

Ancient Roots, Radical Practices, and Contemporary Visions



The Aquarian Minyan 25th Anniversary Festschrift

Editors: Victor Gross, Reuven Goldfarb, Yehudit Goldfarb, Nadya Gross, and Miriam Stampfer

Limited Edition of 200

7/200

© Copyright 1999 by the Aquarian Minyan. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the Aquarian Minyan, except in the case of brief quotations in reviews for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper, or broadcast. Permission may be obtained from

The Aquarian Minyan
P.O. Box 7224, Berkeley, CA 94707
(510) 658-8530
e/mail: AMinyan@aol.com

Contents

Introduction <i>by Rabbi Victor Gross</i>	1
The Weaning of the Minyan <i>by Yehudit Goldfarb</i>	3
Historical Documents.....	6
From Reel to Real: An Interview with Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.....	13
From House to Minyan <i>by Aryae Coopersmith</i>	30
The Earliest Days of the Minyan <i>by Leonard Aryeh Trupin</i>	35
Aquarian Minyan: A Path to Joy <i>by Carol Caine</i>	37
Open Forms & Closed Forms <i>by Reuven Goldfarb</i>	41
Downed Cottonwood <i>by Reuven Goldfarb</i>	43
The in-between one <i>by Yehudit Goldfarb</i>	44
Seven Circles of Love--A Bride's Wedding Song <i>by Rolinda Schonwald</i>	45
Forgiveness: A Kol Nidre Prayer <i>by Charles Burack</i>	47
The Way to Chanukah <i>by Reuven Goldfarb</i>	48
Shabbat Story <i>by Daniel Lev</i>	51
Reflections from an Ally <i>by Rabbi Michael Lerner</i>	53
How the Minyan Has Affected Me and My Efforts to Create a Jewish Renewal in Israel <i>by Linda Elyad</i>	55
Reb Zalman and the Aquarian Minyan Inspire a Peacebuilding Project <i>by Lynn Feinerman</i>	63
It's Possible to be a Jew <i>by Bill Finn</i>	67
Reflections on 22 Years of Jewishing with the Minyan <i>by Miriam Stampfer</i>	69
"You are building it, and they are coming"-- The Aquarian Minyan and the Field of Rebbetude <i>by Ben Habeebe</i>	73

Illustrations:

Daniela Barnes, pp. 17, 74

Susan Aftergut Feldman, p. 46

R. Shefa Gold, p. 47 (right)

R. Ayla Grafstein, Back Cover

Ruti Hafsadi, p. 39

Judith Hankin, pp. 44, 52, 61

Nancy Katz, p. 57

Joanie Mitchell, pp. 31, 33, 34, 35, 50, 68

Miriam Stampfer, Front Cover, pp. 39, 43, 45, 47 (left), 66, 69, 72

Avraham Arie Trugman, p. 63

Yehuda Winiwarter, p. 42

Photographs: Yehudit Goldfarb, pp. 20, 23, 28, 36, 40, 80

Jeffrey (Gabe) Dooley, p. 25

Layout: Miriam Stampfer

Introduction

Towards the Yovel

Jubilation and Jubilee

What a Minyan! What blessing can I offer to the Aquarian Minyan on the anniversary of such a unique institution that never considered longevity as a goal? To reach this point in time which allowed my lives partner, Rabbi Nadya and myself to become the co-rabbis is for us a blessing bestowed upon us.

So what blessing do I offer for the Minyan? "Bless us, all of us as one, in the light of your face" But how can I ask God to bless all of us "as one"? Are not the needs of the individual paramount? Why would I bless the group? The answer, suggests Rebbe Zev Wolf of Zhitomir is that each should yearn for God's beaming face, the *Or Hame'ir*, "the Light which Enlightens." When we are in that light there is no differentiated self. All is One. All is in the One. As Kushner and Polen point out: "the fulfillment of each one of our individual needs can only be found in our common divine source."

The articles in this book all derive from this starting point. Whatever differentiated individual needs brought the founders and successive persons to the Aquarian Minyan, there was a common desire to stand in the *Or Hame'ir*. The creation of sacred space during sacred times-Shabbat and holy days was the central purpose that guided and still guides the Aquarian Minyan.

And equally important is the existence of the Minyan to help create an ongoing community that holds the *Or Hame'ir* during our individuated moments. Many of the articles testify to the carrying out into the outer spaces of our lives the light that was revealed during the sacred gatherings.

I have deep respect for the processes that the Aquarian Minyan has used to encounter the *Or Hame'ir*. And as I think about our stretch run to the Jubilee I offer another prayer: "Atah Chonen l'adam da'at u'mlamade l'ehnossh binah. Chanaynu ma'et'cha day'ah binah v'haskay'I" "You favor people with knowledge and teach mortals understanding. So favor us with knowledge, understanding and wisdom."

So what kind of wisdom and understanding will we need to get to the Yovel? The holy Baal Shem Tov's grandson, Rebbe Moshe Chayim Ephraim of Sudzilkov gave over a teaching of the Besht: "Wisdom is like water issuing forth from a well-spring. The more one draws, the stronger the flow. And like life-sustaining water, wisdom too increases with the space in which it can spread out. In this way, when wisdom is allowed to flow into one's personality and behavior, one becomes both physically and spiritually purified. Such intellectual purification goes beyond its source in the individual. Wisdom also nurtures one's friends and students, even as they, by paying attention and taking it into themselves, provide it with an ever-growing expanse in which it can spread out and increase. For this reason the blessing requests that our wisdom flow forth-both within ourselves and our community. One's wisdom only increases as it flows forth and ultimately is given to others."

The metaphor of the four worlds will serve us well. We need to display the wisdom to thrive in Assiya as we move to the other three. The Order of the Minyan dedicated itself to achieving understanding, enlightenment and devekut. The founding generation was searching for new wine to pour into old bottles. What experiences, ideas, rituals will be passed on? A new generation will search this book to understand that in the individual search are truths to be shared and possessed. Can we raise a new varietal grape to make new wines for today's palate? Can the original generation of the Minyan make room in their garden for new sources of truth? Will those who did not share the first 25 years of the Minyan be willing to honor the heritage and culture created during that time while honoring and preserving what was and still is spiritually life sustaining.

In our first conversation with Reb Zalman he challenged Nadya and me to help alleviate a great concern of his, namely, whether all that has come to mean Jewish renewal will survive this generation. It is my belief that the Aquarian Minyan will answer that question during the years leading up to our jubilee celebration.

This book depicts the individual experiences in a unique group that began to build the new paradigm in Judaism. But that new paradigm, to avoid the reasons that led to the ossification and dysfunctionality of the old paradigm, must be fluid and not become a new orthodoxy. The process of getting to 1999 involved experimentation, envelope pushing, courage, and the accumulation of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. That process seems to be as valid now as before.

The Aquarian Minyan of the future will collectively assume the responsibilities of teaching the children our culture while making room for the new to be made holy. We will continue our celebration of diversity in individual life style while making ourselves a warm inviting community to all .

It is my hope that this will be the first of many volumes that will provide an ongoing written record of the creative efforts of individuals and a community committed to the raising of the sparks. Thus the world will be repaired along with each and every precious neshama. The gaia consciousness will become the operant paradigm and will inform each successive volume.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the contributors to this volume for their interest and their thoughtfulness best expressed in their contributions. To my co-editors: Yehudit and Reuven Goldfarb, Miriam Stampfer, and R. Nadya Gross for the long hours it took to see this project to fruition. Barry Barkin was instrumental in advising me, a novice, on how to print and bind a book and in keeping my eyes on the prize and in good spirits. I have a special sense of gratitude for Reb Zalman for supporting the idea of the project and giving of his time for the interview. As evident in his contribution to this book, he remains our guide, our teacher, and our Rebbe. And finally, our collective Hodu l' Boray HaOlam-Praise to the Creator of the World for partnering with the Aquarian Minyan all these many years.

May peace abound in the upper spheres and below.

Rabbi Victor Gross, co-editor

The Weaning of the Minyan

An Historical Overview of the Minyan's First Three Years

Yehudit Goldfarb

(Published originally in the Aquarian Minyan newsletter of June 1977)

Birth: The Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley's origins may be traced as far back as each member's dreams of a viable, responsive Jewish community which believes in and actively supports the growth of soul and consciousness in all of its members.

The Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley is the most vocal branch of The Order of the Aquarian Minyan which has, since its inception on June 18, 1974, remained primarily a name and a vision of a "non-profit spiritual and educational foundation" whose purpose is "to create new vessels for the faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, and Rachel."

Naming: The name was tentatively put forth as a label for a group of people who had attended a seminar on Volume One of the *Tanya* by Reb Schneur Zalman of Liadi, which was taught by Rabbi Zalman Schachter from mid-May to mid-June of 1974. The seminar climaxed in a farbrengen at the Hillel House of Berkeley, with both Rabbis Zalman Schachter and Shlomo Carlebach participating. The group of people who expressed the desire to remain in touch with each other, in order, at least, to celebrate Shabbos together, had signed a list entitled "Floating Crap Game."* On June 18th, Barry Barkan, Minucha Gleich, and Judith Wallach, all participants in that seminar as well as the earlier Kabbalah seminar in February of 1974, met to share their visions of how the spirit and "alive Judaism" recreated in the souls of so many people during the workshops with Zalman could be tapped to form a living, relevant, and inspiring Jewish community in the Bay Area. The new name was suggested and it was felt to be appropriate because "Aquarian" implied the acceptance of the unconscious, non-rational parts of our being and it also set up a distinction between those Jewish groups in which ten men constituted a "minyan" and a group which believed every living being could be part of a minyan if the intention for "connection" existed. The acronym OAM could be pronounced "oooooooooaaaaahhhmmmm," the sound which many traditions throughout the world, including Judaism, consider to be the FIRST sound.

Original Covenant (June, 1974): [Besides including the statement of purpose quoted above, the original covenant read as follows:]

"The people of the Order of the Aquarian Minyan connect with the faith of their parents to ordain men and women to provide in their communities the sacraments of birth, life, and death.

"Men and women who accept the covenant pledge themselves to live in a way which is consistent with the faith as they experience it and to continue to grow within it.

"Ordination may be bestowed by any three ordained people."

"Ordination" was left undefined until such time as papers would be filed with an outside authority.

The weaning process: Since the autumn of 1974, "The Aquarian Minyan" has been meeting, at least for Shabbat, on a regular basis. After the fourth Shabbat, Minucha offered the house she was renting in Berkeley as a *Shul* for Friday night services, until such time as she and the other members of the Minyan chose another location to meet. In July, 1975, Minucha and the other participating Minyan members agreed to again set the Minyan afloat and people began volunteering their homes for Shabbat.

The membership of the Minyan continued to fluctuate, becoming larger whenever one of the well-known Rebbes was in town or whenever a small number of people organized a workshop, retreat, or series of teachings or conferences. When faced with the possibility of buying some land last winter, a meeting was called to redefine "The Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley" and officially apply for non-profit status. The following statement of purpose was tentatively agreed upon but the papers were not filed (because too few people seemed interested in making the loose organization into one committed to existing as a non-profit corporate entity under the laws and regulations of the State of California and the IRS):

"We are a group of individuals in the process of becoming a native Jewish spiritual community. Some of us come to the Minyan with deep roots in the tradition; all of us, whether we have a knowledge of the Jewish heritage or not, are seeking to root ourselves in one another, in Torah, in the Jewish people, in humankind, in the Divine. We see the symbols and rituals of the tradition as means to those ends. We are not interested in merely preserving the past, but rather, in the words of Rav Kook, 'making new the holy, and making holy the new.'

"We believe that each one of us can be a vehicle for the Light, that each can be a holy teacher and holy student to one another at different times.

"We are an egalitarian movement in which we recognize that each individual has the potential and the function to act as spiritual leader....

"Officers: Barry B.[Barkan], Burt J.[Jacobson], Yehudit and Reuven G.[Goldfarb], Charlotte C.[Cohen], Hanan S.[Sills]"

The officers were merely a roll call of those present and committed to the above statement.

Confirmation: In March the Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley sponsored a seminar with Rabbi Zalman Schachter. Since 1974, the Minyan has been the primary sponsor for Zalman's public teachings in the Bay Area, including his participation in the High Holy Day worship with the Minyan in 1974, '75, '76. Zalman has been an important member of the Minyan, since his visits have always meant a period of self-evaluation, both individually and as a group. The Aquarian Minyan has been an inspiration and teacher for Zalman and he has been an inspiration, teacher, and friend to literally hundreds of Minyan members. After the March seminar, Zalman and those present at the last sessions tentatively agreed that Zalman would not need to come again to present a public seminar under the sponsorship of the Minyan, that the Minyan could "fly on its own," [and] also that others might be better suited to present certain aspects of the teachings than he would be.

Minyan people worked hard this May to find speaking engagements for Zalman and Shlomo both so that David [Zeller] and Elaine [Heller] would not have to foot a large bill for the travel expenses of the Rebbes, and so that the wider public could experience the kind of teaching that many in the Minyan have appreciated for several years.

June, 1977: With our third birthday fast upon us, the Aquarian Minyan is going through its annual: "Where do we want to go as a group and who is willing to make what commitment for the future?" Individuals and small gatherings underwent a Shavuot experience. One group participated in the Eugene Shavuot experience with Zalman and thereby provided a valuable link between the Minyan of Berkeley and Zalman and the communities of the Northwest who are part of a new kind of Jewishing--a Jewishing which assumes new vessels can and are being continually created for the faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Leah, and Rachel.

During this month in Berkeley, participants and friends of the Aquarian Minyan will be meeting to talk about where we go from here. Anyone who wishes to make a commitment to such a community is welcome to attend the meetings.

* The thirty-one people who signed the original "List for Floating Crap Game" in June 1974 were: Judith Wallach [AKA Yehudit Goldfarb], Barry Barkan, Minucha Gleich [AKA Colburn], Wayne Black, Terry Shaudnhar, Sheldon Sklare & Judith Holtman, Basira Rosen, Joel Picheny [AKA Jacob]. Henry Rabinowitz, Sue Goldberg, Pat LaForce, Clifford Hersh, Laurel Zuckerman & Phyllis Sanders, Leonard Trupin [AKA Aryeh], Laurie Weiss, Nancy Brown, David Shaw, Barry Ring, Rolinda Rochlin [AKA Schoenwald], Ellen Brewer, Hakim & Aedstra Skelly, Vera Selig, Nanci Berkowitz, Bill Goldberg [AKA Meir], Royanne Levy, Thomas Sigman, David Mallon, and Susan Newman. [There were a few people who participated in the seminar and later in the Minyan whose names are not on the list because they happened to be absent when the list was passed around for signatures.]



KABBALAH

Rabbi Zalman Schachter is coming to Berkeley to teach Kabbalah under the co-sponsorship of SAT and Lehrhaus Judaica. Rabbi Schachter is a graduate of the Lubavitcher Chassidic Yesheva and is currently chairman of the department of Judaic Studies at the University of Manitoba. He has been a visiting teacher at Lama Foundation, House of Love and Prayer, Esalen, and SAT.

Zalman will be teaching a month-long seminar on Kabbalah from May 17 until June 16 at the Hillel Foundation, 2736 Bancroft Way. The seminar is an in-depth introduction to Jewish mysticism and is open to all serious students regardless of religion. No prior knowledge of Hebrew is necessary. We hope to make the language and experience of Jewish mysticism an accessible discipline in the lives of the participants. Personal interviews with Zalman will be available.

