



# Being

# Jewish

ROSH HASHANAH 2008 (5769)

Relevant Judaism for Modern Life

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# What's New!

## Being Jewish

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By Michael D. Fein  
Editor

**W**ell, here I am, the new editor of Being Jewish Magazine. What a great coincidence that the Rosh Hashanah issue is the first one I'm going to publish; a new year, a new beginning, and a new adventure.

My name is Michael D. Fein, and I'm a nice Jewish boy, born and raised in New York City. At 61 years of age, perhaps "boy" isn't all that accurate, but I now live in Montreal, Canada, and as the old saying goes: "You can take the boy out of New York, but you can't take New York out of the boy." I love living in Montreal, but I still pine for the bustling crowds, the sounds of traffic, and most of all, the smell, and taste of good ol' kosher deli.

I also publish the Gantseh Megillah, an online journal of Jewish culture, and lifestyle, which has grown into a dynamic virtual community. It's been a wonderful ten year experience, and I hope to continue doing it for a long time to come. Getting to know you, and the other members of the Being Jewish community, is a new experience I am looking forward to. Naturally, I hope you will also come and visit my friends at The Gantseh Megillah.

You have probably noticed Howard, the Yiddische Pup, on the upper left-hand cover of the magazine. Howard has been our amiable, friendly, and loyal mascot since we began publishing online. You will always know you are visiting gantsehmegillah.com, because you will see Howard looking back at you. Having a nice friendly Basset Hound face greet you with each issue isn't a bad thing, right? Of course, right!



I believe that the best way to understand the world, is to learn about it one person at a time. The world is comprised of over five billion individuals like you, and me, and each one has their own story to tell. Of course, we can't meet everyone, that would be impossible, but we're going to get to as many as we can.

Both being Jewish, and Being Jewish Magazine, gives us the opportunity to bring people together. I'm excited about editing this magazine because I have great faith in my community. Each issue, when I write my greeting, I will speak to you as a friend, because I hope that is what we will become. Being Jewish, will present stories, and articles that will help you to feel closer to, and increase understanding of, our community. We are a world-wide family, and let's face it, being Jewish makes us experts on the importance of families.

Michael has been publishing the Gantseh Megillah online since 1997. He is also the author of the Glossary of Yiddish Words and Expressions and he recently took over publishing Being Jewish magazine. You can visit his Web site at <http://www.gantsehmegillah.com>, where you will find links to the glossary and the weekly newsletter. If you would like to communicate with Michael, you may email him at [beingjewishmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:beingjewishmagazine@gmail.com).



# Q&A About God and Spirituality

By Gil Mann



Dear Readers:

With the High Holy Days upon us, in our prayer books and services we will hear and recite a great deal about God. I've heard from many Jews over the years that their beliefs about God are not compatible with what they read in the prayer book. What follows is an exchange of emails I had with a reader that delves into the existence and definition of God and spirituality.

*Erev Tov* (Good Evening) Gil, (No I do not know Hebrew, just a few expressions!)

I read your chapter about spirituality in your book *How to Get More Out of Being Jewish Even If...* (Note to readers: the book can be downloaded for free on [www.beingjewish.org](http://www.beingjewish.org) on the right side of the homepage.) I come away with the impression that in order to be spiritual, I have to believe . . . in what? A supernatural force, being, entity or ? What if I don't?

Thanks for trying to help. :-)

R

*Erev Tov* R:

To be spiritual, I think you need a belief that there is such a thing as a person's spirit or if you wish, a soul. I do believe there is such a thing as the soul. If that belief is something that seems foreign, silly or voodoo to you, (and many smart people do think this,) then any of my thoughts that follow would probably be nonsense.

*...continued on page 6*

Gil's Jewish Email columns began on his popular America Online feature called "Judaism Today: Where Do I Fit?". You can read more of his columns at [www.beingjewish.org](http://www.beingjewish.org). Gil welcomes any additional questions or comments about this topic or any other Jewish issue. Email him at [GilMann@beingjewish.org](mailto:GilMann@beingjewish.org).

## note to our readers

We want you to love Being Jewish! We hope you will look forward to each issue, no matter your age, from teen to senior, because you find it relevant, user-friendly, enjoyable, and filled with valuable information and inspiration about the Jewish way of life.

Each article is carefully selected and edited so that every concept is easily understood, even by those of us who left the synagogue as teenagers and did not return for 20 years or more.

Our goal for Being Jewish is to help you find meaning and relevance in the Jewish way of life. In every issue we will try to show you ways to access the three components of Judaism: Ethics, Spirituality, and Peoplehood (ESP).

The articles we publish are designed to help you look at your modern life and our ancient tradition and answer one or all three of these questions:



E How can I be a more Ethical person?

S How can I have a richer Jewish Spiritual life?

P How can I enhance my sense of belonging to the Jewish People?

Being Jewish (the magazine and the Jewish way of life) is organized by the ESP circles, though as you can see by the diagram and also by reading the articles, there is much potential for overlap.

For example, under Ethics, you will find sections like Working and Being Jewish, Learning and Being Jewish, Giving and Being Jewish, and so on. But at the same time, you could easily find a Spiritual or Peoplehood dimension in each of these sections. We can also relate the Ethics and Peoplehood circles more directly by realizing that Jewish values are the building blocks of Jewish peoplehood.

