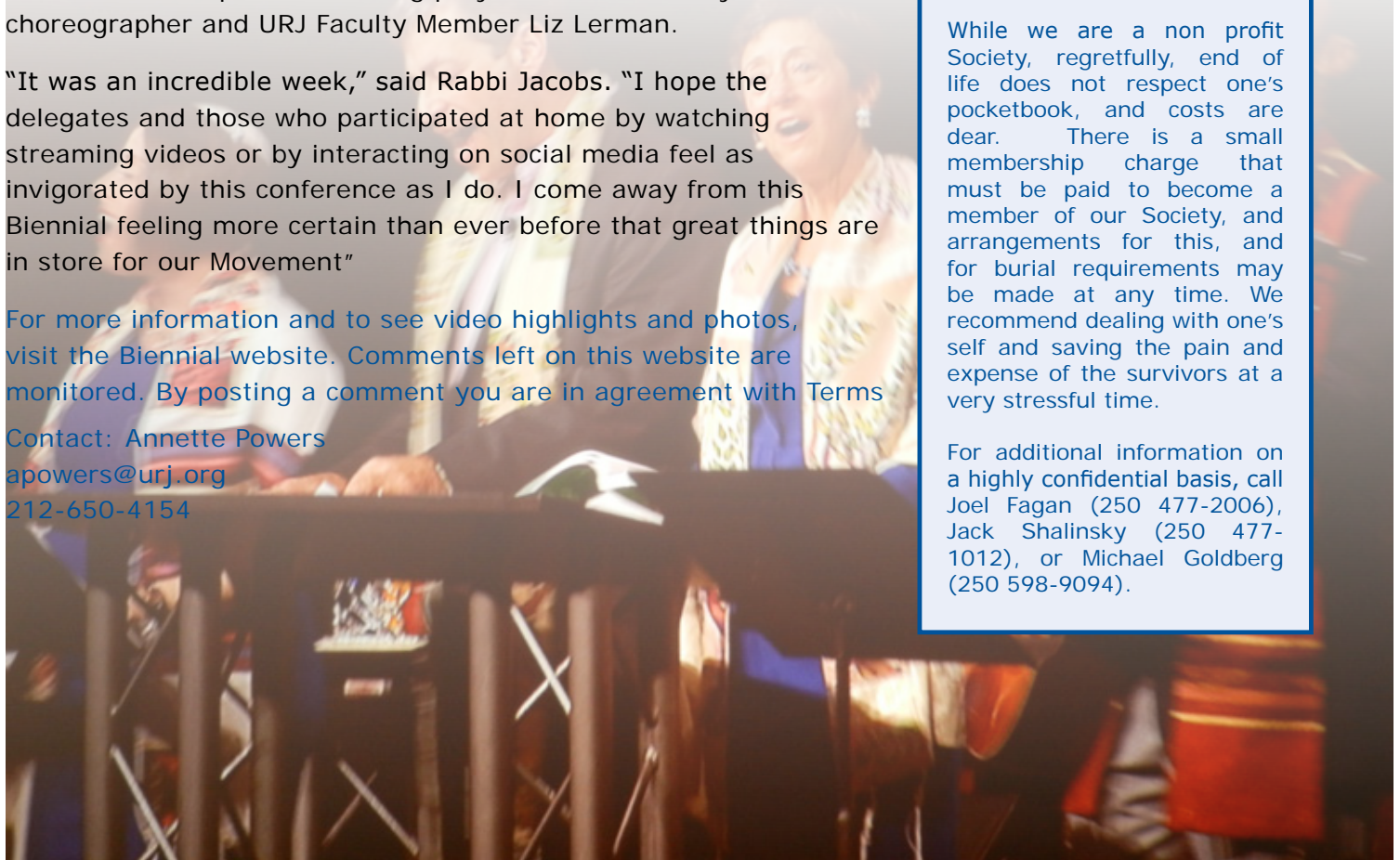
The Victoria and Vancouver Island Jewish Burial Society

The Jewish Burial Society of Victoria and Vancouver Island is a service organization founded to assist all Jews with end of life requirements. We administer four totally separate and distinct sections in the Hatley Memorial Gardens and provide space for all persuasions of Jewish life from orthodox to secular, complete with cremation if specified.