Please note that participation will be limited to seventy persons. It is advisable to mail your reservation and fee in advance. The seminars will be held on Wed., Thurs, and Fri. evenings from 7 until 10 PM, on Shabbat from 10AM until sunset, on Sunday from 10AM until 6PM, beginning Friday evening May 17 and ending Sunday June 16. There will be no sessions on Sun. May 26, Fri. May 31, and Sat. June 1.

The text for the seminar is Tanya Book I. It will be made available.

Zalman is a joy; working with him a rare and enriching experience.

I want to enroll in the Kabbalah seminar May 17-June 16 at Hillel.

THE PEOPLE MILL

Name..... mail to: SAT

858 Station Place
Berkeley Ca. 94707

Address.....

I enclose.....fee to cover expenses. for more information call

527-3952

\$120 general \$75 full-time students



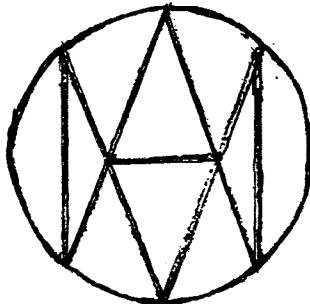
The purpose of the Order of the Aquarian Minyan is to create new vessels for the faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Leah and Rachel.

The people of the Order of the Aquarian Minyan connect with the faith of their parents to ordain men and women to provide in their communities the sacraments of birth, life, and death.

Men and women who accept the covenant pledge themselves to live in a way which is consistent with the faith as they experience it and to continue to grow within it.

Ordination may be bestowed by any three ordained people.

The Order of the Aquarian Minyan is a non-profit spiritual and educational foundation.





AQUARIAN MINYAN

858 STATION PLACE BERKELEY CALIFORNIA 94707

making new the holy making holy the new

GOOD NEWS

The Daily Cosmos reports that the Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley has moved a little closer to its path of honoring the elders of the tribe while allowing the room for the Rebbe in each person to be expressed.

At its Thursday celebration of being in the week, the Minyan decided to invite Reb Zalman to celebrate Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur with us and to invite Hallelujah! the Three Rings and the Sufis to share in the sponsorship of the celebration. (There's a whole lot of celebrating going around.)

Those at the meeting included Reb Bert, Reb Judith, Reb Yosef who was visiting from San Francisco, Reb Baruch, Reb Yakov, Reb Saide, Reb Minucha, Reb Juliette and Reb Barry. They chose to work to make the process of preparing for the holidays as important as their celebration.

For the past few weeks there has been the buzz of a discussion in the Minyan which has gone like this:

On the one hand, the spirit of the Minyan is tied to the notion that each among us has within him/her a strong Rebbe. This spirit has fostered each individual's assumption of responsibility for expressing the Rebbe and it is celebrated in the harmonizing of all its Rebbes. The Minyan has chosen not to establish a hierarchical model emanating from any one central figure.

But on the other hand: Reb Zalman is a profound and high Rebbe. He has lots to teach. He honors us by offering to spend the high holidays with us. Yet his knowledge and charisma is such that usually when he is present, there is a tendency for people to look to; him to assume the role of a central figure and for him to do so.

At the Thursday (May 29) meeting it was decided to invite Reb Zalman to be with us for holidays and for us to assume the responsibility for sharing in the development of the way in which the Days of Awe are to be practiced. It was suggested that the July workshop on aquarian ritual with Reb Zalman; and the Minyan be devoted to preparing for the way in which we will be together for the holidays. The group feels that the liturgy for the celebration of the Days of Awe be a harmonizing of the offerings of the participants.

A paradox was noted. There is alot we have to learn. And we know more than we think.

To rev up the process of learning what we need to learn and to; grow in touch with what we know. It was agreed that each Thursday night meeting prior to the July workshop would spend time and energy learning about the holidays and their meaning in our lives. Next Thursday, there will be some Mazurs provided and we will do some learning about the traditional liturgy.

Other topics suggested for the future include the archetypes of the holiday, learning on the process of turning, the meaning and celebration of the New Year as a human phenomenon, including other cultural celebrations, other times of year it is revered, and the use of ritual as living theater to take us where we need to go. As we move further into the work, other topics will unfold.

Reb Bert offered to put together a biblio and he asks for ideas about books to be included.

I agreed to assume the responsibility for promoting and producing the rite. In future weeks I will be offering specific tasks which will need volunteers.

Reb Yakov offered to maintain liaison with Zalman and confer with him, so he would be aware of our thinking and activities on the July workshop.

It was also decided that each person participating in the celebration would be asked to contribute a day's earnings or a day's work to cover the expense of producing such a celebration. In the event that more work is offered than there are tasks to perform, arrangements will be made for work commitments to be fulfilled with an organization which does "the work" and needs humanpower.

The Thursday meeting was energetic. The consensus was of strong commitment to create a worship which would delight The One and all participating manifest forms.

May the spirit of The One fill our hearts. And may the path we have chosen be in The Name.

Submitted for the sake of clarity
and with love,
by

Barry Barkan

(1975)

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AQUARIAN MINYAN OF BERKELEY

! אלהינו אלהינו

Good Shabbos & welcome to the Aquarian Minyan!

If you are here for the first time, you may wish to know something about us.

We are a group of individuals in the process of becoming a native Jewish spiritual community. Some of us come to the Minyan with deep roots in the tradition; all of us, whether we have a knowledge of the Jewish heritage or not, are seeking to root ourselves in one another, in Torah, in the Jewish people, in humankind, in the Divine. We see the symbols & rituals of the tradition as means to those ends, toward That End. We are not interested in merely preserving the past, but rather, in the words of Rav Kook, "making new the holy, & making holy the new."

We believe that each one of us can be a vehicle for the Light, that each can be a holy teacher & holy student to one another at different times. We have been especially fortunate in having Reb Zalman Schachter with us on many occasions. Zalman is a superb human being. He has helped us open our doors of Jewish spiritual perception. As Zalman has encouraged us to be teachers, students & friends, so have we encouraged him to be our teacher, & student & friend.

]

We often express our feelings for one another through touching & embracing. Some who have visited us for the first time wonder what this signifies. In our society physical contact is almost always interpreted as a preliminary cue to developing a one-to-one relationship, or as an invitation to sexual relations. Touching can, of course, be this kind of sign. But very often people are afraid to touch one another because they fear that this will mean that they are prematurely binding themselves to the other.

[over]

We believe that touching & embracing are natural symbols of the deep human & spiritual love that each of us has for the other as fellow lovers of the Divine. We are aiming toward a spirituality that understands the body as an extension of the spirit. In the Minyan touching may be one or many things: a sign of friendship, a cue to sex, or a way of saying, "We are all brothers & sisters." As far as we are concerned, any one of these may or may not be divine, depending on where the individual is in her or his life.



A few things to be aware of:

1. We usually meet ~~here~~ at ^{member's homes} ~~member's homes (363) Station Place /~~ on Friday nights at 7:30 ^{some times} for our Shabbos celebration. You are also welcome to a Torah study session that begins at 6:30 sharp. The evening concludes with a pot-luck dinner around 10 or 11 o'clock. Please bring something to contribute to the pot-luck.
2. Since ~~the~~ ^{the} house is our synagogue, we are all expected to help clean up the house at the end of the evening. If you are leaving early, please ask what you can do to help.
3. There are Tzedakah boxes for contributions to the Minyan ~~on the left side of the doors~~ as you enter. We ask for a \$1. contribution each Friday night. We use this money for the evening's expenses (hallah, candles, wine, paper plates, etc.) & we are planning to develop a Minyan library.
4. If you would like to be on our address list to be informed about seminars & other events, please write your name, phone number & address on the blank below & leave it on the shelf next to the Tzedakah boxes.
5. We usually meet Thursday nights at 7:30 at the home of Robert Goldfarb Judith Wallach (913 Ensenada Ave./ 525-6434). We do some meditation, evaluate the previous Shabbos experience, & plan Friday night together. We may study Torah & discuss new issues & directions for the Minyan. perhaps most important, we get to know one another better as individuals in a way that is different from how we relate on Friday night. We feel that it is an important growth experience, & we invite you to participate, & if you desire, to take responsibility for some aspect of Shabbos or the Minyan's functioning.
Some Thursdays we meet at the home of Barry Burkan and Debby Cushman (2719 Derby / 348-2053).

MAY HE BLESS YOU & MAKE YOU ONE OF HIS REBBES!

.....
Name..... Address..... Phone.....

From Reel to Real
An Interview with Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

Conducted by Rabbi Victor Gross

Transcribed by Reuven Goldfarb

Victor: Testing--one, two, three...

Zalman: So you shoot.

Victor: Well, what we wanted to explore was the early period of the Minyan, and, from the perspective of 25 years, what role has the Minyan played in contemporary Jewry in fostering a new approach to the search for spirituality--

Zalman: Wonderful! So, hear me out. Okay. Could you be--what's the name of the guy who interviews people on those wonderful series--he handled Joseph...Campbell....

Victor: Oh, Bill Moyers.

Zalman: You be Bill Moyers.

Victor: And you be Reb Zalman.

Zalman: Yeh. And then we're gonna transcribe it as an interview. It's gonna be wonderful.

Victor: Okay.

Zalman: All right. It's [up to] you to start.

Victor: So, there seems to be a historical revisionism that goes on, and it isn't always clear, the way the history is presented, how the Minyan came about. Let's begin from your perspective, and we'll proceed from that point.

Zalman: Very well. Way before even the House of Love and Prayer, that time the word came that there was a wonderful thing happening in Haight-Ashbury, and one of my students--a Reform Rabbi, Jerry Steinberg--went and spent some time in Haight-Ashbury, doing Jewish work. I don't know if anybody remembers him because, you know, the population was coming in, going out--and then Reb Shloime began to come here.

This was already in about '64, '65. Reb Shloime had a group that was the first House of Love and Prayer. Elana, who was [*i.e.*, later became] my wife, was one of the people there....

At the same time--there was this great ferment: there were three guys who were very good friends. One was Sufi Sam, the other one was Joe Miller, and the third one was Father Paul of the group called the Holy Order of Mans. Did you ever hear of it?

Victor: I heard about it.

Zalman: Right. So they were trying to do a Catholic renewal-type thing. And it was very beautiful--ordaining women, etc., etc. They used to wear blue clerical clothes with the Roman collars.

SAT presents

HIGH HOLY DAYS

~ a living experience of spiritual growth

with

Rebbi
Zalman
Schachter



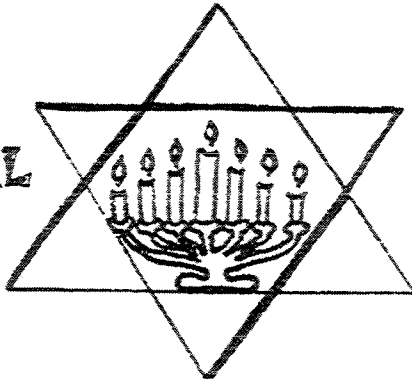
The Sufi Choir
Steve Kaplan

Rabbi Abe Feinberg
Halleluja! The Three Rings

and eminent guests from the Christian Ministry,
Zen Buddhism and Bio-energetics

at
GLIDE
MEMORIAL
CHURCH

TAYLOR & Ellis
San Francisco



ROSH HASHONA

Sept. 16-17-18

YOM KIPPUR

Sept. 25-26

For many years, Rabbi Schachter has lovingly and courageously explored ritual as a way of liberating our innermost selves. - "Through meditation, chanting, breathing, davening and sacred dance, we will experience the High Holy Days as ritual in depth, and take stock of our inner lives, that a new page may be written in the book of life."

The Celebration, as a deepening of the richly traditional liturgy of Judaism through the ineffable language of music, gesture, and silence, and through the eloquence of man speaking out, will be a truly momentous occasion.

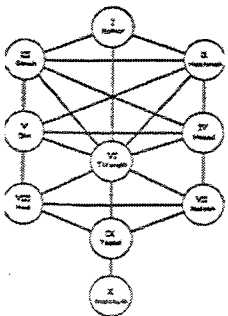
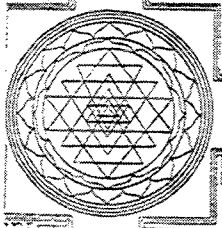
DONATION: \$60 general \$30 unemployed
-single services by arrangement

For Reservations:
SAT Institute
89 Kensington Rd.
Kensington, Ca. 94707



for information call
415-527-3952

SAT is a non-profit religious & educational corporation under the directorship of Dr. Claudio Naranjo



The master of the Seder lifts up his cup of wine



"Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord"

Now these three were doing things. The one was doing it in Christianity; Sufi Sam was doing it in Islam/Sufism; and Joe Miller was doing it in Buddhism. And they were sort of the Gurus of the West Bay at that time.

On the East Bay, there were other things starting. Tarthung Tulku had come and set up a place. And very, very powerful was the work of Dr. Claudio Naranjo. Claudio Naranjo ran several groups that were sort of "beyond Gurdjieff." Very powerful stuff. He had learned from Oscar Ichazo the Arica and was a psychiatrist--an M.D.; he experimented with all the consciousness-expanding things and was the one who sort of discovered Hoffman of the Fischer-Hoffman Process--Hoffman Institute.

Victor: Mm mm.

Zalman: Esalen and Big Sur were big news at that time, and Fritz Perls was the rage. Teachers would be coming through, like Baba Hari Dass, Chogyam Trungpa, etc., etc.--all these guys were doing their thing, and body stuff was happening with Stan Keleman, and Harish and Tariq were doing Indian Tantra. The place was hopping at that time. And each time somebody else came with a stronger high, as it were, y'know? And so I was invited once, by Hillel, to come and afterwards [I was invited] by Claudio Naranjo; and while I was doing these things here, I was having some contact with the people at the House of Love and Prayer.

George Calmenson was in charge of the Esalen San Francisco [and now he's working closely with Barry Barkan]. So we made a deal that in 1973 I would be coming into San Francisco and do a Rosh HaShanah two-day thing and then do a Yom Kippur thing. And so I translated portions of the Machzor that are in *Hashir V'hashevach [The Song and the Praise: A collection of prayers, songs, hymns, blessings and psalms]* by Reb Zalman, published by Aleph]. And about two hundred people showed up, with their zafus and with everything else, y'know; and I brought along recording equipment (I would travel at that time with a trailer--one of those 13-foot trailers behind a half-ton truck). Those were not yet so sophisticated days that you had short cassettes. So I had made a loop that would play an instrumental pa-da-da-da-da-da. So Rosh HaShanah night, with that I set up that service, I mimeographed--printed off--that Machzor, so that everyone should have it--it was a great service. Esalen San Francisco was not happy with the money of that, but there was a strong echo, and I would come back a couple of more times. And some of the people, they were--how would I say?--they didn't have a nucleus yet. But some of the Sufis were involved, and so on. So one of the people who can tell you a great deal about that period is Parvati. (*Rabbi Pam Frydman Baugh*)

I had heard the Sufi Choir before, and I wanted to come back and do Rosh HaShanah again. The people in the Bay Area wanted me to do Rosh HaShanah again, so we decided on Glide Memorial Church, and Ruth--Ruthy Allon, the Feldenkreis practitioner--was there, and we had a remarkable davvenen--I did an overhead projector--the Machzor with the overhead projector--the Sufi Choir singing, and instead of singing their usual Arabic, *Ya Malik, Ya Malik*, they were singing *HaMelech*. And I was doing the 24th Psalm which talks about "The King of glory shall enter....Who is the King of glory?" and so on and so forth, and it was a remarkable, remarkable davvenen. Yom Kippur night the sermon was preached by the Minister of Glide Memorial Church--Cecil Williams. Have you ever heard him preach?