We hope we can show you ways to access each of the ESP circles and where they overlap, so that in your modern life, you can more fully enjoy the wisdom and beauty of Being Jewish! - Gil Mann





# Oy! The Places Where We Worship!

by: Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe

Libby Mowshowitz ("Straight Talk From A Rabbi's Wife") writes, "Rosh Hashonah is one of the few stop signs in our lives. On Rosh Hashonah we are bid to have a '*ches-bon-hanefesh*,' an accounting of the soul. On Rosh Hashonah let us stop, as we do at a stop sign. Let us look very carefully in all directions to see if we are making headway, and if we are cognizant of what is worthwhile in life. Above all, let us make sure we are not colliding with anybody, lest in our hurry to achieve success, we are hurting somebody who may be crossing our path."

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, The Jewish New Year, I reminisce about my childhood synagogue, *Derech Emunoh* in Arverne (Rockaway Beach), New York. The synagogue, which was once the heart of a thriving Jewish community of wealthy summer visitors and year-round residents, no longer exists. The synagogue opened its doors in 1904--or the year 5665 on the Hebrew calendar.

Sure, there were other synagogues in the Rockaways: the White *Shul*, the Belle Harbor Jewish Center, where I was married in 1958, etc. But *Derech Emunoh* was unique in that it resembled the stately lines of the oldest synagogue in the country--the Touro Synagogue in Newport, RI. It was unique in that it had a wonderful spiritual leader, Rabbi Eugene Cohen.

So, what's the difference between a synagogue, a "mushroom" synagogue, a "*shul*" and a "*shtibl*?" Can we turn a desert canyon into sacred space?

Sylvia Schildt, defines a "*shtibl*" (also a *shul*) as a gathering place for *Khasidim*. Fred Kogos defines a "*shul*" as colloquial Yiddish for synagogue; said to have stemmed from Germans who, seeing Jews studying in the synagogue, mistook the synagogue for a *shul* or school. According to another opinion, it comes from the Latin

term, a *schola*,' and it is used by Italian Jews as meaning community.

What is a "mushroom" synagogue? According to a fascinating book, "New York Jews and the Great Depression," by Beth S. Wenger, poor and unaffiliated Jews attended "mushroom" synagogues--large auditoriums or theaters temporarily converted to houses of worship for the High Holidays. These houses of worship offered an alternative to established congregations

**"many people who think nothing of spending \$25.00 for a day's amusement will balk at spending a similar sum in support of a house of worship."**

Rabbi Israel Goldstein

According to Wenger, "For years before the Depression, merchants eager to exploit the Jewish desire to attend High Holiday services had turned a profit by hiring amateurs to conduct worship and charging a reasonable two-to-five-dollar admission fee. In response to an American Hebrew article entitled, 'Religion at Bargain Prices,' one reader wrote to the editor, questioning, 'Why should not those who can-

not afford [synagogues] fancy prices...seek religion at bargain prices?...Are not mushroom synagogues, therefore, rendering a real service? Established synagogues vehemently opposed such sentiments. Jewish leaders believed that most Jews who attend mushroom synagogues were not impoverished but simply chose not to support regular congregations. Rabbi Israel Goldstein insisted that 'many people who think nothing of spending \$25.00 for a day's amusement will balk at spending a similar sum in support of a house of worship.'...I doubt whether such people deserve any sympathy or consideration...During the Depression, established congregations, struggling to stay afloat, attacked mushroom synagogues more virulently than ever before."

On a more humorous note, Albert Vorspan ("My Rabbi Doesn't Make House Calls - A Guide to Games Jews Play") writes about a proposal to build a drive-in syna-



gogue. Certain problems will result: Do we discriminate between Cadillacs and Chevrolets? (Writer's comment: Remember the expression, "Cadillac, Schmaddilac, You're suddenly too good for the Lincoln?) Should a Volkswagen be *verboten*? How do we prevent necking during services? And, most important, "Dues: Most members will continue to pay annual assessments. But what about those non-members who want to buy tickets only for the High Holy Days? Shall we charge by the car or by the head?"

Vorspan continues, "This will truly be the Synagogue of the future. The caterer can advertise: 'Visit Our Unique Drive-In Synagogue: Where the Posh Come to *Nosh*.' And Mr. Fergessen--a member of the Building Committee, suggested that the Candlestick [drive-in synagogue] go ecumenical under the name Our Lady of the Perpetual *Simcha*, but there was no second, *Gutzeh dank*. (Thank God)"

The "Adventure Rabbi," Jamie S. Korngold, climbs peaks, rides bikes, hikes canyons, skis the steeps, and uses the Colorado River as a *mikvah*. She asks, "Adventure Rabbi? An oxymoron?" No! The members of her "congregation" pray, study text, debate, discuss and wonder; text, debate, discuss, and wonder. They take traditional methods of Jewish teaching and discourse and transplant them into the wild. 'Rabbi Korngold asks, "How do you transform a day of powder skiing into a holy day? By stopping to notice a snow-dusted Douglas fir tree you might have skied by on another day. By learning the prayer for falling snow and teaching it to a friend...How do you turn a desert canyon into sacred space?...By saying blessings combining traditional words with modern sentiments. By reading ancient words from a *Torah*, carried in a dry bag, and discussing how our own wilderness journey is similar to the journey our ancestors made."

And so, as we celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, let's not be too concerned about WHERE we "*davn*." Let's not get gripped by a fashion fever--"coiffing for the holidays," as Elizabeth Hayt calls it. Let's just look back at the previous 12 months and look at all we've done, look at all we haven't done and honestly see how we feel about it.