The Society works with the Victoria Chevrah Kadisha in preparation of the body for burial, and works with the family in all ways to ensure that the concern and embrace of the entire community for the bereaved.

While we are a non profit Society, regrettably, end of life does not respect one's pocketbook, and costs are dear. There is a small membership charge that must be paid to become a member of our Society, and arrangements for this, and for burial requirements may be made at any time. We recommend dealing with one's self and saving the pain and expense of the survivors at a very stressful time.

For additional information on a highly confidential basis, call Joel Fagan (250 477-2006), Jack Shalinsky (250 477-1012), or Michael Goldberg (250 598-9094).



*Sincere condolences
to Rennie Parrish and Alec Lewis
on the loss of their mother & mother-in-law
Arline Parish.*

Chai חַי

Kolot Mayim has several funds to which you may earmark your donations. They are: Chai (General Fund), Religious School Fund, Social Action Fund, and Parochet (Ark Curtain) Fund. Undirected donations will go into the Chai.

The following donations have been received since the last Voice.

PAROCHET (ARK CURTAIN) FUND

In memory of Gerry Marks - Arlette baker
In memory of Arline Parrish - Julie Elizabeth & Reva Hutkin
In honour of Rennie & Alec's birthday's - Julie Elizabeth & Reva Hutkin

SOCIAL ACTION FUND

In memory of Gilda Good's nephew- Arlette Baker

CHAI FUND

In memory of Gerry Marks- Susan Halpert

Planting and Parenting: The Lessons of Tu BiSh'vat

By Rabbi Ben David , 2/08/2012

Here is the quintessential Jewish question: How do we emulate God? We are told that we were created by God. We are told that we have a divine spark within us. We are told that each one of us, like God, has the power to create worlds, to perform acts of abounding goodness, to bring greater peace to our world. But how? We emulate God by planting and by parenting.

This week we celebrate Tu BiSh'vat, the new year of the trees, a holiday that the rabbis introduce in the Mishnah as a way to bring us back to nature. After all, this is a time of year when we could easily lose sight of the beauty of nature. The sky is often gray. The days are often short. Tu BiSh'vat reminds us that spring is going to happen after all, the blue sky will come back and flowers will bloom again.

It is a holiday that hinges on hope and possibility. The tree is a symbol of life, belief in the face of doubt, strength amidst uncertainty. The olive tree, referenced frequently in our tradition's literature, endures storm after

storm, the rise and fall of governments, the endless tides of change. If anything it gets taller and stronger with time.

This holiday can be observed as a time to plant, taking the idea of hope and making it real by rolling up our sleeves and contributing to the promise of the future. With the work of our hands we contribute to making a better world. As one midrash reads: "'You shall walk in the ways of the Holy One.' What does this mean? From the beginning of creation the Holy One was occupied only with planting. God first planted the Garden of Eden, and thus so shall you. As you first enter the Promised Land, occupy yourselves only with planting, as it is written: 'And when you come into the land you shall occupy yourself only with the planting of trees.'"

When we roll up our sleeves and touch seed to soil we realize that we can emulate God after all. We see in that moment that to be Jewish is not simply to sit back and expect a beautiful world or a peaceful world or an educated world, but to pick up where God left off.