Victor: Once, back in the early 70s.

Zalman: All right. Then you know the power that's there, right?

Victor: Absolutely.

Zalman: And he was preaching about *T'shuvah*, and the Sufi Choir was there, and it was such a wonderful, wonderful celebration. So between '73 and '74 and between '74 and '75, I made several visits here, often in connection with Hillel.

And we set up a study period in which I was gonna teach Tanya. And I saw people--I was very much into "the *Rebbe* thing" at that time. And I saw people, and they brought me little *kvitlach*, [a written request] on which they had written their life story, y'know, and I saw them in short fifteen minute things. And Barry Barkan came. Let him tell you the story how he proposed to me that he would teach me and I would teach him. And, I took him seriously.

Victor: As we've all learned to do.

Zalman: It was, it was, it was a joy--okay? So here, out of that hunger was set up--that--let's do something, an organization that would arrange for me to come and teach from time to time, and it was still very loose, okay? Also, Temple Beth El had invited me up in Berkeley. So I had gotten various invitations that had brought me there--and Claudio Naranjo would call on me from time to time. Once, he called on me to lead a session--like the Hoffman Institute work, with your own religion. The reconciliation and everything, expressing the rage, was wonderful stuff that he did.

So there was the group more or less that wanted to do Shabbatot together, and in those days we were so open to experimentation--it was a joy. I had a whole tape--a cassette--put together with pieces so that you could dance the whole Friday night service with the exception of the Amidah. And we did it with black light and with strobes. Can you imagine that?

Victor: It's still further out than what we're doing now.

Zalman: I know. But that was--it attracted people. They came. Someone, I forgot who-- the names don't come--wrote a Reform service: *Yism'chu--bubububububu, yism'chu--bubububububu, yism'chu v'malchut'cha shomrei Shabbat v'korey oneg--bubububububu*. And together with the strobe, dancing this thing out.

And then the *farbrengen* that would be afterwards, y'know, the Oneg Shabbat. And it was also the time of the sexual revolution, so that Friday night many people went home with partners, because they were turned on so much by the *davvenen*, by the good mood and the sharing that we did. So that was that period out of which more and more specifics--and I can't remember them--of the organization because I wasn't there when they were doing it. I had telephone contact with one or two of the people, and it was always a joy to think up the next series. We did a Chanukah series in one of the churches in Oakland. So ask the local historians about it, okay?

Victor: Right. What was the relationship in thinking and innovation, between your efforts at Havurat Shalom in Boston and what was beginning with the Aquarian Minyan?

Zalman: Ah! Wonderful. Havurat Shalom was basically Art Green's scene. Being Art Green's sort of older *chaver* and mentor then--that was my year of sabbatical--I was there when it was happening. And we were also pretty experimental--I'll give you an example--two examples.

One was that every time a turn of the season was, that Shabbos morning for *P'sukei d'Zimra* we played that part of Vivaldi [s Four Seasons]. People were very hot dancing to "I really wanna see you..." [George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord"]

Victor: Right.

Zalman: It was also a time where grass was a delight for many people--great discoveries. Every once in a while somebody came back from an LSD trip, and they experienced that. Uh, one of the chief people of the Havurah wrote, under a pseudonym, Itzchak Lodzer, an article on Kabbalah and LSD. So, they were not that far--how would I say?--behind in experimentation.

The other point I wanted to tell you--one from Rosh Hodesh. We had a Rosh Hodesh meal--I brought a *hibachi*--and each one brought a little *Korban* [offering] of their choicest morsel off their

FABRENGEN

WITH



עבודת ה' בשמחה
WORSHIP GOD IN JOY

WEDNESDAY JUNE 7 1978

8:00 P.M.

HILLEL FOUNDATION

2736 BANCROFT WAY BERKELEY

ADMISSION: \$3.50, \$3 STUDENTS SENIORS

David Barnea '77

plate. And it upset some people. But here there was this hibachi in the fireplace, and it was a *mizbay'ach* [altar], and I wanted us to experience what does it feel like if you offer a sacrifice.

With the Aquarian Minyan people, it was different. They didn't come from such a mental, intellectual background as the people in the Havurah. And the people in the Havurah are the people like Buzzy [Michael] Fishbane, Eddie Feld, Art Green, you know, all of them [now] Ph.D.s in Judaic Studies, and later on [Danny] Matt came in--so this was wonderful, fine, but they were more intellectual. You came to the Bay Area, there was a lot more on consciousness. Do you know, do you feel the distinction here?

Victor: I fully understand it. I remember at the time that Havurat Shalom was being founded I had just entered JTS Rabbinical School, and I remember Burt coming to the seminary--

Zalman: Yeah--

Victor: and kind of looking around for dissatisfied--

Zalman: Ah hah--

Victor: rabbinical students--

Zalman: Yeah--

Victor: and I had just entered, and I only became dissatisfied after the first month--

Zalman: Yeh--

Victor: but the talk was going around, and the talk was about establishing another Havurah in New York--

Zalman: Uh huh--

Victor: and I remember the fermentation that was going on--

Zalman: right--

Victor: We didn't hear, there, in New York, about anything going on in Berkeley, but we certainly heard about Boston.

Zalman: Yeh.

Victor: And in line with that, I've always been curious by some of the literature, talking about what they refer to as "New Age Judaism" that they call you the Zeide, whereas, as you heard the few times that I've spoken in your presence, that maybe Rav Heschel was the Zeide and you're the Abba.

Zalman: Well, it wasn't that quite. You could say "Zeide" in relation to the Havurah movement, because Art Green was the Abba.

Victor: Ah ha.

Zalman: When it came to the Jewish Catalog, the editors were the Abba--and Ema--and I was the Zeide! And the Jewish Catalog was a remarkable thing that came about. How would I put it? I had seen the Whole Earth Catalog, and I had met-- the Strassfelds --I did their wedding! And the co-editor with them...

Victor: Richard Siegel.

Zalman: Ah, Richard Siegel! I showed him the Whole Earth Catalog, and I said, "Do you see? We need something like this for Jewish." So then they studied with me one year--in '68--when I was at Brandeis. I was teaching a course in Psychology of Religion with labs.

That summer, the papers that were written at that time, were sort of the background... Some of them actually came into the Jewish Catalog, and that was the homework that the people did and then later on put into it--it grew. There were the things that had to do with Weiser's Farm and later on there were the Havurah Institutes in the summer which I attended and participated [in] and gave *shiurim* in them, so that was another part, okay?

Victor: To what degree, Reb Zalman, was this activity, like the Aquarian Minyan, similar to RaMBaM's "I'll tell you what G*d isn't"? That this was coming from a negative perspective of Judaism and not really knowing what they wanted; they knew what they didn't want.

Zalman: I'll tell ya, it didn't happen that way. They didn't come with the intellectual questions; they came a lot over the emotional being pissed off. You know what I'm saying?

Victor: Yes.

Zalman: And under the circumstances, --there was energy. People knew there was real energy there. The thing was pulsing. So the Friday nights at various homes and so on and so forth were always very very powerful. Sometimes at halls, when we had 'em, when I came to do a special weekend, for instance. It was remarkable. We danced! And I always brought recorded music for the dancing and for the davvenen that we did together. And there was a lot of teaching, and there was a lot of experience. And I wanna say that a lot of people came with liquid minds already to the service. So, you know what I'm saying? It wasn't like the Havurah in Boston.

Victor: Uh huh. So the Aquarian Minyan was the more ecstatic experience at the time--

Zalman: Right. And the language--you see, this is the Age of Aquarius, and the language was in the air. There was also a good bit that people were moving around. It wasn't like, "I belong to this place, I belong to that place." There wasn't that sense of belonging yet. It was a lot more like a floating crap game.

Victor: Well, that was the original name.

Zalman: Pardon?

Victor: That, according to Yehudit and Barry, was the original name for the Minyan- "the floating crap game".

Zalman: Well, that's how I called it. Partly because it pulled people together. They knew something was happening. When Elana and I got married in Hinkel Park, there must have been about--I don't know--500 or more people who were of Berkeley's finest. And with the tie-dyed, and with the robes, and with the this and with that. Some people still have pictures of it, y'know?

Victor: Mmm.

Zalman: So people would hear--where's the next big thing gonna happen, y'know? Who's gonna come in, be in such and such a place-- and so the fish swim in that direction. Do you see what I'm saying?



Victor: Were you conscious that you were creating something new, and possibly with permanence?

Zalman: No. Because the whole point there was at that point, as I was saying, that it was a floating crap game. Floating crap games don't have permanence. It didn't feel like that to me. What it felt to me was like I needed to infect people--with a bug, as it were--to say that Judaism can be ecstatic, can be exciting, deserves attention, can get you high. And my sense was that that was enough. But later on, when there was a possibility of creating a more steady thing, --I can't operate in as much chaos as Reb Shloime was able to operate. So --somebody had to be in charge--somebody had to set it up. And I didn't want--unless this was all taken care of--I didn't want to come. So there had to be some structure--it was an infrastructure for the floating crap game. Wasn't much more than that.

I was interested in home observances, for instance. I wanted people to make Shabbos in the various homes and celebrate, and it was paying a lot of attention on Friday night because it wasn't yet Shabbos morning--I could get some people together but not too many. Shabbos morning was always like--people loved to sleep--and loved to make a long Friday night for themselves. So that's how it began. But there were always serious classes--and labs. People were really willing to go with me when I would say, "Let's make these movements--let's experience this, experience that." In those days I had a lab, that was about body movement, to allow body movement in the davvenen, which began with the hokey-pokey and got people into dancing free-form to the Chazan's solo. So we did wonderful, wonderful things. And it wasn't an organization. Somehow it was being instituted organically by the people. But, later on, more people were interested, would ask, "Where can I get a hit of that?" So then Aquarian Minyan became that kind of a reality. And for some time it ran parallel with the House of Love and Prayer.

Victor: What do you see as the influence that Shlomo had on this development?

Zalman: As I was saying that there was a flow back and forth where the fish were going?

Victor: Right.

Zalman: So very often, there was sort of an understanding--some people were more Shlomo people, some people were more Zalman people but...uh...when Shlomo did a gig, and I was around there, I would go and be with him, y'know? It was almost as if we worked for the same boss, but--I'll give you an example. The first time Shlomo and I went on a *shlichut* from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, we went to Brandeis University--we came there for a Chanukah celebration. I'll make it short. In a little while, Shlomo was telling *meises* and around him there was a circle of people. I was standing on the periphery of the circle, and sort of juicing Shlomo, and people would say to me, seeing that I'm--you know, the same company, "This sounds like the Upanishads," or this one would say, "Well, what do you guys have to say about the theory of evolution?" I pulled these guys to the other side of the room so that I wouldn't disturb Shlomo with his thing, and pretty soon there were two circles, see?

It's like you dip a string into a solution. And this was crystals forming, y'know what I mean?

Victor: Mm hm.

Zalman: Well there was sorta--despite the fluidity of things, there were people who were more attracted to what they got from Shlomo, and some people were more attracted to what they got from me. I think those with more psychological religious bent would come to me.

Victor: Let's jump to one of the products of the Aquarian Minyan that seems to have been widely copied, and that's the Siddur. I wonder what your reaction to it is now, in retrospect.

Zalman: I think that if you view this as fluid, not as a publishing venture, because it was always, like Torah, it was a Torah *sh'ba'al peh*, not a Torah *sh'b'k'tav*, despite the fact that it was a Torah *sh'b'k'tav*. You know what I'm saying?

Victor: Right.

Zalman: So it could move on--Burt didn't like something that I had in one of my translations, he changed it, y'know? Burt was working on his tack, I was working on mine--and so these things were fluid. I can't think of two years having the same text.

Victor: Ah ha. You think that's the direction it should go back to, rather than having it bound?

Zalman: It's a different time. you see, the wonderful thing is that we responded to the time. If I had to say something, it would go something like this. Sheikh Sent Mikhayi (?)-- that psychologist from the Chicago University--talks about the flow. Flow is the place of creativity between pain and boredom. Got it?

Victor: Yep.

Zalman: The sense was that Aquarian Minyan stayed in the flow. Now it has a tradition already. And somehow we have that attitude that we want to justify who we were yesterday by being the same way today. You know what I'm saying?

Victor: Right.

Zalman: So you build traditions that way; but they also make you a captive. And, uh--

Victor: It's a new orthodoxy.

Zalman: Well, that's its problem, yah?

Victor: Right.

Zalman: But it also gives it structure.

Victor: Correct.

Zalman: It's like the old rings of the tree that were at one point the growing edge are now the hardened wood that holds the tree up straight.

Victor: Right. One of the things I'd like your opinion of is we've had, Nadya and I, innumerable conversations with Reb Burt about that split--the controversy about a spiritual community versus a pro-active socially involved community. And now, 15 years later, after Kehilla's existence, we've come and sensed that that is also an orthodoxy that the Minyan is holding on to that may or may not be proper anymore.

Zalman: Mm hm. That's exactly my point. If the Aquarian Minyan were to live up to its--if I could say there is an intent. The intent is to stay in the flow. The Shekhina is now. You know? And what's coming down is what's coming down. And if we are the instruments of what is coming down, then we are vital. If we are instruments of what came down, we are not as vital.

Victor: Whew!

Zalman: A lot of the stuff that's coming down now is a need for structure. And people mistake that as a need for orthodoxy.

Victor: Whew! Amen.



Zalman: See, the difference between one and the other goes as follows. I call it the difference between the exo-skeletal beings and the vertebrates. A vertebrate also needs bone structure that's hard, but it gives it structure on the inside. And I think the need for structure is what's coming through very strong, and along with it a need for being able to work on real information, rather than on vague--how would I say it?--visceral feelings.

Victor: And do you see that same connection with the issue of Halacha in the Minyan?

Zalman: As long as Halachah is a process-*holekh*, walks-it's moving; it's in process. Then it's doing what it needs to do. But there is also Halachah with a capital "H," which is the way orthodoxy defines Halachah--"Ya gotta do it always in this way." And I used to teach this, and put a lot of emphasis behind it, that there was a difference between the Book of Deuteronomy and the Book of Ecclesiastes, that if you go to Deuteronomy, you're always very anxious. Two people are old people--Shlomo HaMelech and Moshe Rabbeinu, yeh?

Victor: Right.

Zalman: Moshe Rabbeinu is old; he's also very anxious--"You're gonna screw up after I die, don't change anything, don't add, don't subtract, not to the right, not to the left," y'know? And Shlomo HaMelech said, "*Lakol z'man v'et l'khol chafetz*--To everything there is a time". And of the stuff, if you think you're gonna get an advantage in this universe which is dynamically balanced, forget it! So it comes out a lot more Taoistic, a lot more Buddhist--and that's a Judaism, too. Deuteronomy isn't the only thing. And so in the total body of Jewish life, in the organism of Jewish life, some people have to represent the *Kohélet*--the Taoistic thing. So I wanna make a distinction, I'd say, to use a Chinese thing, so I say, the Halachists are the Confucianists.