I'll conclude by sharing a Myron Cohen story about Paul Grossinger, of the famed resort, who knew a famous world traveler who, being of the Jewish faith, always made it a point to spend Yom Kippur at Grossinger's.

For years the traveler had mapped out his schedule and always made sure that when that day rolled around he would be praying at the temple of the famed hotel.

But one year, due to a very important assignment, he was unable to make it, and when the High Holy Day rolled around, he found himself in China.

Truly disturbed by his inability to be at the hotel for the holiday, the traveler walked unhappily down the streets of Nanking brooding over the turn of events.

While he was walking, he happened to look up, and was amazed to see a temple with a Jewish star in front. He walked in, and was really astonished to see a Chinese rabbi conducting the services. He walked over to the side of the room, picked up a prayer shawl, and joined in the services.

Several minutes after he was seated, the rabbi walked over to him, stared, and then asked, "Are you Jewish?"

"Well, er--yes I am," said the traveler.

The rabbi eyed him again and then said, "Well, you certainly don't look it!"

Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe wishes all of her readers "*I' shanah tovah tikatevo*"-("May you be inscribed [in the Book of Life] for a good year.)



She is the author of two books: "Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order: Contact her at [Wolfeny@webtv.net](mailto:Wolfeny@webtv.net).







To me, spirituality is nourishing, guiding, and comforting our spirit or soul from a source that is above human. Before getting into any kind of discussion about this, your personal notion of the soul needs to be pursued - Gil

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Subject: Eureka!

Hello Again Gil,

I believe I found my "spirituality" -- It is only a matter of semantics. In your book you wrote about an American soldier in the Saudi desert and the lighting of the Hanukah menorah? He called it a spiritual experience. I would have called it an emotional experience.

For me the spirit is one's motivation, élan vital, will to live, learn and experiment -- nothing to do with the supernatural.

The soul for me is what a person stands for during his or her life. After one's death it is the memory of these people who influenced our lives and helped us be who we are. Nothing to do with Casper the friendly ghost or the Dybbuk.

If belief in a superior force, being, or whatever helps a person live, I would not call it voodoo or anything else, it just does not work for me. Sometimes in time of stress I wished I could pray . . .

May the Force be with You! - R

---

Dear R:

I too think some of what we are talking about is semantics. But I am not sure, as I do believe there is something out there, a force that is supernatural. Many call this force God.

I have a close friend who is a rabbi and a psychologist. His definition of God is "meaning" in life.

To use one example from prayer, when we lose someone we love, we pray with the mourner's Kaddish. When a person's heart is broken, or their lives seemingly destroyed over the loss of someone loved dearly, the last thing that person cares to do is praise God. But if viewed rather as an affirmation that life still has meaning, then this prayer, does have potential to nourish or guide ones soul, spirit or ones life force....or meet a spiritual need.

Does this nourishment or guidance come from God or a supernatural force? Is this just emotion? Well what exactly is emotion? I don't know, but I do know that emotions are much more difficult to understand or define as say our bones, blood or kidneys. Could emotions be part of the Divine in us? - Gil

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Subject: Spirituality or emotion?

Dear Gil,

I attended a Memorial service shortly after I lost my husband and we recited aloud "We Remember Them" -- are you familiar with this? I found it very soothing.

Now we embark into something more complicated, what is the Divine?

Shabbat Shalom, - R

---

Dear R:

What is Divine? I can tell you only my guesses as I sure don't know. (There is a chapter in my new book, Sex, God, Christmas & Jews, about knowing the "Truth", that you might like.) The Jewish notion is that humans are created in the image of the Divine. Put differently, often we hear about the Divine spark in each of us.

Personally, I buy into this thinking because I find it spiritually resonates with me and is uplifting.



Specifically what is this Divine element? Two areas that I've thought a lot about are creativity and conscience. I don't know where these amazing abilities come from but these seem to be some of what distinguishes us from most or all of the animal kingdom. I take a leap of faith to say these abilities are based on the Divine in us.

Email can't do this difficult subject justice...but this is my quick attempt. - Gil

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Good Morning Gil,  
I mentioned earlier, that I found the following prayer more comforting than the traditional Kad-dish, others may too.

***We Remember Them***  
***by Rabbis Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer***

***In the rising of the sun and its going down,  
We Remember Them.***

***In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,  
We Remember Them.***

***In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring.  
We Remember Them.***

***In the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer,  
We Remember Them.***

***In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn.  
We Remember Them.***

***In the beginning of the year and when it ends,  
We Remember Them.***

***When we are weary and in need of strength,  
We Remember Them.***

***When we are lost and sick of heart,  
We Remember Them.***

***When we have joys and special celebrations we yearn to share,  
We Remember Them.***

***As long as we live, they too shall live, for they are part of us.  
We Remember Them.***

Dear R:

I've seen and always liked this prayer. Are the words spiritual? Do they speak of God? Do they touch your soul? I wouldn't presume to answer for anyone. These words can move me spiritually. I say this especially with the High Holidays upon us and I contemplate another year that has passed and a new one beginning. They also touch me as the new year begins and I think of loved ones who are no longer with me physically but do live on with me in spirit and spiritually.