What if we read planting in a more figurative way? How might we emulate God in parenting and grandparenting? The Talmud notes that as parents, we are required to do the following four things: teach our children Torah, bring our children to the chuppah, teach our children a trade, and teach our children to swim. [Continued on page 7.](#)

[Planting and Parenting, Continued from page 6.](#) First, let's take Torah. Parents are required to teach our children Torah. Closely reading the stories of Biblical heroes yields a crucial life lesson. We are not meant to be Abraham or Rachel or Moses, nor are we to expect our children to be super heroes or superstars. Indeed, the Torah ends by reminding us that never again would there arise another like Moses. The truth is never again will there arise anyone like any of us. Our children are to be their best selves, just as our biblical ancestors had the courage to be themselves in spite of the pressures all around them. With Torah as our guide, we show our children the way to self-esteem and self-respect, a sense of happiness that will be their own, not based on pop stars or all-stars or make-up drenched super models. That's Torah, not only planting seeds of kindness and compassion, but also of self-worth and pride.

We also are told to teach our children a trade. For the rabbis this perhaps meant tailoring or farming. For most of us it means preparing them for the world out there, a world of increasing closed-mindedness and bullying, a world that can be scary, a world led by politicians who sometimes seem to be almost diametrically opposed to every one of our core values. How do we prepare our children for this world?

Teaching a trade is in fact about instilling the sense that, in a world that would pull them in so many directions, our children don't have to cower. They don't have to be perfect or look perfect or go to the perfect college because there is no such thing. They need not trade away their sense of humor or spirit or point of view in order to be accepted. And that leads us to the next mandate, because we must teach that the perfect person for our children, the person to stand beside them at the chuppah, is the person who will recognize and appreciate the sacred and unique perfection that only they possess.

Finally we are told that we are to teach our kids to swim. Swimming is about confidence and independence. To be able to swim is to believe in your own ability. To be able to swim is to recognize, as your parent lets go, as those "floaties" finally come off, your own strength as an individual. You can do this, and you are going to make it. You will endure, just like the olive tree endures trial after trial. To be able to swim is to appreciate those things we so often forget to appreciate, the blessing of movement, breathing, a beating heart, the ability to see and to feel.

The medieval commentator Rashi equated swimming with survival. We need to be able to swim and not only in the water. We need to be able to keep swimming even when our energy is sapped, when life is messy, when the days are long. This we teach through modeling. Parenting can no doubt be the most exhausting job, but it can also be the most rewarding, like swimming a length you did not think you could or attempting a dive you never thought possible. On this Tu BiSh'vat may we recommit to planting seeds of empowerment, confidence, and love in our children and in theirs.

Rabbi Ben David is the associate rabbi of Temple Sinai of Roslyn in Roslyn Heights, NY.
<reformjudaism.org>

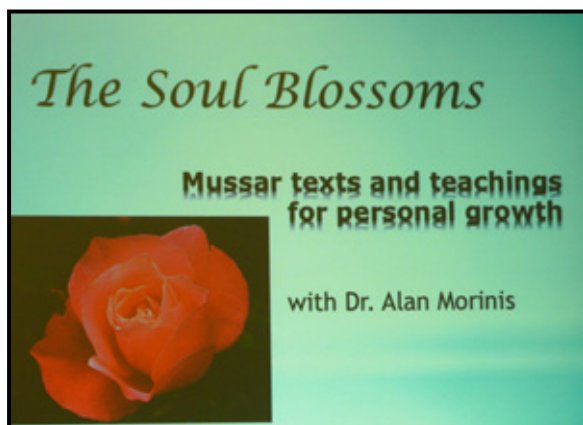
Tzedakah: A way of life. Kolot Mayim Supports Food Bank

Hundreds of people rely on the various food banks in town. Torah tells us to leave the four corners of our fields for those in need; today, this could be translated to mean the 4 corners of our shopping carts!

I urge everyone to bring a little something to Shul on Fridays for our Tzedakah Box. We support two food banks: Jewish Family Services and the James Bay Community Project Food Bank. If everyone brought one can each week, it would go a long way to helping those in need. Thank you for your support.



Canadian and Israeli flags adorn tables at ARZA Canada reception.



A wonderful afternoon seminar Julie attended.