Victor: Right.

Zalman: And we are more Taoist! So it doesn't mean that Taoism doesn't have structure; it has a dynamic structure. And that's what's coming down, and it asks for deepening, and that's why manifestations like Chochmat HaLev are coming up, why we feel we need to have a Happy Minyan. And why we want to be able to go for *Yahrzeit* either to Oakland or to Berkeley to the shul--it's just that: this ability to be ferment fermenting.

Victor: One of the questions I posed some months ago to Barry was: what would he consider the irreducible foundation of the Aquarian Minyan? That no matter what changes take place, that can't be tampered with. And he thought about it, and he said, "The right to be crazy."

Zalman: Ah hehhehheh! As you say it I can see his face.

Victor: That was his face. It strikes me there's a great profundity there. It's not saying you have to be innovative--that's part of it.

Zalman: Yeah.

Victor: But there's more to it.

Zalman: Pushing the envelope beyond the normal limit--that's one of the things--but there's another thing. There's a real love that the people have--there's spiritual intimacy around like you can't find in any other shul. Kehilla is nice--I'm not saying Kehilla isn't doing its job, and Beyt Tikkun is fine, it's doing its job. But the spiritual intimacy that over the years has developed, with the clearing, sharing, you know, all the processes they were going through--it's fantastic!

Victor: I made the comment after several months here, regarding process, that process is very nice, but occasionally it's nice to see product.



Zalman: Yeah.

Victor: And I think that one of the problems is that process is something to hold on to when one doesn't have a clear vision of where you wanna go, with the hope that the process will reveal it. And it seems that not only the Minyan but, in a way, Jewish renewal is getting close to that stage where the vision is something that was a past vision that people who are coming to it are relying on rather than continually creating an ever-recurring vision.

Zalman: So we are on the same page. We are on the same page. Alright. Take one more or two more things, and then I'm gonna sign off for the day.

Victor: Okay.

Zalman: Oh, by the way, when you get it transcribed, and sort of a little bit edited, send it to me, okay?

Victor: Absolutely.

Zalman: Okay. Go ahead.

Victor: If you sit back in your chair, what do you think the Minyan has contributed to contemporary Jewry?

Zalman: If I were to look at a human body and were to say how much room does musculature take up in the body, I would say, more than half--right?

Victor: Yeah.

Zalman: If I were to ask, how much room does the pituitary gland take up--

Victor: Not much.

Zalman: Not much. But the pituitary sets a clock in motion for the rest of the body--right?

Victor: Mm hm.

Zalman: If you have an organismic point of view about Klal Yisrael, you realize that the enzymes, that the hormones that the Minyan gives off flow all through, and each time there's a Kallah, there's another fertilization happening.

Victor: Well, I wanna give a chance--if I'm Bill Moyers, I should say that my Walter Cronkite is here. So she can chime in with anything else...

Zalman: Hey, Nadya, *leben!*

Nadya: How are you? It's so good to hear your voice.

Zalman: Baruch HaShem! I'm sitting here and relaxing with you, but I gotta go soon to do something else.

Nadya: Good, good. Well, I walked in in the end of the middle, or the middle of the end.

Zalman: So, what is something that you would like to make sure I respond to? Go ahead.

Nadya: Oy.! I'm not sure what all went before, but I think I would like to hear from you-- Victor was talking about vision, and it's a big issue for us here- creating and owning a shared vision in this community. So what would you consider to be essential elements of that process and of the vision that's ongoing?

Zalman: I think we could work well in seven year segments. Do you know what I'm saying?

Nadya: Yah.

Zalman: I think if it gets beyond that, we lose it. So I would want to ask the people to have a Council session in which you have a talking stick, and people begin with the word "And...," and when they are finished, they say, "I have spoken."

Sitting in Council session and to have done before some reading from Yeshaya [Isaiah] beforehand. And some meditation afterward. And after the meditation could begin the Council meeting on the question, "What I would like to see the Minyan be like in seven years from now." And then to have the people sit quietly with that and to get up and speak when they have a word to say.

Try that process, and you will see what will come. A lot of times people want to do deficit financing by saying what I didn't get before, when I needed it, I wanna finance that deficit.

Nadya: Yeah.

Zalman: And it's not necessary! On that one we declare a *shmitah*. That's why I like seven years.

And say, we don't have to pay for the past--what we missed. Where do we wanna be then? Now one of the things that comes up in that relationship is the question of intergenerational stuff.

Nadya: Yeah.

Zalman: Here's where Naomi Hannah and her chevre are very important. Next there's an element of--you don't have a Chevra Kadisha yet.

Nadya: That's right.

Zalman: Well, for me, the question comes up of where I want my remains to go. At this point, it feels like if, at Elat Chayyim, we could have a cemetery, I would like to be buried there.

Victor: Mm hm.

Zalman: Then I'm asking more and more people from the Minyan, and not only the Minyan--you can talk to Beyt Tikkun, and to Kehillah, and to Dan Goldblatt, you know? Could you create a shared cemetery?

Nadya: Yeah.

Zalman: Now could you imagine how you'd want it to be? You'd want to have a place where people could come, and have a cot there if they needed to do a retreat in the chapel--

Nadya: Yeah, wow--

Zalman: Where the *tahara* can be made.

Nadya: Mm hm.



Zalman: And that's the ground. That's gonna be the ground. And I would like to see picnics happening there.

Victor: Yes.

Zalman: Do you know what I'm saying?

Victor: Yes.

Zalman: To create that kind of a thing? And to have a sort of *maskeret* place. If your *zeide*, for example, is buried in New Jersey, but he left you, let's say, a watch that doesn't work any more--to make a little mound there and to place that in the ground and to have this as the place where you visit your *zeide*.

Another question that I want to bring up--and it's not for the next seven years, but it may be fourteen years from now--if you think of retirement homes as they are today, what kind of retirement home would Minyan people want to have for themselves?

Nadya: The type that Barry's and Debby's is.

Zalman: But do you understand what I'm saying?

Nadya: Yes.

Victor: Absolutely.

Zalman: So the infrastructure has to be set. Another thing has to happen about schooling for kids. I would like to see sort of a Bar Mitzvah thing with Vision Quests, with life skills, it's not only calling to the Torah.

Nadya: Right.

Victor: Yep. Well, those are the things that we're beginning to raise as the next projects that the Minyan has to turn its attention to.

[Interviewer's Note: ...and so with images of the past merging into our experience of the present; and Reb Zalman's "charge" for the future, our conversation came to a close with our expressions of gratitude and his blessings for all of us.....]

From House to Aquarian Minyan

Aryae Coopersmith 1999

A strange side effect of being born just before the Boomers is that no matter what you do, there will soon be millions of slightly younger people doing the same thing. If you were born then you know what I mean. I want to tell this story because I think it's not only about me, but also about a generation.

December 1943: Bronx, NY. My grandfather, president of his schul, is torn between joy at the birth of his first grandson, and grief at the death of his youngest brother in a Nazi concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. My uncle has enlisted in one of the U.S. Army units preparing to invade Europe.
December 1944: Belgium. My uncle dies in the Battle of the Bulge.

December 1956: Palisades Park, New Jersey. I'm standing at the bimah for my bar-mitzvah at Congregation Sons of Israel. Like the other boys and men in the schul, my hair is short, and my suit lapels and tie are narrow. I am shaking and the rabbi is trying to calm me. I perform my Torah and Haftarah readings. I don't understand the words, but I can chant them perfectly. I do my job well, and my parents and family are proud. That night there is a big, expensive party, and I collect over \$3000 in checks. Everyone can see that we are a prosperous and successful family, and are confident I will carry that success to new heights. My best friend, Ricky, isn't Jewish. My family is treating him differently from my other friends. I feel embarrassed.

Over the next few years my grandfather kept asking me why I didn't go back to schul. I couldn't explain it to him. It just didn't feel good. Most of my friends who grew up Jewish in America in the 50s felt the same way. If my grandfather were here today, I could tell him why. June 1965: Paris, France. I experience God for the first time, under the towering spires of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. This is my first acid trip. The LSD is from an Arab in trade for some of the hashish I picked up in Jerusalem. I experience what I never learned in schul: God is present, God is real, God is one, the world is one. After the trip is over, God goes away. I feel abandoned.

From Paris I go to San Francisco. I have such longing to bring God back. I take acid trips in Golden Gate Park, chant "Hari Om Namoh Shiva" with Allen Ginsberg, chant "Hari Krishna" with Swami Baktivedanta, take Tai Chi classes, study Yoga, sit ZaZen.

December 1965: San Francisco State College. My hair is long and my beads are pounding against my chest as I dance for hours. Then I stand with hundreds of other students in concentric circles with our arms around each other, singing. I am holding tight to the blond woman on my right and the black man on my left. I feel us all melting into each other, like there's only one being here. In the middle of the circle is the singing rabbi (Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach). "Our holy master, the Holy Baal Shem Tov, tells us something very beautiful," he says. "He says if everyone in the world would hold hands, the hands would reach to heaven." Starting that second, it begins to dawn on me, like warm rays of sunshine after a long night. Somehow there is a roadmap in the wisdom of my own people, a way to bring God back.

Within a couple of months a group of us in the Bay Area start getting together for Shabbos at the tiny one bedroom home of Alex and Miriam Scott (later Elyah and Miriam Succot) on a green hillside in Forrest Knolls. The guests all crash in sleeping bags on the living room floor. We praise God, sing Shabbos songs, wander the rolling hills and occasionally drop acid. When Shlomo is in California, we gather all our instruments, dogs and babies and travel with him to sing at his concerts. We dream of creating a community. June 1967: Haight Street, San Francisco. Alex and I are walking with Shlomo on Haight Street. It is the Summer of Love. Shlomo plunges into the crowd, hugging everyone, inviting them all to spend Shabbos at Alex and Miriam's. I am amazed at Alex's equanimity.

Shlomo dreams of having a house in San Francisco where we can invite all

these "kids," as he calls them. When I ask him to say more, he answers, A House of Love and Prayer is a place where, when you walk in someone loves you, and when you walk out someone misses you." This is as specific as he gets.



Shlomo has told us about the time in 1948 when the old Lubovitcher had sent for him and Zalman (Rabbi Zalman Shalomi-Schacter). The Rebbe told Shlomo and Zalman, his two most brilliant students, that it was time for them to leave Brooklyn, to go out and connect with the younger generation of Jews scattered across America. They took him very seriously. From the time they left Brooklyn, the journey never really stopped.

"The Nazis may have destroyed our bodies," he said, "but America was destroying the souls of our children." Where did the six million go? The Rebbe believed that these holy souls were coming back and growing up in America in my generation. I asked Shlomo if he believed that. He closed his eyes and sighed. "What do we know?" he said.

February 1968: Los Angeles. I'm sitting with John Seaman by the side of the pool at the motel where we're staying with Shlomo. The sun is out and it feels amazingly warm for February. Last night's concert was huge; we stayed up until 4 AM, and we're all totally wiped out. Shlomo is hard to keep up with. It seems like he never stops.

I'm feeling depressed. Like everyone else in our group, I'm getting tired of waiting for Shlomo to do something about starting a House of Love and Prayer. He has promised us we'll have one, soon. When I ask him how, he sighs, rolls his eyes and says, "Oy vey! I wish I knew!" People are starting to leave. The biggest blow was when Alex and Miriam left for Jerusalem a couple of months ago. We sit in silence for a while.

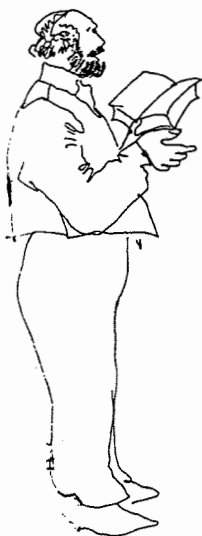
Suddenly John looks up at me. "Maybe it's not his job," he says.

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"To start the House of Love and Prayer," he says.



John looks at me. "Maybe it's your job," he says simply. I don't have a good answer. I am shocked at the obviousness of his idea. We sit in silence. I watch the reflections of the sunlight off the little waves in the pool. April 1968: San Francisco. John has made me a gift of his life savings, which amounts to \$350, to get started. The first realtor I go to shows me a stately old Edwardian home, immaculately maintained, that belongs to the estate of two sisters who lived in it all of their lives. The younger recently passed away. The house has plenty of spacious, airy rooms, and the energy feels good. I ask the realtor how much it rents for.



"300 a month," he says, "plus a \$50 security deposit."

"I'll take it," I say. I move in that week. May 1968: House of Love and Prayer. Alex and Miriam cancel their tickets for Israel, return from the East Coast, and move in. Shlomo is telling everybody, and people are showing up from all over the world. We are committed to maintaining this as Shlomo's house. When strangers walk in, we try to make them feel loved. Soon people are coming and going 24 hours a day.

Our Shabbosim are unbelievable. I don't know how to explain it or even understand it. It feels like we're transported to another dimension. The joy is so intense that the only thing I can do is to sing, or shout, or dance for hours, or hug everyone, or just close my eyes and cry. It feels like the tears and laughter

of a hundred generations of our people are exploding in a wave that carries us all the way to God's revelation at Mount Sinai, or to the beginning of creation itself. Once you have this experience, your nervous system is changed, and your soul is changed, and you can never go back.

Hundreds of people show up every week to be with us for Shabbos. About 50 will typically sleep on the floor of the prayer room and dining room. Services last until after midnight and we sometimes don't get to sleep until dawn.

When Shlomo comes to join us, every few months, we pack up and travel with him to his concerts all over California. Then, every day is Shabbos.

August 1968: House. We discover that there is another side this experience: there are, after all, seven days in the week. What about the other six? Alex and I teach some classes. But it doesn't seem to be enough. People come and go. People hang out. The garbage piles up. Conflicts arise. The bank account is often empty. I get frustrated. What are we supposed to do when Shlomo isn't around? Where do we go from here? Zalman comes for Shabbos. I am very glad to see him. He seems grounded. His energy feels calming. He shares his dreams of Bnai Or: a community whose members become artisans and revive the ancient spiritual crafts of our people, making talasim, Torah scrolls, mezuzot, challah covers, kiddush cups. He says we have to not only awaken our souls but also build a home for our bodies that is worthy and becoming and sustainable. He wants to build a community where that can happen. I ask him how we can start doing that here. "Shlomo is your rebbe, not me," he says. "You have to work with Shlomo."

November 1969: House. New people keep walking in, endlessly, seven days a week. Trying to love them all leaves me exhausted. I want to go away and hide. Alex and Miriam have again left for Israel, this time for good, and I am teaching and leading services on my own. Other people are leaving as well. The House seems like a way station. People come in and get turned on to Shabbos, to the depth of their souls, to God's oneness. Then it's time to move on. Many are following a similar path to Alex and Miriam. They find orthodox yeshivas in Israel and the States committed to embracing alienated Jews and bringing them back. Letters arrive all the time. Initially they are as exuberant and colorful as hippies who dance all night at the House. Eventually they become more restrained, more sober and serious.