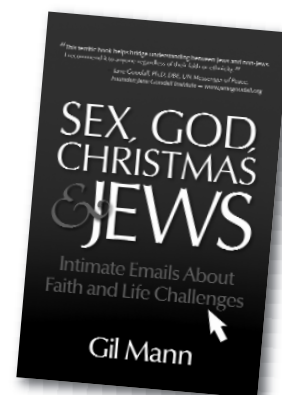
Shana Tovah!  
Gil

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To see more of Gil's writing, go to  
[www.beingjewish.org](http://www.beingjewish.org)

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Gil Mann's new book *Sex, God, Christmas & Jews* was a finalist in the Jewish Life and Living category of the 2006 Koret International Jewish Book Awards.



The book features 18 of Gil's popular columns, in which he responds to readers' most perplexing emails, including: I am Very Angry with God!; Bizarre Jewish Sex; Body Piercing, Tattoos and More; I Will Not Circumcise My Son!; and Will Jews Burn in Hell? All names have been removed from the emails, of course!



The book (including shipping) is available at a discount to Being Jewish readers for just \$13. To order the book, call 800-304-9925 or go to [www.BeingJewish.org](http://www.BeingJewish.org).



# Sin and Atonement

By Lynn Ruth Miller

During the Second World War, gasoline was rationed and my mother drove a tiny model A Ford. Its motor had to be cranked to get it moving but it got unusually good mileage. It was only a two-seater, but as we drove down Cherry Street, my mother would stop at every bus stop and offer strangers a ride. We would all move closer together and some lady with a ton of packages or an evil smelling man reeking of alcohol and tobacco would crowd in next to us and ride a few blocks to his corner. We used to tell jokes about this habit but now I realize that my mother was simply living the philosophy that was part of her heritage. She was helping others because their difficulties belonged to her.

I don't think any incident reinforced this point so much as the interview I had in the seventies with Jacob Pratt, the mayor of a tiny town in Ohio right outside Toledo. This gentleman was 98 years old and as alert as a teenager. He was an inspiration to me, full of energy and optimism. He told me that his diet was spare, porridge in the morning, a larger dinner at noon and a Spartan evening meal. He retired early and went to church every Sunday with his wife of 67 years and his immense clan of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He took a brisk walk every morning, rain, snow, sleet or storm and he read his Bible every night before he retired. He was a happy man.

Mr. Pratt doubled as Justice of the Peace for his hamlet and every Wednesday, he held court in the town hall. He listened to the complaints of the farmers, angry couples determined to divorce, neighbors bickering over property lines and the bereaved trying to get all they could from their loved ones' estates. He took his responsibilities very seriously and considered himself the surrogate father of all his constituents. After we had discussed his

health habits and his general philosophy of life, I asked the inevitable question one cannot resist asking such a cheerful human being. "Tell me, Mayor Pratt, what upsets you most about modern life?"

I had expected him to remark on the increased crime rate, our polluted air, the lack of moral standards and the decline of educational standards but he didn't even men-

tion those things. He thought for a moment and then he looked up at me, his face a study of worry and concern. "The thing that disturbs me most about our life today, Lynn Ruth, is the national debt."

The national debt? Of all the factors that made living abrasive, that was

one I had never considered. What on earth did the government's fiscal responsibility have to do with anyone's sense of well being? His next words altered my entire concept of my obligation to society. "How can I tell a farmer he has to pay his neighbor for the destruction his pigs did to his neighbor's yard, or a young man that he must settle his gambling debts when the United States government can't meet its financial obligations? If our

"No man is  
an island,  
entire of itself"

*John Donne*



The classic two-seater Model A Ford





Lynn Ruth Miller

president allows us to rob Peter to pay Paul, how can I force my citizens to take responsibility for their credit card debts and honor the promises they make to one another?"

I realize now that his belief that because the government we voted into office reflects our own moral values, we are as responsible for those decisions as if we were the ones that had determined them. My religion has taught me that and I believe it is so.

There are no easy answers to poverty, or ways to show our respect for the human needs of others, but compassion must always be the determining factor if we are to feel secure in our community, and provide the best opportunity we can for everyone. Bruce Hoard, a darling friend, and as WASP as I am Semitic, gave me the most meaningful example of this theory that highest mission of man is to take action to prevent the poverty we see around us. "When a vagrant or a drunk asks me for money for food, I never give him cash because I don't know if he will spend it for alcohol, drugs or some substance detrimental to himself," said Bruce. "Instead, I take him to the nearest diner and I buy him dinner."

Would that we all made the effort to give the starving in our world the nourishment they need, be it a piece of bread, or an encouraging word. Their hunger is ours. Their need deprives us as well. We created the society that is depriving them and we enrich our own lives when we reach out to them. It is the Jewish way. It is the human way.

## Tzedakah on Parade

Jewish Community Center summer camps have long served as the center for activities, shows, or sports competitions. The Saint Louis JCC camp directors channeled campers' competitive energy into a service project, in which the various camps raced to collect canned goods for the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry.

Approximately 250 campers of all ages marched on a closed section of Schuetz Road from the JCC to the pantry to deliver almost 2,000 cans.

"It was overwhelmingly beautiful. It probably took 30 minutes for every child to walk over and personally deposit (the food) on the shelves," said Sue Rundblad, Coordinator of the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry.

The JCC camps, and the food pantry, "adopt" each other in a mutually beneficial relationship, and the campers "actually saw what a food pantry was. We've been very fortunate that Joey Boime, and the other counselors, are really aware and they are really good about teaching the children during camp about the need for food. Words can mean something, but when you actually see it, it makes it real, so to speak," Rundblad said.