A Taste of Biennial in Pictures



Julie Elizabeth in small group discussion at Leadership in Small Congregations workshop. The gentleman on the left is the President of one of several Seattle Reform congregations.



Rabbi Zoe Klein, Anita Diamant, Maggie Anton, and Moderator (Outgoing WRJ President), Lynn Magid Lazar at Shabbat Lunch and Learn Wromen authors' Seminar.



Rabbi David Fine,
our (Western) URJ
contact person.



One of many wonderful musical offerings.



Rabbi Rick Jacobs and Cantor Angela Buchdahl leading
Saturday's Torah service.



At the Saturday morning Torah service, there were over 5,000 people, and thirteen bimas and Torahs,
where Vayahi was read and enacted!



OBSERVED DATE	CIVIL DATE YEAR OF DEATH	HEBREW DATE YEAR OF DEATH	NAME	RELATIONSHIP	MOURNER
January 1, 2014	January 14, 1964	29 Tevet 5724	Otto Weisz	Father of	Eleanor Mintz
January 1, 2014	January, 1999	Unknown	Paul Thomas	Friend of	Jessi Goss
January 2, 2014	January 2, 1939	11 Tevet 5699	Mac Cohen	Father of	Betty Cohen
January 2, 2014	January 2, 1962	26 Tevet 5722	Alfred Gatland	GrandFather of	Heather Gatland
January 3, 2014	January 10, 1997	2 Sh'vat 5757	Elerine Ashford	Mother of	Murray Ashford
January 3, 2014	January 3, 1993	10 Tevet, 5753	Nathan Kadonoff	Father In Law of	June Kadonoff
January 3, 2014	January 3, 1993	10 Tevet, 5753	Arthur Fischl	Step Father of	Aaron Devor
January 3, 2014	January 3, 1997	24 Tevet 5757	Elizabeth Taylor	Mother of	Doreen Sullivan
January 4, 2014	January 4, 1990	7 Tevet 5750	Betty Tobias	Grandmother of	Lynn Marks
January 6, 2014	January 6, 2000	28 Tevet 5760	David-Francois	Partner of	Julie Elizabeth
January 6, 2014	January 6, 1979	7 Tevet, 5739	Irving Garbell	Father of	Marla Yacowar
January 7, 2014	January 7, 1981	2 Sh'vat 5741	Jack Shubert	GrandFather of	Linda Shubert
January 9, 2014	January 9, 2012		Zavie Miller	Friend of	Reva Hutkin
January 9, 2014	January 9, 2011	4 Sh'vat 5771	Debbie Friedman	Composer to	The Jewish Community
January 10, 2014	January 10, 2003	7 Sh'vat 5763	Sara Zevelking	Friend of	Jessi Goss of
January 11, 2014	January 11, 2006	11 Tevet 5766	Barbara Graff	Aunt of	Karen Schafer
January 11, 2014	January 11, 1971	14 Tevet 5731	David Fagan	Father of	Joel Fagan
January 13, 2014	January 13, 2010	27 Tevet 5770	Cynthia Ryan	Friend of	Arlette Baker
January 13, 2014	January 13, 1992	8 Sh'vat 5752	Ilse Benker	Mother of	Klaus Benker
January 13, 2014	January 13, 1985	20 Tevet 5745	Thomas M. Jardine	Father of	June Kadonoff
January 14, 2014	January 14, 2010	28 Tevet 5770	Duart McLean	Friend of	Rennie Parrish
January 16, 2014	January 16, 2010	1 Sh'vat 5770	Sayre Weinerman	Mother of	Brian Weinerman
January 18, 2014	January 19, 1968	18 Tevet 5728	Ben Jaffe	Father of	Len Jaffe
January 18, 2014	January 18, 2005	8 Sh'vat 5765	Harry Klein	Father of	Saul Klein
January 18, 2014	January 18, 1953	2 Sh'vat 5713	Philip Robert Horowitz	Father of	Isadore Horowitz
January 21, 2014	February 12, 2004	20 Sh'vat 5764	Rose Katz	Friend of	Caroline Hergt