I wonder if there is any Jewish community out there, any place that can receive and nurture my joyful, wacky, exuberant friends without turning them into "black hats." One Shabbos I see a man about my age, mid-twenties, who seems thoughtful and serious. I call him up for the Torah reading. His name is Robert Goldfarb. We use his Hebrew name, Reuven.

February 1971: New York and San Francisco. The House community was falling apart, and we had to shut it down. On a conference call with Shlomo in New York, we come up with a new plan: a House of Love and Prayer Yeshivah. This time we'll be more grounded. We'll buy a house, hire teachers, recruit students from all over the U.S., charge tuition, build a community. Shlomo loves it. I make a deal with him: I'll be executive director, raise funds, lead services and run the place, if Shlomo will stay with us and teach four months a year. He agrees.

September 1971: 1456 9th Ave. The new House opens. We are all very excited. Students have come from all over the country. Shlomo will be here in a couple of weeks to start learning with us. We finish the carpentry work on the prayer room about 20 minutes before Rosh Hashanah. Pesach and Ne'eman and I quickly put the tools away. I rush upstairs to take a shower, and then come down to lead services.

April 1972: 1456 9th Ave. I left the House. It was an incredibly agonizing decision, and would take

more space to explain than I have here. The simplest way to say it is, when I led the prayers on Shabbos, God was no longer there. Maybe the reason is that I wasn't there either. I was just going through the motions. I was trying to lead a community by doing what I had learned from my rebbe: to act, as well as I could, like him. I was trying to make myself disappear, to become simply a channel for God's presence as I had received it from the rebbe. In retrospect I can see that it was the wrong model of leadership and the wrong model of community, at least for me.

Shabbos is the soul, and the week is the ego. To live, we need both. It is so, so hard to get the balance right.

February 1975: Noe Valley Community Store. Reuven and I have met again, as members of a collective in the People's Food System. I have recently completed my Masters of Humanistic Psychology program at Sonoma State.



It is Friday. Reuven and I are closing down the store for the night. As we work, he tells me about this group that is getting together in Berkeley. Zalman started it last year after he and Shlomo came together for a farbrengin. Some of my friends from the House are involved. Reuven is very excited. I get the feeling that there is a lot going on here. I feel a twinge of jealousy, but I am still too burned out from the House to even think of joining another Jewish community. Besides, I don't have a clue about what I would do or who I would be. Our last task is counting all the money from the cash register drawers and preparing the bank deposit. I'm busy stuffing coins into the paper rolls when I notice that Reuven has stopped. I look up at him. He's looking out the window.

"What?" I say.

"We blew it," he says.

"What do you mean?" I say. I look out the window again. "Oh my God, it's Shabbos!" We look at each other, our hands filled with money. First we smile. Then we crack up.

March 1994: Berkeley. The Aquarian Minyan of Berkeley, one of the oldest and largest of the world's Jewish Renewal communities, hosts a farbrengin for Reb Zalman and Reb Shlomo, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the one in 1974. Zalman and Shlomo reminisce about the old days, about their visit to the Rebbe in 1948 and their subsequent journey to find the Jews of the new generation. Someone asks them about the difference in how they teach. They both agree. Zalman is very wide, says Shlomo. With his knowledge and understanding he can reveal the relationship of the world's spiritual traditions, and connect the Torah to the whole world. Shlomo is very deep, says Zalman. He digs so deep into the well of the Torah and the soul of the Jewish people that his stories and songs reach the entire world.

I look at these two old men, standing together in front of us. They go back to Europe before the Holocaust. They knew the Hassidic rebbes of that generation. They are carriers of the seed stock of spiritual wisdom of a generation that was destroyed. They brought it to America, and planted it in the souls of a new generation of Jews. Zalman stands with his arm around Shlomo, smiling. "We're the last of the Mohigans," he says.

Thousands and tens of thousands of Jews of my generation have entered through the gateway that Shlomo opened up. When we arrived, we found that someone truly did love us. Then we had to move on. Some of us chose the spiritual right, channeling our joyful exuberance into the structure,

comfort and safety of traditional orthodox communities. Others found Shlomo's Moshav in Israel, or other Shlomo communities, and tried to live according to Halacha the way that Shlomo would do it. Still others have turned to the spiritual left, following Zalman to communities that are trying to renew the spiritual roots of our past to bring healing and transformation to the world today. Am I and my brothers and sisters of this generation, those of us who entered this gate and traveled this road, really the souls of the six million? As Shlomo said, "What do we know?"

October 1994, New York. Shlomo dies of a heart attack as he boards a plane en route to see his daughters. The road from the House to the Minyan is only one of many roads that have brought people to Renewal. Once, at a concert of San Francisco's new age spiritual communities at the height of the 60s, someone said to Shlomo that all our paths lead to the same place. Shlomo smiled. "You know, the way I see it is, we're all on the same path," he says, "we're just wearing different shoes."



The Earliest Days of the Minyan

Leonard Aryeh Trupin

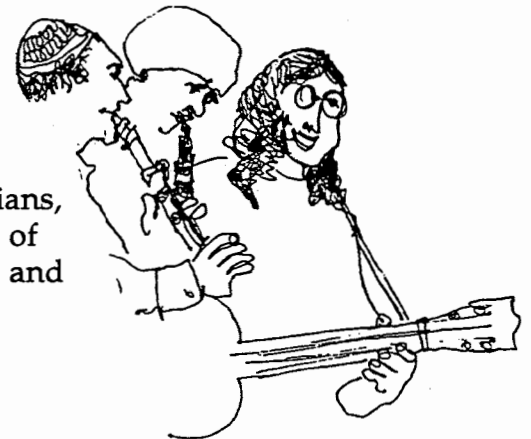
The group of people that became the Aquarian Minyan first got together with Reb Zalman at the end of 1973. Reb Zalman was teaching a seminar on the second book of the Tanya by Reb Schneur Zalman, the founder of the Lubavitch Movement in Eastern Europe. Reb Zalman returned to Berkeley in May of 1974 for a month long seminar on the the first book of the Tanya. This seminar was sponsored by the Seekers After Truth (S.A.T.), the self realization group founded by Dr. Claudio Naranjo. This seminar was produced with great loving care by Minucha Gleich (an incredible woman who was the founding mother of the Aquarian Minyan). She served chicken soup for us in order to heal our tzoris, hosted Shabbat the her home on Station Place behind Solano Avenue every Friday night. We processed with Barry Barkin and Yehudit Goldfarb the early relationship that the groups was to have with Reb Zalman. This seminar that initiated the founding of the Aquarian Minyan met for text study three times a week and for Shabbat Friday night and Saturday until Havdalah.

Reb Zalman was a conduit for our Jewish evolution. He was going into an evolutionary stage in his own life, and we were a perfect match of energy together. Reb Zalman has a cosmic history of Jewish mystical experience and he transmitted information that served as the foundation of a new vision of Jewish life. We connected with a fervency which is still spreading to so many people of diverse backgrounds. He had a familiarity with the great tzadikim in Hassidic history, to such an extent that many of us felt that Reb Zalman was one of the Tzadidim of whom he spoke. Everyone agreed that he was our leader, and each of saw something distinct and unique in his leadership. I admired his innate understanding of the consciousness that went into the ascent of the soul. Growing up in New York City, where to paraphrase Karl Marx, religion was the opium withdrawal of the people, to me, having a soul such as Reb Zalman with us was truly a blessing of Hashem. Each of us became transformed in our own way.

The early Minyan had a diversified interest in Jewish mysticism and Chassidus, an interest in cosmic religion and religious pluralism. We would chant "Om" at the end of each service. By chanting the sound of the Sanskrit name for G-d, we were at the same time chanting (in acronym) our official name-The Order of the Aquarian Minyan-OAM. Each of us was a rabbi, teacher, and friend to one another. In fact , we had an ordination ceremony to celebrate our intention to support each other in those roles. We had our first Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur services together with the Rev. Cecil Williams and the San Francisco Sufis at Glide Memorial Church, with Reb Zalman at the helm. We embodied the vision of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook in the transformation of Judaism in the 20th century. We were committed to making the Holy - New, and the New - Holy.

We were from every conceivable Jewish walk of life, secular and religious. I had only recently left the Berkeley commune where I had lived for four years. I had an interest in Jewish mysticism that was ignited by my being in the Aquarian Minyan.

The early Minyan was composed of college professors, disciples of Alan Watts, Hindu swamis, Buddhist meditators, Holy Beggars, high school kids from the suburbs, dropouts from the orthodox world, hippies from the sixties, Ph.Ds, successful businessmen, rabbis, MD's, graduate students, radical historians, lawyers, musicians, and religious scholars. All of them were personal representatives of the Shechinah. Each had a taste of the world to come in that time and the most wonderful and amazing Jewish experience of a lifetime.



Best wishes and love blessings, now and always.



Aquarian Minyan: A Path to Joy

Carol Caine

I met the Aquarian Minyan in early 1992 and my life has never been the same. The Minyan made me love being Jewish again. It showed me that being Jewish was fun and that Judaism was deeply connected to my real life. The Minyan also gave me a wealth of personal connections that healed my soul in a profound way. The group pulled me into its sweet embrace. I met a group that had the great good sense to laugh at my jokes. I felt part of a vibrant community of love. And, although I left the Bay Area several years ago, the connection continues. The Grateful Dead have a song in which this incredible band comes to town and turns everybody on. People don't know if it's day or night. The band packs up and leaves, and no one even notices. The people just keep dancing. It's been like that with the power the Minyan turned on for me. For me, like that song says, "the music never stopped."

Like so many people, I grew up feeling connected to Judaism in a cultural and familial way, but found little personal meaning there. I drifted away from it as I got older. I found a profound spiritual connection through a non-denominational spiritual fellowship. I wanted to connect this spiritual sense with being Jewish. I tried different Bay Area shuls and was not moved to return to any of them. What brought me back to Judaism in a full way was the Aquarian Minyan. My first Minyan Shabbat was in the Goldfarb's home. There were Reuven and Yehudit, so kind and welcoming, all dressed in white, filled with Shabbos joy, and with a Torah in the middle of their living room. I heard people speaking from their hearts and singing with abandon--and doing so within the context of a Jewish service. It was like a dream come true. I could integrate my deep spiritual yearnings with being Jewish. I didn't have to hold them in separate compartments anymore.

That Shabbos was Shabbat Zachor, the Sabbath of Remembrance. Reuven suggested we discuss something we remembered that week. I became more and more nervous as we went around the room and people were saying, "I had a dream"...."I had a vision." I thought, "I didn't have a dream or a vision, what am I going to say?" Then Lisa, in her charming New York accent, told of her memory, involving a plot from the old I Love Lucy show, and everyone broke into hysterics. When it was my turn, I took a similarly lighthearted approach. One of the most delightful things about the Minyan is the openness for everyone to enter wherever you are. In fact, there was a gentleman there that night whom I believed lived on the street. He had a ski mask pulled down covering his face. I recall Reuven turning to him and brightly asking, "does our anonymous friend have anything to say?" He wanted to make space for this guest as well.

I quickly became more and more involved in the Minyan. I started going to services every Friday, joined in the Shavous and Joys of Jewishing retreats, and eventually served on the governing Council. I often wondered, "what did I do with my time before I became involved in the Minyan?" I loved learning the full cycle of the Jewish holy days. I remember the incredible joy I felt when I danced with the Torah on Simchat Torah. It was the first time I'd ever touched a Torah. At my first Joys of Jewishing retreat, our excitement mounted as the skies darkened on Friday. I thought that this must be what our ancestors in the old country felt when Shabbos approached. It was so powerful to stay up all night on Shavous and then daven early in the morning.

Our rabbi among rabbis at that time was David Wolfe-Blank, may his memory be for a blessing. David was the first, "cool rabbi" I ever knew. I didn't know rabbis could be regular

people. I remember David leyning and simultaneously translating from Torah in a way that made it seem like a real story that happened to real people. I remember his supernatural glow as he prepared to lead High Holy day services, and his total humanness as he lay on the floor in his purple zipped up sweatshirt during our "sharing and clearing" meetings, saying how he really felt. I remember David waking everybody up by starting a fight at 3 in the morning during a Shavous retreat. He felt we weren't being serious enough. Two hours later, he led us down to the morning mikveh, feeling very pleased with himself. Once during a pre-holy day camp out, I was there for the day but was not planning to stay overnight. David told me that he was the rebbe and I couldn't leave without his permission. I kept saying, "give me a break, David, I don't need your permission! And he kept insisting that I did. I never exactly admitted that I needed his permission nor did he admit that I didn't. But before I left I spoke with him. He asked me a series of bizarre meta-David questions, to which I mumbled some kind of barely coherent semi-serious replies. And then he granted his permission (which I didn't need).

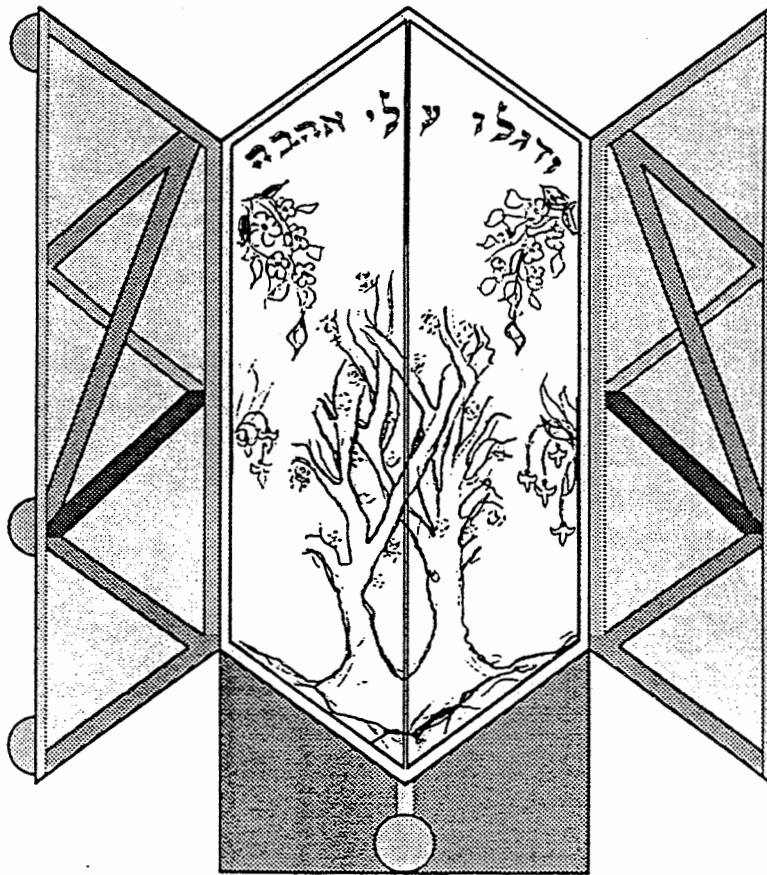
During my time with the Minyan I became heavily involved on the organizational level. At that time, policy was set at monthly business meetings, which were open to all. In practice, the same people attended the meetings, made the decisions, and did all the work. When I arrived there was significant dissension between the organizers and those who felt excluded from the so-called "in-group". There was already movement to change the structure in some way. I was integral to a reorganization that led to the election system for the Council we have now. This process was lengthy, emotional and intense. We always wondered who would threaten to walk out of the meeting this time! And the saving grace was to keep our sense of humor about it. Once someone called me an "apologist." I was going to apologize to her, but then she would have really thought I was an apologist! Another time someone stated opposition to David's contract with the very unfortunate choice of words, "I don't think David should get the money." David told me later, "I'm going to call up where she works and tell them not to pay her!" What made all this tsouris bearable for me was the knowledge that everybody on all sides of all the issues loved the Minyan and wanted to make it work.