Metaphorically speaking, the winners earned more than just a cookie cake party. Campers were reminded of children who may not have the opportunity to compete in swim races or color wars. The hike, which JCC camp director Joey Boime entitled "Tiyul For Hunger," was designed to encourage participants to keep making a difference, and to keep, as Boime puts it, "repairing the world."

*This article by Ariana Tobin, originally appeared in the Jewish Light of Saint Louis. It is reprinted with their consent.*





# The Vilnius Jewish Library More Than One Man's Dream

By: Wyman Brent

**H**ow does one get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice is the answer. How does one get to Vilna? Bus, bus, bus if you are on a budget. Riding a Eurolines bus from Tallinn, Estonia, to Vilna in Lithuania, took 9 and half hours, which was spent staring out the window, and reading books, and trying to rest. I'm not much good at napping on buses so fortunately I had reading material available. Anyway, what is a librarian without a book close at hand?

An adventure in the U.K. and Estonia had gone even better than could have been expected. The big challenge was almost 10 hours down the road in the city remembered by so many as the Jerusalem of Lithuania. One does not try to build a Jewish library in Vilna, without going to Vilna. It is said, that all roads lead to Rome, but my path lay along the road less traveled.

The easy part was arriving in Vilna at 7:30 pm, or 1930, as they would write it in Europe. The Vilnius Old Town Hostel was a short walk from the bus station, and to be home for the next 2 months and a week. Finding the place in the dark was no problem, even without having been in Lithuania since December 2002. No doubt it had something to do with having lived in Vilna for so long. Due to the courtesy, and philo-Semitism of the owner, a librarian had a free place to rest his head.

I had already spent almost 3 months living in hostels between the time in London and Tallinn. Now, it was time to stay another 2 in Vilnius. While I appreciated the free bed, a hostel is not a place for quiet contemplation. There are too many people around, but it was free, and there was work to be done. The hostel was only a short walk from Pylimo Street, or Pylimo Gatve, as Lithuanians write it.

Why was it nice to be so close to Pylimo Gatve? Pylimo is the street around which much of Jewish life is now centered in Vilna. Pylimo 4 is the home of the Jewish Community Center, and of the Righteous Gentiles exhibition, hosted by the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum. A few meters off of Pylimo is the museum's Tolerance Center, and the

museum's Green House is just past where Pylimo begins. Pylimo is also home to the Choral Synagogue, the one remaining synagogue in the city.

It turns out that a Shoah survivor would be my entry to all things Jewish in the Jerusalem of Lithuania. Rachel Kostanian is a miracle, and not only because she survived the fate of the majority of the Jews. She is one person, but does the work of many, and this at the age when most people are busy enjoying their retirement. She is the deputy director of the Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum, and has her office in the Green House, which has a display dedicated to the history of Jews in Lithuania, and what happened during the war.

The Green House is on a prominent street but difficult to find if you don't know it is there. Tucked away as it is, you still need to go, if you want to experience one of the most dynamic people (Jewish or not) in Vilna today. Ms. Kostanian is both survivor, and savior. She is a driving force in the work of the museum, and keeping Jewish culture alive.

Keeping anything Jewish going is not the easy task it was in the day of *shul* and *shtetl*. Like Rabbi Kot in Tallinn you have to be in it for the long haul if you are working to revive things Jewish in Lithuania. Rachel Kostanian helped create the beautiful book, Vilna Ghetto Posters, of which I am privileged to have a signed copy. She also wrote Spiritual Resistance in the Vilna Ghetto. She writes, she gives tours of the museum; she lectures in various countries (I first met her in London,) and does many of the administrative tasks needed to keep the Green House going.

This remarkable lady was my introduction to the small but vibrant world of the Jew in the Jerusalem of Lithuania. In the over two months I was in Vilna, a stop at the Green House to speak with Ms. Kostanian was both a necessity, and a pleasure. She and the other staff plied me with tea and cookies every time I walked through the door. They were all so friendly and inviting that one could be excused for inventing reasons to visit them. What better way to





spend time than after a walk in the snow to stop and share tea with people you truly admire, and respect?

As I said, our first meeting took place in London in November, 2007, while she was there to give talks relating to the Holocaust, and the ghetto posters of Vilna. Imagine a people, living under such circumstances as the Jews during the German occupation, still trying to live a life filled with cultural activities. They knew the reality beyond the ghetto barriers, and yet it did not stop them from doing everything from running a library, to holding concerts, and performing plays. They even celebrated the loaning out of the one hundred thousandth book from the ghetto library during those dark days, and nights.

Perhaps that is why I am so driven to build a new Jewish library in Vilna. Yes, there are few Jews left in Lithuania. Does that mean forgetting about them? They have dedicated their lives to keeping Jewish culture alive no matter what may face them, just as did the people of the ghetto. Can I do any less than dedicate my life to helping not only keeping the torch alive, but also fanning the flame?

The Vilnius Jewish Library needs the support of every person who wants to see the return of a proper center of culture, education, and thought to the Jerusalem of Lithuania. What is needed is someone with the knowledge and skill to set up a non-profit organization. Someone who knows how to write successful grant applications would be crucial. There are now about 4,000 books ready to be shipped over to Lithuania. The total cost for the shipment from San Diego, California to Lithuania will be 4,160 dollars. Anyone able to help cover the costs to ship the first batch of books for the first real Jewish library in Vilna, since the war, will have performed a truly great, and lasting mitzvah. I am devoting the rest of my life to this project as the shammes of the library. I do not ask others to give up their lives and move to Vilna with me. All I ask is for your help in reviving what once was so beautiful.