January 2014

Tevet-Shevat 5774

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rabbi Louis will be with us when the squares are white.			1 January 29 Tevet	2 1 Shevat Rosh Chodesh	7:30 pm K. Shabbat Service led by Joel Fagan	Bo 3
5 4	6 5	7 6	8 7	9 8	7:30 pm Service led by Michael Gans	Beshalach 11 10
12 11	13 12	14 13	15 14	16 15	7:30 pm K. Shabbat Service led by Reva & Julie	Yitro 18 15
19 18	20 19	21 20	22 21	23 22 Tu B'Shevat	7:30 pm K. Shabbat Service led by Rabbi Louis	Mishpatim 25 24 4:00 Torah Study
6 25	27 26	28 27	29 28	30 29	7:30 pm K. Shabbat Service led by Joe Gougeon-Ryant Rosh Chodesh	

Anat Hoffman's Biennial Address: "More Than One Way to Be Jewish" December 17, 2013 [Editor's Note: This address was given by Noa Sattath on behalf of Anat Hoffman, director of the Israel Religious Action Center and chairwoman of Women of the Wall, on Saturday night at the URJ Biennial.]

Anat lost her voice. Despite all the remedies and chicken soup suggested by many in this conference, she can't speak. So here is a useful tip from her: If you're destined to lose your voice sometime in the course of a 25-year struggle for equality, don't lose it in the Knesset, don't lose it in a prison cell, don't lose it in the supreme court. Lose it when you're approaching victory, lose it at the 2013 URJ Biennial in San Diego. After flying all over the US, hugging and kissing so many people, a virus succeeded in silencing me tonight. But what a divine coincidence to teach me and all of us that I can be silenced, but everyone here can speak for me.

Everyone here knows there is more than one way to be Jewish. No one here is willing to be ignored on the struggle for this right in Israel. None of us here are willing to give up on the vision of Israel's declaration of independence as a state that ensures, "complete equality of social and political rights irrespective of religion, race, or sex."

Now we are part of a team that is making history, together with Rabbi Rick Jacobs, my brother, whose reason, passion and courage make all of Israel's cabinet ministers look up to him and my colleague and friend Rabbi Gilad Kariv, head of the Reform Movement in Israel, who is blessed by both profound ideology and superb analytic skills, and who is leading the Reform movement to a new era in religious life in Israel. Together we are negotiating a new reality for all of us at the Wall. This is not going to be a slightly cleaned up second-rate area for the misfits. It will be the first time that the Israeli government will offer everybody a real choice at the Kotel. I know Israelis are going to get used to the flavor of choice and they are going to demand freedom of choice in all other areas of religious life, such as marriage, divorce, conversion, and education. Once you have 31 flavors, you can't go back.

For too long, the face and character of Judaism's holiest site has been in the image of one extreme minority, but we are changing that. It is time that Israelis got to know some other faces of Judaism, like that of our very own Rabbi Miri Gold, or that of Ariella Finklestein, our Orthodox, 14-year-old client who personally sued the bus driver who told her to go the back of the bus in Beit Shemesh.

We must plant our values the same way we have planted trees. This will require all of us to get our hands dirty since there is no other way to plant. Our success at the Kotel must become the engine pulling the train of religious pluralism. The next car is the end of gender segregation in Israel and the exclusion of women. We bring you news of great achievements, but we also know that the rights of women in Israel are under attack, and it is falling on us to provide the response. Other cars in the train are freedom of choice in marriage, in conversion, and the full equality and recognition of our rabbis and institutions.

I am standing on the shoulders of our incredible institutions and of the generosity of IRAC supporters over the years. I am standing on the shoulders of women and men who care about Israel, about Judaism, and about equality. I felt this throughout the Biennial. Many asked me what they can do.