Then there was the time I attended a meeting of synagogue presidents at the East Bay Federation. Actually, we didn't have a president. I was the main person insisting that we have a president or chairperson of the board or someone like that who could represent the Minyan. Our longtime treasurer, Miriam Stampfer, got us invited to this meeting from her work with Federation. She didn't want to go herself; she was already the treasurer. After some phone calls back and forth, it was decided that I should attend. The topic of the meeting was "your synagogue's fund raising policy." When it was my turn to speak I acknowledged that we didn't have a president—or a fund raising policy. They were all very friendly to me and didn't seem to mind. After that we decided we had to have an official we now call the shomer or shomeret.

I left full-time participation in the Minyan when I moved to Philadelphia, but I never really left. Instead, I am now a proud member of the "Aquarian Minyan Alumni Association," a very illustrious group indeed. I continue to feel connected to Minyan members, including people who were involved either before or after I came along. Uriel Hadassah/Wave Korpi became a dear Minyan buddy, and we were never in the Minyan at the same time. Rabbis Victor and Nadya Gross feel like my Minyan rabbis, too. They fit in so perfectly that I thought, "these people must have been chosen by central casting!"

I've made a particularly blessed Aquarian Minyan alumni connection with Rabbi Shefa Gold. When I joined the Minyan Shefa had already been gone for several years, but she left her aura behind. And her music. Every time I heard something she wrote, I was moved and said something like, "wow, who wrote that?" We met at the Berkeley Kallah. I've been privileged to have her as a special teacher in my life. Our mutual connection with the Minyan is part of that in some sweet way. Several months after I'd made this connection with Shefa I finally spoke about it at one of our sharing and clearing meetings. I looked out on all these faces who loved me and loved her, too. Everybody beamed as I spoke, as if to say, "it's all in the family." Reuven starting singing, "may we always remember where we come from." He even knew how the la-la-la part went!

My last Minyan Shabbos before I moved was Shabbos Shuvah, which was, of course, at Miriam's house. Shefa was there, in between holy day services with her congregation in Ukiah. We danced Lecha Dodi on the porch, as always. During the Barchu through Amidah we gathered close with our arms around each other. My left arm was around David and my right arm was around Shefa. I felt this profound connection coursing through me and centering in my heart. I still feel that place inside me. As I go to the next step in my life, entering the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in the fall, I pray to hold that sweet place deep inside me. The music never stopped!





Open Forms & Closed Forms

--Poetry, Liturgy, & Nusach--

Reuven Goldfarb, *Morenu*

Modern poetry, beginning with the dithyrambic lines of Blake's prophetic books--or even earlier, with the biblical cadences of Christopher Smart--and stretching forward to Whitman and our own Allen Ginsberg, exhibits a tensile strength concerned with throwing off the chains of superfluous outer control. Charles Olson, the poet and theoretician, draws a useful distinction between "open forms" and "closed forms," taking the outworn debate between advocates of conventional and free verse to a more subtle and sophisticated level of discourse. To paraphrase his main thesis, a poem is an emotion or idea in search of an appropriate form for the upwelling that wants to utter itself in articulate speech and melody but not be limited by received forms or even by novel permutations they might assume.

I think that much of this urge for original expression that is not "fixed" or imitative is part of the movement for Jewish renewal--which is present in every generation--and that we, in particular, can trace to the late sixties Havurat Shalom in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco. Even these complementary entities had antecedents in unlikely places, such as the *kibutz* of Reb Nachman (the annual Rosh HaShanah gathering in Uman), the type of setting where he invented the allegorical fairy tale and transmitted his rediscovery of a Jewish meditation tradition of spontaneous personal prayer.

The Aquarian Minyan, from its very beginnings, encouraged and relied upon an ecstatic kind of worship scarcely (and often invisibly) supported by the skeletal structure of the traditional service. Its discrete segments--of *P'sukei d'Zimra* (Songs of Praise), *Borukhu* (Call to Prayer), *Kriyat Shema* (Declaration of Faith), *Amidah* (silent prayer), Torah reading (revelation and interpretation), Healing and Blessing circles--helped to focus group energy and elicit improvised and animated overflow.

As knowledge grew of the received liturgical forms, so did our attempts to appropriate them for our own purposes. I think there has always been a wide range of responses to traditional Jewish liturgy within our community. First, of course, there is respect for its antiquity and authenticity. Then there is resistance to its authority and perceived hierarchical assumptions and outer-directed language. People don't want to be constrained, overly directed, or forced to accept a world view and value system they have not thought through. That is why we needed new translations from the outset--and attempts in that direction by Reb Zalman and Burt Jacobson and, later, David Wolfe-Blank and Miriam Stampfer, were eagerly embraced. The freshness of thought, the reframing of images, the evocation of universalism and inclusion, and the flashes of humor in these translations were greatly appreciated.

Like new poetry working on the national consciousness, new translations, incorporating new interpretations and levels of understanding, acted as leavening agents in the soul of our community. The feelings of liberation these translations fostered enhanced our connection to and appreciation of Judaism on the one hand and the Divine in our lives on the other. The two were linked and were experienced as part of one continuum.

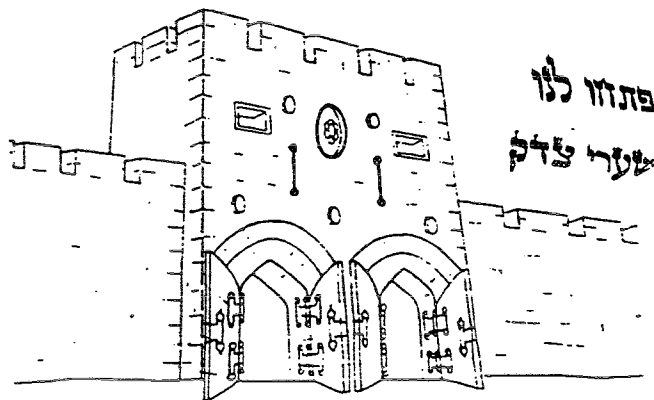
Likewise, the innovations in ritual freed us to rediscover the original meanings of Shabbat and Holy Day celebrations and enabled a creative group process to occur. Participants in worship who have input into the form or style are empowered participants. They give more, so they expect

more. They make a commitment, and so they have a stake in the outcome, for themselves personally and for the group as a whole.

This empowerment builds community. Even if only a few members are overtly leading, they must be tuned into the needs of the congregants to succeed in their task. Even if the many feel unable as yet to take a leading role, they can imagine themselves getting ready to step up and do so--and will at least know that their reactions and comments matter to the leaders and to the collective. This sense of belonging inspires learning, increases competence, and encourages interdependence and mutual respect.

But just as in poetry, or in any of the arts, new forms can become static and imitative of past experiences, rather than creatively transforming them. Therefore, the emergence of a Jewish renewal orthodoxy is not an oxymoron--it is a real (and scary) possibility. This is not to say anything against orthodoxy, which possesses a vitality and staying power we would do well to examine. In fact, I would recommend any devotee or acolyte of Jewish renewal to become well acquainted with and even, if so inclined, to master the forms of traditional Jewish liturgy and learning--probably a lifetime quest--just as I would encourage an aspiring poet to learn how to write couplets, sonnets, and blank verse. Nor do I mean to criticize Orthodox Jewish renewal, an entirely legitimate phenomenon, but one with problems of its own in regard to gender inclusion and archaic G-d language. But for many of us, the rectitude of habit, even though it is often attractive and necessary, does not always produced the desired intensity of practice. For that, the teachings of our teachers about *kavanah* (intentionality) ought to be consulted. Through it, closed forms are enlivened and open forms given integrity and coherence.

One essential element which, because of its importance, I have left for last, is *nusach*, which may be defined as the tonality of a worship service--inclusive of melody, rhythm, diction, and mood. The infusion of *niggunim* (wordless melodies), whether of ancient or modern provenance, into our service, has often provided the uplift needed to take us beyond a merely conceptual approach. The same is true of some of the inspired and well-crafted songs composed by our bridges between two worlds, Reb Shlomo Carlebach and younger composers--Mickey Shur, The Diaspora Yeshiva Band, Michael Shapiro, David Zeller, Hanna Tiferet, Shefa Gold, Jack Gabriel, Aryeh Hirschfield, Yitz Hankin, and so on--too numerous to mention (no one should be offended if omitted). This aspect represents the true creative heartbeat of our tradition, and the flow it mediates is apt to appear in any of us at any time. Song and spirit, poetry and liturgy, *nusach* and vitality--all these are modes of accessing the divine within ourselves and evoking it in one another. These are some of the secrets of Jewish renewal.



Downed Cottonwood

A Threnody for Rabbi David Wolfe-Blank

Reuven Goldfarb
Aravaipa Canyon, Arizona
14 Nisan, 5759 / April 1, 1999

The heavy trunk, indenting the mud,
stripped of its bark, revealing its grain;
crumbling bits, like entrails, spilling out
of its broken base, returning to the earth,
decomposing, very slowly,
slower than the human eye can see
in its peripatetic wanderings.

Under the onslaught of falling snow,
melting upon contact, moistening the wood
where the cracks widen, the big splits
and the hairline fissures, many rows,
vertical layers of growth where the tree
widened from its base, broadening to take in
the wind and rain, to bear the heat of summer,
draw upward the earth's moisture from its roots,
nourishing its every leaf and seed.

Recumbent now in its shallow grave,
returning but not hastening,
knowing it has offspring elsewhere,
knowing it still hosts a multitude.



The in-between one

Yehudit Goldfarb, Moretaynu
May 19, 1974 (at that time known as Judith Wallach)

Born in a bottle
 within plastic limits
A lid on, a bottom in place,
 transparent sides
It stretches, it stretches

A hole in the lid
 and like a genie
 reborn

Push down, down
 feel above and no top
 feel sides and front and back
 and open space

But then
 pressures
 this side and that
 pull and push
 sway and sway

Hold together
 hold the force
 of freedom
 firmly hold and hold and hold

And pass through the new center
 to air and flow
 to willingness to turn inward
 to willingness to contact outward
 to share--but elude capture
 to influence--but to respect

Finally to praise
 and hallelujah



I wrote this poem during the seminar on Kabbalah with Reb Zalman which led to the formation of the Aquarian Minyan on June 18, 1974 (29 Sivan 5734). The text for the seminar was Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi's *Tanya* or *Sefer shel Benonim*--"Book of the In-betweens."

Seven Circles of Love - A Bride's Wedding Song

Rolinda Rochlin Schonwald

I was privileged to be one of Reb Zalman's students during the Sefirat Ha Omer workshop which gave birth to the Aquarian Minyan. Those beautiful teachings have stayed with me, and I have given them over in all the places we have lived since then.

When we returned to California, I taught about Sefira at a Tikun Leil Shavuot in Oakland. One of my students was engaged to be married. As we waited for the mikvah attendant before her wedding, she asked me about the meaning of the Hasidic custom of the bride making seven circles around the groom beneath the chuppah. "Does it have anything to do with the seven Sefirot?" she asked. I had never made that connection before, but I thought the question was wonderful. "Would you write down the names of each Sefira and its translation, so I have a Kavanah for the circles?" she asked me. Happily, I agreed.

As I sat down to write the list, this poem flowed onto the page. I gave it to her at the auf rufn. That night, she called and asked me to read the poem during the circlings. When I began practicing, a Nigun came to me for the poem, and this wedding song was born. It has been sung at many weddings since then, giving the couple and the wedding guests an understanding of the seven circles of love.

Seven times encircling my beloved
Beneath this fragrant canopy, our home
The seven circles of my love for thee
The seven blessings of our wedding day

Seven are our vows today, my love
Seven the days of the week
And the Sabbath is the seventh day
Seven circles of love

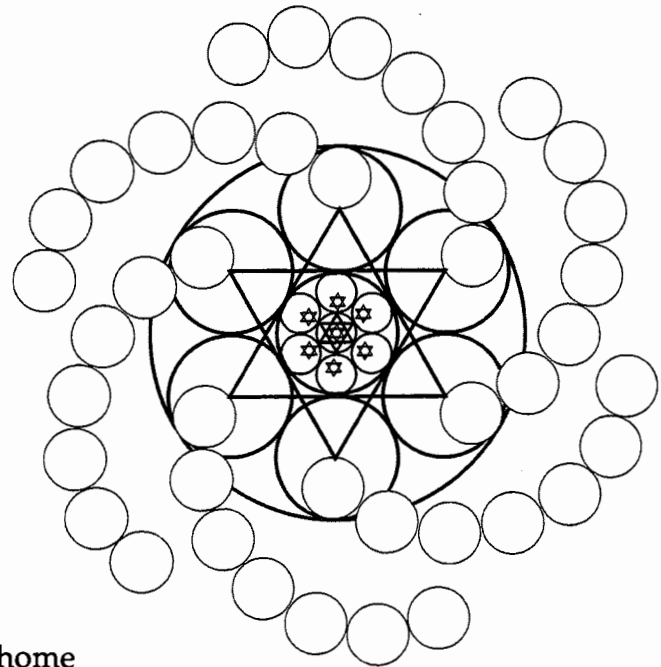
The first circle is Chesed
I circle thee with lovingkindness

The second circle is Gevurah
I bless thee with strength

The third circle is Tiferet
May harmony rule in our home

The fourth circle us Netzach, the circle of victory
May goodness always triumph
All the days of our life

The fifth circle is Hod
The shining radiance of G-d's glory
Reflected in our faces today
On this our wedding day

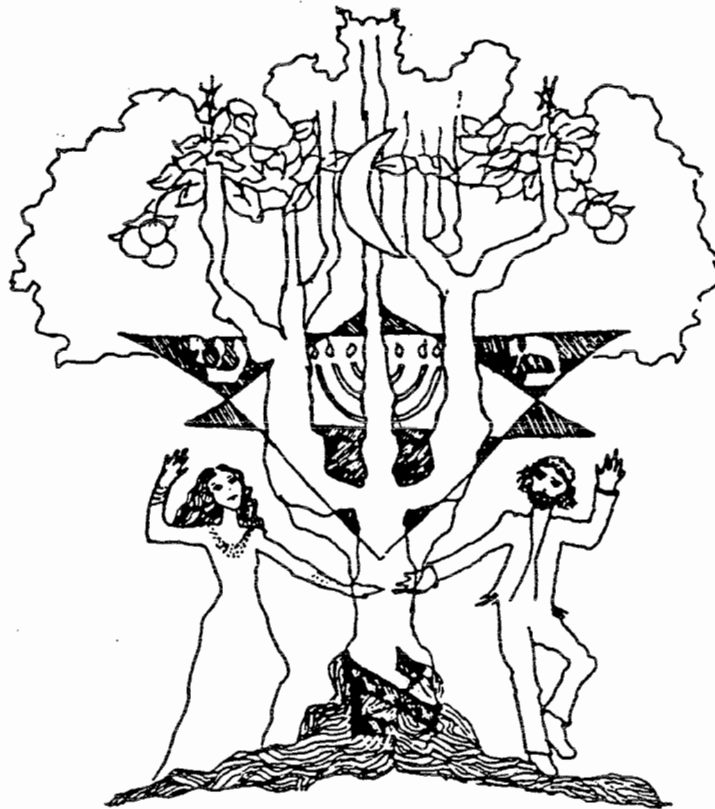


The sixth circle is Yesod, the firm foundation
May the bedrock of our love and faith sustain us come what may

The seventh circle is Malchut, the sphere of Kingship
Today I am your Sabbath Queen, together we rejoice in our love

Yassis alayich elokayich
Kimsos chattan al kallah
Thy G-d shall rejoice in thee
As a bridegroom rejoices with his bride

V'erastich li
I shall bind you to me
B'Chesed - and in lovingkindness
U'v'Rachamim - and in compassion
With this dance
I thee wed



Forgiveness: A Kol Nidre Prayer

Charles Burack

May my words of forgiveness come from my true essence.
May my words of forgiveness be truly transformative.