[vilniusjewishlibrary@yahoo.com](mailto:vilniusjewishlibrary@yahoo.com)  
<http://vilniusjewishlibrary.wordpress.com/>



# Loving and Forgiving Ourselves and Others

By Sharon Lynn Bear



Sharon Lynn Bear

As a singles columnist, I write about relationships. With the High Holidays upon us, I want to focus on our first and most important relationship—our relationship with ourselves. In one of my columns, I wrote that “we cannot love another person until we first love ourselves.” But how can we tell whether we love ourselves? It’s not easy. Often, we find it easier to identify others who don’t love themselves.

I have dated several men who appeared not to love themselves. They would tell me, “you’re too good for me” or “I’m not good enough for you.” One man seemed concerned that, on our first date at a local restaurant, I might “escape” through the window in the ladies room. He probably would have agreed with the Groucho Marx line, “I wouldn’t belong to any club that would have me as a member.”

Contrast this to the experience of people who have an “I’m in love” glow. Many of us women have had the experience of men “coming out of the woodwork” once we have a boyfriend or husband but, of course, not when we’re looking for one. And I’ve heard that men with wedding bands are considered especially attractive. Although we cannot be certain that these individuals love themselves, the energy that they give off says that, at the very least, someone else loves them.

We don’t have to be in love with another person, or have another be in love with us, to have that “I’m in love” glow. We can get it by being in love with ourselves. Please understand that this is not a narcissistic love. Rather, it is a healthy love that comes from taking the time, and making the effort, to get to know ourselves. So how can we accomplish this?

There are three steps to getting to know and love ourselves: self-discovery, growth, and forgiveness.

## 3 Steps to know and love ourselves: self-discovery growth and forgiveness.

For the first step, self-discovery, we need to take a good, hard look at the break-up of one of our major relationships. Please understand that the ending of a relationship does not imply that we (or the other) were “at fault.” Rather, it could be as simple as our having made an inappropriate choice. But whatever the case, we need to identify the behaviors over which we had control that contributed to the break-up. We must ask ourselves, “What didn’t work that I have the power to change?” and keep in mind that, if we know and love ourselves, we are better able to “roll with the punches” of a relationship and maintain harmony and intimacy.

The second step is growth. After we have identified the behaviors that we would like to change, we need to take responsibility for them and, most importantly, work on

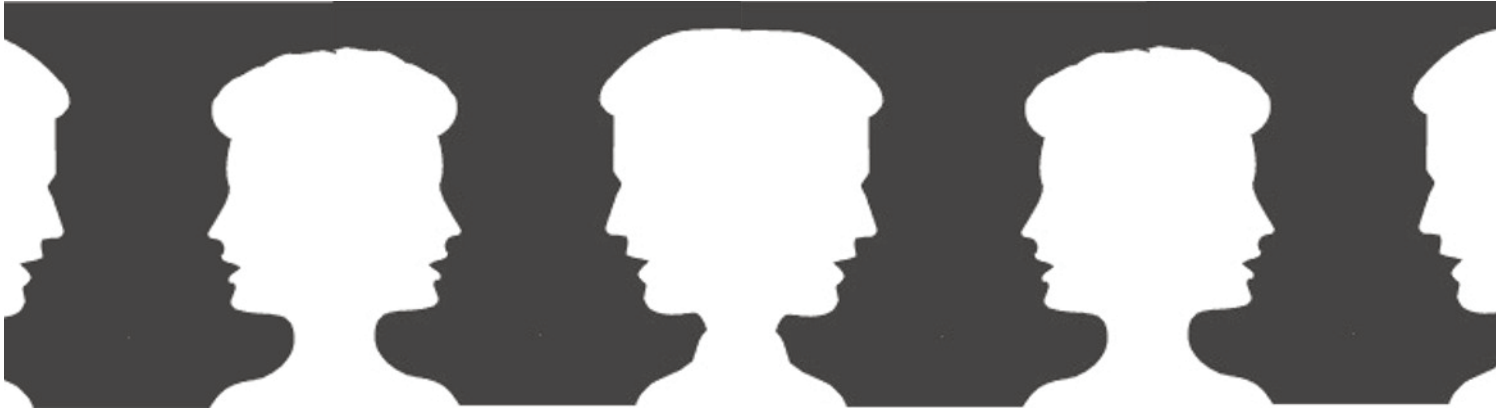
them. We cannot do this alone, however. We need to enlist the help of friends—friends who will serve as a sounding board and provide honest, and sometimes blunt, feedback. Friends also can provide a “testing ground” for the person we are trying to become. They’ll continue to be there for us even if it takes a while to get where we’re going. It’s also helpful to have friends of the opposite sex who

can give us the man’s (or the woman’s) point of view.

I rely a great deal on my group of friends. I am fortunate to be blessed with friends who include a life coach, a licensed clinical social worker, and a hospice-care nurse. These are people with insight who can provide me with the feedback that I need. I especially value the friendships that I have with my ex-husband and an ex-boyfriend.

I am aware, however, that women, much more so than





men, are likely to have close friends with whom they are comfortable discussing their feelings. But whether a woman or a man, we may want more help than our friends can give us. Thus, for both women and men, I highly recommend support groups. Even more useful is individual therapy, perhaps even coupled with group therapy. Therapy can help us every step of the way on our journey toward knowing and eventually loving ourselves, particularly as we undertake the next step.