First, you have to make a decision. Are you going to wring your hands about Israel or are you going roll up your sleeves and get to work? You can't do both at the same time. Let's roll up our sleeves. **I'm asking you to do four things: Read!** At least once a week read something about Israel that is not about security. **Use** your financial support to create an Israel that reflects your values. **Visit Israel**, and make your visits count. Make time for the Israel Religious Action Center. (Less Roman ruins and more freedom rides.) **Refuse.** Refuse to choose between your liberal values and your commitment to Israel. Let your frustration motivate you to action. Action is our middle name

I want to thank the Women of Reform Judaism, led by their remarkable executive director Rabbi Marla J. Feldman, for their years of friendship, support, and solidarity. I am honored to accept this award with the full awareness that I am propped up on the shoulders of so many you here today. I am literally speechless from all the love you have shown here during this amazing Biennial. Thank you!

Tu B'shvat Living Talmud

While the sage Choni was walking along a road, he

saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked him: "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?"

"Seventy years," replied the man. Choni then asked: "Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered: "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planted for my children." ~Ta'anit 23a

IN ORDER TO SERVE GOD, ONE NEEDS ACCESS TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE BEAUTIES

OF NATURE - MEADOWS FULL OF FLOWERS, MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS, FLOWING RIVERS. FOR ALL THESE ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EVEN THE HOLIEST OF PEOPLE. (RABBI ABRAHAM BEN MAIMONIDES,

"And the apple tree has the fragrance of Garden of Eden and the fragrance of Garden of Eden was that of a field of apples." (Ta'anit 29b)

A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people." ~Franklin Roosevelt



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I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. ~ Dr. Seuss

Shimon bar Yochai taught that "if you are holding a sapling in your hand, and someone says that the Messiah has drawn near, first plant the sapling, and then go and greet the Messiah." (Avot d'Rebbe Natan 31b)

"No shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not yet sent rain upon the earth, and there were no humans to till the soil" (Genesis 2:5).

Rabbi Simon said, "There is no plant without an angel in Heaven tending it and telling it, 'Grow!'" (Genesis Rabba 10:7).

In the time that the Holy One created the first human, he took him to all the trees of Garden Eden and said to him, 'See my works, how lovely and praiseworthy they are, and all that I created, for your sake I created it. Put your mind [to this], that you don't ruin or destroy my world, for if you ruin there is no one who will repair after you.' Kohelet Rabbah on Eccl. 7:13

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit trees yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is on the earth," and it was so. And the earth blossomed with grass, herbs and trees, and God saw that it was good.

~Bereshit 1:9-13

"The trees have borne their fruit, fig tree and vine have yielded their strength. Children of Zion be happy, rejoice in the Lord, your God." (Joel 2:22-23)

"[The Torah compares humans to trees] because, like humans, trees have the power to grow. And as humans have children, so trees bear fruit. And when a human is hurt, cries of pain are heard throughout the world, so when a tree is chopped down, its cries are heard throughout the world." (Rashi)

Wild forests also serve as refuges for the human spirit, places where we can witness the Creator's majesty, reflect upon the mystery of life, and hear the small, still voice within.... Our heritage calls on us to serve as protectors and defenders of God's magnificent creations. (From the CCAR Resolution "Protecting Ancient Forest Ecosystems")

How can a person of flesh and blood follow God? ... God, from the very beginning of creation, was occupied before all else with planting, as it is written, "And first of all [*mi-kedem*, usually translated as "in the East"], the Eternal God planted a Garden in Eden [Genesis 2:8] Therefore ... occupy yourselves first and foremost with planting (*Leviticus Rabbah* 25:3).

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said, three things are of equal importance: earth, humans, and rain. Rabbi Levi ben Hiyyata said: ... to teach that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, the earth cannot endure, and without either, humans cannot exist (*Genesis Rabbah*, 13:3).

We live on a beautiful planet, but the state of its health will be the deciding factor in our own health and longevity. We seem to forget that the earth is a living organism and that when it dies, we die. (Sheryl Crow)