I forgive my parents for the times they did not see my soul.
And I forgive myself for the times I did not heed my own inner voice.

I forgive my brothers and sisters for the times they ridiculed me.
And I forgive myself for the times I prolonged self-reproach.

I forgive my friends for the times they were too busy to give and to receive.
And I forgive myself for the times I did not care for my own well-being.

I forgive my lovers for the times they did not understand my yearnings.
And I forgive myself for the times I hid who I am.

I forgive my teachers for the times they denied the reality of spirit.
And I forgive myself for the times I denigrated my deepest inspirations.

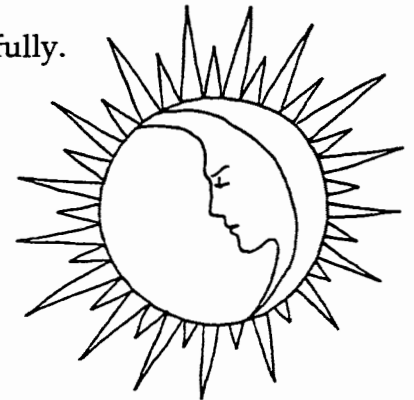
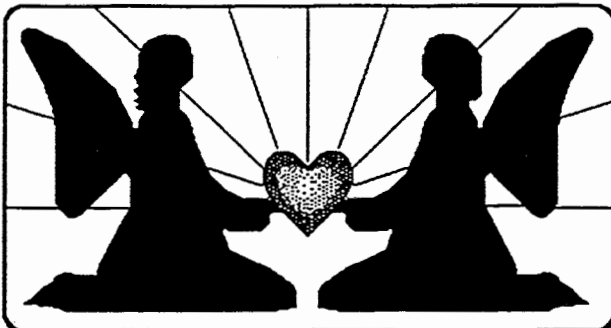
I forgive my community for the times they overlooked my presence.
And I forgive myself for the times I depreciated my native gifts.

I forgive my colleagues for the times they created competitive conflict.
And I forgive myself for the times I envied others' success.

I forgive my neighbors for the times they kept me awake with raucous noise.
And I forgive myself for the times I did not communicate my concerns.

I forgive my political leaders for the times they did not hold to a vision of justice.
And I forgive myself for the times I let fear stop me from speaking out.

I pray that my forgiveness will bring me closer to the One.
I pray that my forgiveness will let me love others and myself more fully.
I pray that my forgiveness will help heal the world.



The Way to Chanukah

A story that wants to be told

Reuven Goldfarb

My wife and I made our first trip to Israel in 1979, with Yeshayah, our one-year-old, who took his first independent step in New York and was fairly running when we returned seven weeks later. We had the pleasure of living in Jerusalem and at Moshav Me'or Modi'im during much of our stay and were pleased to have adopted the observant life-style of most of our friends and many of our neighbors. When we returned to Berkeley, however, we quickly returned to many of our previous habits, among which I include driving on Friday night in order to spend Kabbalat Shabbat at whatever home our spiritual community, the Aquarian Minyan, was conducting its services.

In 1986, we again made a six or seven week visit to Eretz Yisrael, this time with two young kids, visited some of the same people, stayed in some of the same places, did some learning, and came back imbued with a determination to live here as we had there. That commitment lasted about two weeks. Soon we were back in the East Bay rhythm, wherein if you wanted to go somewhere that was at a distance, you drove.

In 1990, we went again. We stayed in a nice apartment and took classes at Pardes. Our kids went to Camp Ramah--a five minute walk from where we were staying--and played soccer or basketball with the neighborhood kids till it grew dark. This time, when we returned, we felt more resistance to changing back. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no way to remain active and *au courant* with our community without reverting to our previous practice of driving to Shabbat.

Initially, we were able to walk on Friday night to places in the general vicinity of our home. But finally, the Shabbat of Chanukah arrived, and the Minyan was celebrating at a home in Oakland we had never visited, on a street we didn't know, in an area we never frequented. Moreover, I had been asked to tell a story there. It seemed we would have to use the car, so Yehudit and I, along with our rambunctious kids, who would certainly rebel at being asked to walk all that way, and a guest, our Bat Bayit and sister story-teller, Lynn Feinerman, prepared to get in the Toyota for a ten or fifteen minute drive.

Only there were a couple of hitches before we could leave. Nine-year-old Elishama's plastic harmonica had gotten stepped on, and a piece had cracked off. Unfortunately, all the air he blew into it rushed out that hole, ruining the musical quality of the instrument. Faint squawks were an inadequate substitute for full chords and sonorous notes. I needed to glue it back on because tape blocked the pipes, reducing the range of the scale.

I was a firm believer in super-glue, so I got out my tube and hastily squeezed a couple of drops onto the rough edges. I managed to press them together, but because I had to hold them in this position for a minute, and because I had gotten some glue between my finger tip and the plastic surface, I couldn't pull my hand away when the plastic had bonded--the skin of my finger was also bonded to the surface.

I thought I had a solution, though. I reached for my exact-o knife, an aluminum handle topped by a pointed razor, excellent for cutting through paper and cardboard when I did layout work. I

figured I could just saw through the thin layer of glue that held my finger and the plastic harmonica together. However, the glue resisted, and my fingertip got pulled more and more into the narrow space. Soon its skin was cut, and it dripped blood all over the instrument, the table, the floor, and my clothes. In desperation, I pulled my stuck finger and the plastic mouth harp apart, tearing skin and leaving a layer of glue on my shaky digit.

I assumed the glue would peel off over the next few days, and I figured the raw skin would eventually heal, though it was quite tender at that moment. I was grateful not to have lost more skin. I washed off the blood, put some peroxide on the wound, and summoned my family, in front of whom I'd been raving for several minutes, out to the car.

It was now fully dark out, but in December it gets dark early. Also, Chanukah comes just before and just after the New Moon, so you don't see much moonlight until near the end of the holiday. I took off down Shattuck Avenue and headed toward Oakland with my four passengers.

I suppose I should have asked Yehudit to drive, but she was still holding out--willing to accept a lift but not to be the main perpetrator. The traffic grew heavy as Shattuck merged into Telegraph, and I hesitated, not sure if the yellow signal was a blinking light or was turning red. The guy close behind me knew the terrain better and honked me on while tailgating. My New York genes kicked in as I rolled forward a couple of feet then jammed on the brakes, just to let him know: "Don't push me, man!"

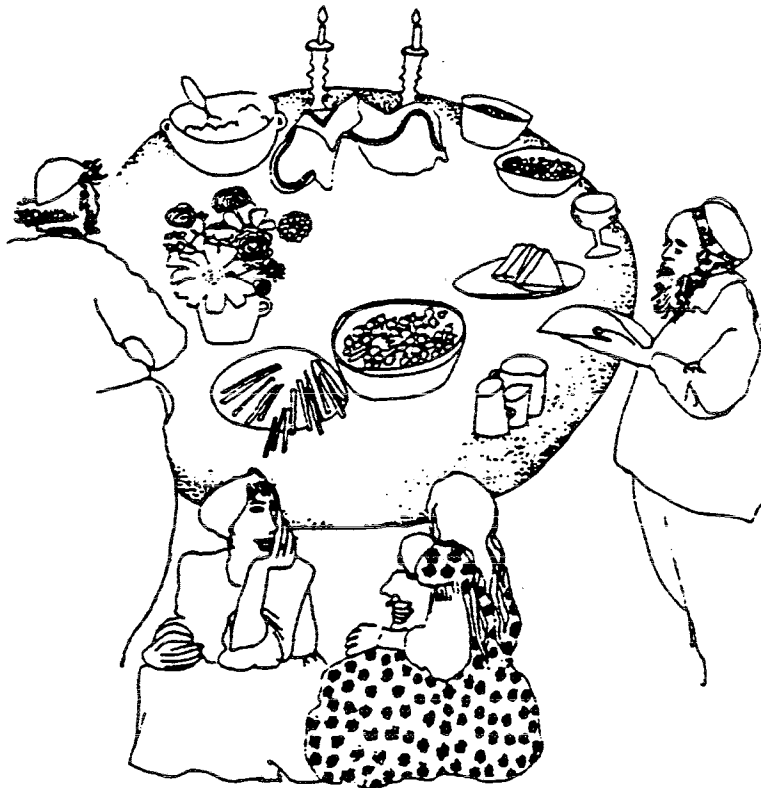
He got the message, all right, and stayed close behind me--I mean *inches* behind me--as we joined the stream going down Telegraph. The adjacent lane was also full of cars, so I couldn't move over left, where I needed to be to make the turn, and I didn't have much maneuverability because this guy was right behind me, and the adrenaline was flowing because I was literally in fight or flight mode, and, thinking of the safety of my Minyan friends, I decided I didn't want to lead him to the Shabbos house, I tried to stay ahead of him and looked for a right turn. I took the first one I saw and found myself headed down a dark side street with few lights ahead. Desperate to shake my pursuer, I turned abruptly into the parking lot of a 7-11, but he followed right behind me. I circled around and exited the same way I had come in and sought, by speeding, to distance myself from my tailgating rival.

I took a left turn onto Martin Luther King, then quickly made a right. One block ahead the street narrowed into a tunnel-like underpass, with traffic emerging from both lanes against us. Fearing the other driver more than a head-on collision, I shot into the tunnel, headlights ablaze, horn blaring. Startled drivers changed lanes to avoid me, but at one point we gridlocked because my pursuer had moved into the adjacent lane to overtake me, leaving the oncoming drivers with no space to avoid us.

He got out of his car and walked methodically to his trunk. I thought of telling everyone to duck, for I sensed some kind of projectile would come our way soon. I hunched behind the wheel. The trunk opened. He was 20 feet away. I refused to look directly at him, not wanting to provoke a further confrontation. There was a loud thump on our left rear fender. We all flinched, the traffic ahead of us opened up, and we fled from the cramped interior of the underpass, with our pursuer right behind. I did a 180 and headed back into the tunnel and sailed, with the traffic this time, out the other side, the other car still following close behind, and then made a right turn back onto Telegraph where I tried to lose myself in the traffic. I seemed to have put a few car lengths and intervening vehicles between us before risking a left turn, toward the house where we were expected, though not exactly by the route we had chosen. As we eased through the

quiet streets, we looked around but saw no vehicle pursuing. The other driver had given up the chase.

When we reached the house, we stumbled inside, immensely relieved. Lynn headed for a back room to recuperate. Yehudit and I and the boys took our places in the circle, indicating little about our adventure and escape. When it came time to tell my story, I told of everything that had happened in the third person, making us characters in a tale, my narrator's voice establishing a safe distance from the danger we had just survived. It was a comical bit, though imbued with a dark and self-mocking undertone. When we got home that night we knew that our days of routinely driving on Shabbat were over.



Shabbat Story

as told by Maggid Daniel Lev

Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest, is most sacred to our tradition and provides us with a full-day, spiritual respite each week during which we celebrate, connect with our loved ones and the earth and just "be" after a long week of "doing." To the Jews of Eastern Europe, the day was called "Shabbos," due to the different Hebrew pronunciation they used. As Rabbi Heschel taught in his book, "The Sabbath," our tradition tends to sanctify time and not materials. Shabbat is a prime example of our making time sacred. One way we do this is by refraining from work during the twenty-five hours of the Sabbath. The talmudic rabbis even derived thirty-nine types of activities that comprise "work," all of which are forbidden on the Shabbat.

Reb David was faced with a predicament that shook him to the core of his Jewish soul. It began when David's Rebbe, his spiritual master, decided to move his community from Poland to a medium-sized city in Germany. Like a good Hasid (adherent of the path of loving-kindness), he and his family followed the Rebbe to Germany. It was the mid nineteenth century and the industrial revolution was in full swing, creating a major challenge for Reb David. He brought his problem to the Rebbe:

"Rebbe, you know I was a cobbler in Poland and made a good living selling my shoes out of my little shop. But here I have no money to open up a shop and so I have to work in a shoe factory and they make us work on Shabbos! What can I do Rebbe? - I have to support my wife and seven children but I also have to keep Shabbos."

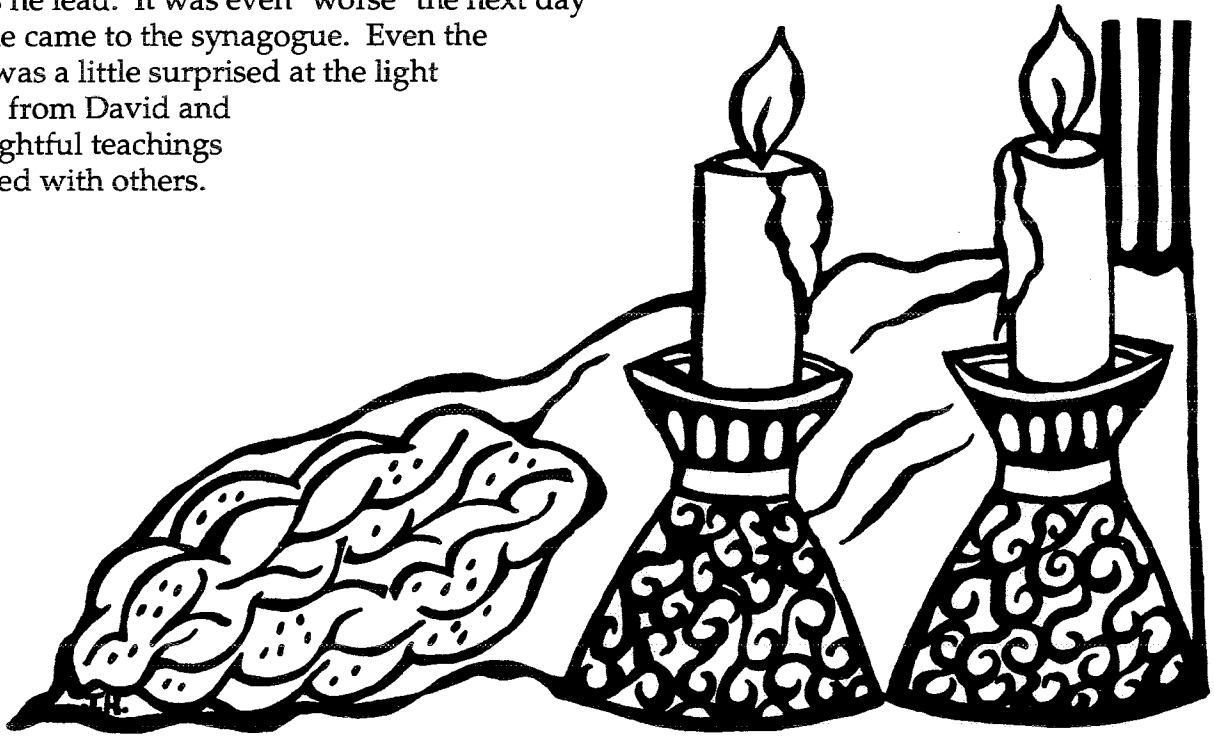
The master stroked his beard for some time and then he gently soothed David with these words: "My sweet brother, you know that the commandment regarding Shabbos is written in two places in the Torah. However, there is a difference in the words used. In Exodus it says 'Remember the Sabbath...' and in Deuteronomy it says 'Observe the Sabbath...' So why did G-d use two different words? This creates a logical problem. If we are to remember Shabbat and keep it in mind, why do we need to observe; and if we are in the midst of observing the Shabbos practices, why bother remembering. We can't do both at the same time. Perhaps G-d wrote this because He knew that such a problem as yours would arise. Perhaps G-d knew that there would be times in a Jew's life when he or she would not be able to observe Shabbos as completely as they could. But in such a case do we just give up Shabbos? No! when we cannot fully observe Shabbos G-d gives us a way to stay connected. G-d tells us we should remember Shabbos. So my dear David, when you work in the factory on Shabbos, spend every moment remembering Shabbos. Sing songs to yourself, review the Torah portion in your head, recall previous Shabboses spent with your loved ones. If you do this a most wonderful thing will happen to you."