The third step, forgiveness, is perhaps the most relevant to this special time of year. We need to forgive others for their mistakes, but we also need to forgive ourselves for our own mistakes. It will help us if we remember that it is rare that we intentionally hurt others or they intentionally hurt us.

Moreover, when we do not forgive ourselves or others, we cause ourselves harm. We carry around negative energy that takes away from our ability to love ourselves and, by extension, our ability to love others.

To begin the process of forgiveness, we need to think about the relationships that we have (or perhaps no longer have) that could benefit from being repaired. We must figure out what we can do to repair these relationships, including our relationship with ourselves, and then do whatever it takes to begin the healing process.

Although we have this special time set aside to seek forgiveness from G-d and to make things right with our family members, friends, and colleagues, forgiving others and ourselves is something that we need to do on an ongoing basis. Forgiveness can go a long way toward contributing to our ability to love ourselves and to love others.

**L'Shana Tovah!**

### SOME SLICES FROM THE LOVE CAKE

"Love and marriage go together like soup and dumplings."

"*Singlemon*" Yinglish word for bachelor.

Manage-a-trois - She and he and "*de frage*" (the Question)

My mother always said, "*Dray zakhn ken men nit bahaltn: libe, hustn un dales.*" (Three things that cannot be hidden: love, coughing and poverty.)

She also told me that it's just as easy to love "*der gvir*" (a rich man) as "*der orem*" (a poor man!)

Drawing upon her training as a humanistic existential therapist, Sharon Lynn Bear, Ph.D. brings both a personal and professional perspective to her writing, one that enables her to find meaning in the seemingly inexplicable aspects of relationships. She writes in a conversational, "from the heart" style, making her readers feel as if they are part of her circle of friends. Her stories have appeared in Orange County Jewish Life, Orange County Jewish Journal, Los Angeles Times, Today's Woman, Jewish News of Greater Phoenix, and the Gantseh Megillah of Montreal. She is also a featured poet in *We Used to Be Wives: Divorce Unveiled through Poetry*, Jane Butkin Roth, Editor, Fithian Press.





# Hands Around the Table

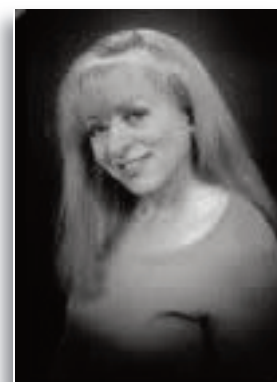
By Eddy Robey

**A** dining table is part of the family. It is there that many of our dearest moments will occur: we celebrate birthdays, observe holidays, and offer confidences in its presence. There will be laughter, singing, and perhaps the occasional tear: all shared around this welcoming surface. We light candles, arrange flowers, prepare special treats of love to enjoy, and think about the faces present or absent from our circle.

Every clan has absent faces, and the table is where they are most sorely missed. Some have other commitments, but will be present for the next feast. Others will feast no more; they will be memorialized with candles at the coming new year. Those unseen visages, which evoke the most sadness, belong to dear ones who have not been invited, or who have declined to attend.

Each year, we are commanded to seek, and grant forgiveness to one another. Yet, families have members in exile, whether that isolation is imposed, or self-inflicted. Too many people say that family is a primary value in their lives, but when it comes to festive meals, decide that pride is what matters most. Pride? Yes, because those who harbor grudges usually have a story to tell about why their decision for estrangement was both good and just. These tales are too often told without regret.

Now, dear readers, I ask you to avoid this situation, and do whatever is possible in your lives to keep from having absent faces around your tables. Do not postpone gestures of peace, but learn from tragedies, such as New Orleans, that love may be washed away, and all chances for a hug vanished. Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of creation. I can promise that if you are able to end any harsh feeling and start a new year with warmth, the taste of an apple and honey *Kiddush* will be more sweet that it has ever been before.



## Moroccan Turkey Couscous Pilaf

This recipe may be completely made the day before it is needed, and reheated in the microwave to serve.

### Moroccan Turkey

Preparation Time: 15 minutes (Meat-Flayshik)

Cooking Time: 150 minutes

- |   |
|---|
| 2 tablespoons Olive Oil                         |
| 1 Turkey breast, split in half (About 5 pounds) |
| 2 large onions, diced                           |
| 4 Shallots, minced                              |
| 3 tablespoons grated Ginger Root (NOT powdered) |
| 2 teaspoons ground Cinnamon                     |
| 1 cup Orange Marmalade                          |
| 1 29 ounce tin crushed Tomatoes in Tomato Puree |
| 1 teaspoon Salt                                 |
| 2 teaspoons Lemon Pepper                        |
| 1 cup White Wine                                |

Pour the Olive Oil into a 4-quart Dutch Oven, and set over medium heat. When the oil is heated, add the Turkey Breast halves, skin side down, and cook until lightly browned.

Remove from the pan, and set aside until needed.

Set the oven temperature to 325 degrees, and turn it on to preheat.

Put the Onions, Shallots, and Ginger Root into the pan in which you browned the Turkey; then set the pan over a medium heat, and cook until the onions turn translucent. Add the rest of the ingredients. Stir everything together until the Marmalade has melted and the mixture just begins to bubble.



Remove from heat. Nestle the browned Turkey Breast halves in the Tomato mixture, making sure that they are covered.

Put a tight-fitting lid on the pan, and place it in the oven for 2 1/2 hours, check about halfway through the cooking time, and add another cup of Wine if needed.

## The Couscous Pilaf

### Couscous Pilaf

Preparation Time: 10 minutes (Meat-Flayshik)

Cooking Time: About 30 minutes

1 teaspoon Saffron threads, crumbled

1 tablespoon Sugar

2 cups Chicken Broth

1/2 teaspoon Salt

3 tablespoons Margarine

1/2 cup sliced Almonds

1 Onion, minced

1/2 cup Raisins

2 cups Couscous

Place the Chicken Broth, Saffron, Sugar, and Salt in a small pan and heat over a medium flame until very warm. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to steep until needed.

Melt the Margarine over a medium flame in a large saucepan.

Add the Almonds and cook, stirring constantly until the Almonds start to turn golden.

Add the minced Onion, and continue to cook until it turns translucent.

Pour the Chicken Broth mixture into the Almond mixture, and bring to a boil.

As soon as the combined mixtures begin to boil: pour in the Couscous and Raisins, stir, cover tightly, and remove from heat.

Allow the Pilaf to sit for 20 minutes.

Fluff and serve.

## THIS & THAT

### You Grew Up Jewish If...

Every Saturday morning was spent at the neighborhood deli, stocking up on whitefish salad, whitefish ("chubs"), herring, corned beef, roast beef, spiced beef, coleslaw, potato salad, a half-dozen huge barrel pickles, a dozen assorted bagels, cream cheese, and rye bread... all of which would be strictly off-limits until Sunday morning.

You think eating half a bottle of dill pickles is a wholesome snack.

You're compelled to mention your grandmother's "giant steel cannonballs" upon seeing the tiny, fluffy matzo balls served at restaurants.

You buy 3 shopping bags worth of hot bagels on every trip to NYC, and ship them home via FedEx. (Or, if you live near NYC or Philadelphia or another Jewish city hub, you drive 3 hours to the center of town just to buy a dozen "real" bagels.)

### ALTEH GEFERLEKH JEWISH JOKE

A Chinese waiter approaches a table at a new Jewish Deli and takes the order in perfect Yiddish. The customers are amazed.

As they are paying for their meal, one of them asks the owner, "Where did you find a Chinese waiter who speaks Yiddish?"

The owner glares at them, "Sha, he thinks I'm teaching him English!!!"



# ARE YOU AGE 25 - 45...

Looking to meet new **Jewish friends**, network professionally and get more involved in the **Jewish community**?

## DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS!

### APPLE PICKING

Sunday, October 5th  
Minnetonka Orchards

*Transportation will be provided from the Sabes JCC at 1:15 p.m.*

### HAPPY HOUR AT BACIO

Thursday, October 30th  
Join us anytime after 5:30 p.m.

### WE BRING THE BAR, YOU BRING THE MITZVAH

Our hottest party of 2008 is coming this November!  
*Details to follow...*

### HAPPY HOUR AT BAR LURCAT

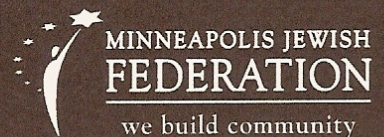
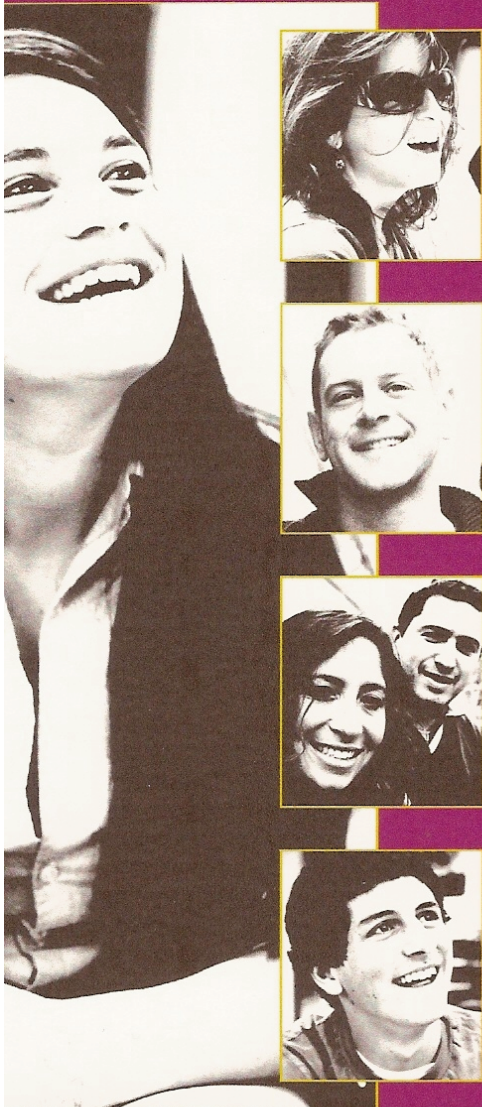
Thursday, November 20th  
Join us anytime after 5:30 p.m.

### TZEDAKAH BOWL

Thursday, December 25th  
Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome  
Football and fun from 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

*Are you receiving our monthly Young Leadership E-mail about upcoming events? If not, contact Barb Adelman at 952.417.2347, badelman@mplsfed.org to sign up!*

Check us out online! Log on to [www.jewishminnesota.org](http://www.jewishminnesota.org) and click on Young Leadership.



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