The Rebbe took David in his arms and gave him a loving kiss and hug. David left to begin his new spiritual practice.

David did as the Rebbe suggested and soon he grew stronger and stronger in feeling Shabbos even in the midst of his assembly-line work. Then it happened after some time he and his wife figured that they had accumulated enough savings to open up a little shoe store. They were elated: finally, David could come home for Shabbos and observe.

But something unusual happened on that first Shabbos. When David made Kiddush, the table wine blessing, he took half-an-hour and when he finished everyone felt bathed in the light of G-d! He

likewise brought out the spiritual depths of the Sabbath during the singing, stories, teachings and prayers he lead. It was even "worse" the next day when he came to the synagogue. Even the Rebbe was a little surprised at the light coming from David and the insightful teachings he shared with others.



After the services, he came to the Rebbe and asked, "Rebbe, I don't understand what's happening to me."

The master put his arms on David's shoulders and softly answered his question: "My boy, you have followed my counsel well and spent every moment of your compulsory work on Shabbos remembering the holiness of this day. You have caused it to permeate your very being. My holy brother, when you Zachor, when you remember Shabbos so intimately, then, when you once again Shamor, when you practice Shabbos – you become Shabbos. Even deeper - when you become Shabbos, then everyone you meet will also shine with Shabbos. And you are a good Shabbos, my son."

Reflections from an Ally

Rabbi Michael Lerner

I still remember how excited I was those early years of the Minyan to find a community of Jews who were willing to push the limits of Jewish practice. I had been involved in the 1960s in efforts to generate a Jewish renewal as part of the movements of social change. I led a Chanukah service at the big sit-in of the Free Speech Movement in 1964--over 200 of the sit-iners joined enthusiastically. I created a freedom seder which was held each year in Berkeley. I organized Jews to leaflet Bay Area congregations to raise issues of Black liberation and opposition to the war in Vietnam (I was fired from my job as a USY youth group advisor when the rabbi saw me on television speaking to an anti-war rally). I organized a demonstration against the Bnai Brith when it gave its "man of the year award" to a racist and reactionary elected official.

All these stirrings were valuable, but they left me feeling empty because they did not connect deeply enough with the religious vision that had brought me to radical politics in the first place. I had been a disciple and then later a friend of Abraham Joshua Heschel. My politics flowed from my Judaism. Heschel and I discussed these links, and as the 1960s progressed I pushed him to go further into linking his theory with action. It was often hard for me to pray with the people I met in the orthodox synagogue in Berkeley because of the political conservatism and moral insensitivity that it reflected. Yet at the same time, it was almost impossible to be spiritually fulfilled in a Left that was hostile to spiritual pursuits. The correct recognition that the Jewish establishment was hopelessly corrupt--more interested in finding a way to cuddle up to the wealthy than to speak the message of the Prophets--had led many many young Jews to feel that there was a fundamental lack of integrity in the Jewish world. So these Jews often expressed contempt for Judaism itself, not knowing that there was anything else. They had never heard of Heschel, never read the Prophets, never known a Judaism that could be less accommodating to power, money, and culturally-deadening bourgeois conventional lifestyles.

No wonder, then, that it was a huge excitement to help in the building of the Minyan. Here were a group of people who were spiritually alive, seeking the deepest truths, and yet also politically opposed to imperialism and racism, unwilling to subordinate moral sensibility to blind loyalty for Israel, and insisting on the full equality of women! It was "very heaven."

I don't mean to exaggerate my role here. I was a small fry. I was at that point just recovering from years of being under indictment by the Federal government for the "crime" of organizing powerful anti-war demonstrations (though I spent months in prison, the laws under which I was charged were eventually declared unconstitutional). I was a single father raising my son Akiba. And I had just resigned my job as professor of philosophy at Trinity College and returned to the Bay Area to get a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. So, I did not have a huge amount of time for the Minyan. Nor was I entirely in sync with some of the Sufi and Buddhist elements I encountered--I still felt more at home (and even to this day still feel more at home) with the matbeyah tfillah (the Halachically mandated structure of the prayer service).

Yet I also felt tremendous spiritual energy being liberated in me by the Minyan, and was glad to share what I could. I wrote various translations of prayers that I thought captured some of the deeper meanings. One of these, the "Al Cheyt" (For Our Sins) recited several times on Yom Kippur, was adopted by the Minyan, in large part because it attempted to show how that prayer could be made to address the deepest spiritual and ethical longings of our own contemporary souls.

As my own involvement with the emerging Jewish renewal energies deepened, I began to feel a certain absence in the Minyan. Though people shared the general progressive sentiments at the time, many Minyan people seemed to be uninterested in a deeper integration of the politically transformative elements with the spiritually deepening elements that they were pioneering. For me, the essence of Judaism was precisely this combination--and it was that combination that my teacher Heschel had both taught and embodied. Yet by the mid to late 1970s the social movements of the sixties had largely collapsed, and for many Minyan people the whole notion of politics began to seem a distraction from the energy that they were putting into their own spiritual growth. I found this dichotomy both intellectually mistaken and emotionally unsatisfying. Eventually, I felt the need to leave the Minyan and try to create something else--a Jewish havurah that would embody the synthesis of both spirituality and transformative politics.

In the ensuing years, I found that this was a more formidable task than I had ever imagined. Even at Beyt Tikkun synagogue, the community I helped organize in San Francisco after I had received smicha (rabbinic ordination) from Reb Zalman, this integration is very difficult. Even though we were formed with this intention, it still remains the case that many people turn to spirituality for comfort and to escape the very distorted realities of daily life in a materialistic society, so they don't want to be dragged back into these realities by their religious or spiritual community. Progressive politics has continued to frame issues in ways that underplay or ignore their spiritual dimension, and social change movements rarely try to incorporate a spiritual dimension into their daily activities--so that has put the burden on those of us who want to build a spiritually sensitive transformative movement to recreate politics from the ground up. Well, it's an overwhelming task, and as a result, many people don't even bother to try.

Given that difficulty, there is all the more reason to focus on and rejoice in what the Minyan has been able to accomplish in its twenty-five years. For me, the Minyan remains a fount of spiritual creativity and energy that I find personally important and refreshing. For years the Minyan was blessed with a spiritually gifted leader, Rabbi David Wolfe Blank, whose brilliance was not adequately treasured. Petty jealousies and a deep anti-leadership tendency prevented the Minyan from ever taking seriously the responsibility to provide David with the caring and support he needed. Only a month before his death he told me personally of his remaining hurt at having to leave the Minyan and take a job in Seattle where he was given much more of the support and respect he deserved. I truly hope that in the years ahead the Minyan will transform its relationship to leadership and give strong support to its rabbis. It's easy to support the famous spiritual leaders from afar--in Boulder or Jerusalem or Tibet--the trick is to support the ones who are in our own communities.

The Minyan remains at the heart of the growing Jewish Renewal movement in the U.S. Its future is deeply important to me and to all of us who hope for a transformed Judaism. In recent years, the Minyan has begun to take itself more seriously, to realize its tremendous potential for being a significant force in the larger Jewish world.

But I don't want to speak only about potential. The actuality of the Minyan deserves celebration. It remains one of the most significant developments in American Jewry during the past twenty-five years. Its spiritual energy and spiritual wisdom needs to be more widely understood. But for me personally I can only thank God for having been given the opportunity to participate in building the Minyan, to learn from its many creative thinkers and spiritually wise guides, and to still have the opportunity on occasion to daven with it.

May God preserve and strengthen this holy community.

How the Minyan Has Affected Me and My Efforts to Create a Jewish Renewal in Israel

Linda Elyad

14 March 1999, Kibbutz Gezer, Israel

Where We Were Coming From

In 1970, I was breaking out of the mold. My first husband, myself and our baby moved from comfortable, successful suburban Westchester County New York to nowhere. It was a long, difficult trip driving cross-country with our baby and all our possessions in a station wagon. We had sacrificed a lot.

We saw ourselves as spiritual seekers, whose quest was to create a new, better, higher social order. For our quest to succeed, we had to break through the ways of being, thinking, feeling, and doing that came from our backgrounds and training.

It's important look at where we were coming from. In those days, there wasn't the expansion, opportunity, or freedom we now treat so casually and take for granted.

Since I had been living in Chicago since birth, my window to the world was like most middle class people in the 50s. There was an occasional movie, a few things to read, co-ed public education, and the people I knew. There was no Internet, only black and white TV. People's worldviews were limited by birth and place.

There were few choices in everything. And among those few choices there were even fewer "Right Choices". At that time, what was "the best" was like the situation comedy, *Father Knows Best*.

It was agreed that the people in your life had the right to tell you what to do, what to say, how to feel and how to think. Psychologically, people internalize the people around them. You were supposed to become like them. Their opinions about what you did, said, felt, and thought were very explicit and very black and white.

In turn, they were like that because they lived under the thumb of some nebulous authority, which was referred to as "They". You had to do what "They" say. "They" say it's right (or wrong). "They" say what's real, what's possible, and what one's place in the scheme of things. Roles and social status rules were rigid. And they were strictly enforced everywhere.

Contact among different kinds of people was limited, and it was restricted by negative social norms. People thought very negatively about everyone who wasn't part of their exact little cultural sub-group.

The number of people you could possibly know in your lifetime was very limited. People remained in the same jobs and places. Travel opportunities for the ordinary person were limited.

You couldn't really see changes in the world. Things seemed to change very little and very slowly.

When we think of the past, we don't look clearly at the negative aspects of how people were affecting each other. In our depiction of the past, we gloss over this. But we need to remember

that the Right Choices were socially enforced by strong self-righteousness, ridicule, ostracism, or worse. Situations would quickly become mean, base, cruel, vicious and violent.

In 1970, we had gone out into a void. We had given up connection to a job and a steady place to live, and to our respectable place in society. "They" told us we were absolutely wrong. "They" ridiculed us. "They" shunned us. All we knew was that we wanted freedom from the old. We felt an urging, something needed to happen. All we knew was somehow we had to make a new world for ourselves. We had to change spiritually and socially. We had to go. We had to break free.

We found we were part of a group of large numbers of people who needed to break through internalized rigidity. We needed to create a new social order, different from the old one and away from it. Mind-expanding soft drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, peyote, and mescaline were part of that process.

Drugs were rites we did together. They were means for initiation, trust and recognition. Our minds and lives were expanding from a rigid mold. We weren't just choosing an option or lifestyle, as you might imagine from today's perspective. These things didn't exist yet for people like us.

Personally, I didn't have much taste for drugs. My problem was that my consciousness had already been expanded. My mind was "far out" naturally.

How I First Had the Z'chut to Meet Rebbe Shlomo Carlebach ztz"l

When I was a teenager in Chicago, I had been having spontaneous Transcendent Experiences. Much of what I knew didn't even admit such a thing was a possibility. Nothing in my experience had prepared me for this.

I liked it. I wanted more! The Jewish Reform religion of my family background disappointed me by its lack of spirituality. I had a strong need to understand what was happening to me, to expand the phenomenon, and get it under control.

By the time I was 18 years old, I had made a connection with my first spiritual teacher. This was my best z'chut. I underwent a lot of social pressure because of my contact with him. Everything in my life has flowed from there.

Sri Nerode was an 80 year old authentic East Indian Brahmin. He taught me yoga and meditation from his house near the University of Chicago. He came had come to the U.S. forty years before, in the 1920s, as part of a wave of pioneering spiritual teachers from India, in order to open up the mysticism of the East to the West.

I learned what true spirituality is from him. It's something very humble, invisible, humorous, loving, and gentle, not connected with money and the things of this world. It is also difficult and dangerous to use on this plane. It is something delicate, deceptive and true.

Sri Nerode guided me about how to be a spiritual seeker. He taught me, explicitly, and at length, about the dangers of authoritarian, charismatic spiritual leaders. He taught me to make my way by myself, what to open to, and what to refuse. He strengthened me and blessed me for my journey through what turned out to be a huge, booming spiritual marketplace in the late 1960s, 70s and 80s.

When we were traveling through America on our "spiritual trip" searching for a perfect commune to join, we met Zalman Schachter at the Llama Foundation in New Mexico, who was also on a spiritual search at that time. Our families became friends and confidants. He showed me how to pray with a tallis, and we went together into a small New Mexican town to buy me a Mexican sarape to use as a tallis. I'm still using that sarape/tallis in Jerusalem now during our Jerusalem Jewish Renewal services.



In 1971, we went to San Francisco simply because we heard that we could find like-minded people there. We weren't disappointed. It was wonderful! Things felt magical.

The House of Love and Prayer was part of that magic. Open-heartedness. Kindness. Joy and smiles. We found a tiny, crowded room that was a gateway to a mind-expanding, deeply fulfilling experience of being in universal love.

And it had an authentic Jewish flavor! Reb Shlomo Carlebach was the radiant source of that bursting, energetic flow. He made us sing and dance and be happy!

Reb Shlomo showed us the "highest of the high" and the "deepest of the deep." I returned many times, though, personally, I was ambivalent about Judaism. It was part of what I was in the process of breaking away from and leaving behind. Some of his most enthusiastic followers from the House of Love and Prayer immigrated to Israel in the early 70's. In 1976 they founded a community in Israel inspired by him, which exists today as Mevo Modi'in.

Why Be Jewish? What's The Use?

Many of us, who remained behind in San Francisco, were not wholly committed to being Jewish. I think I'm among the first generation who really had the freedom to move away from their Jewish identity.

In the America of my childhood, even if you didn't want to identify with your Jewishness, covert and overt anti-semitism was still common--and would control your life. I had grown up in an all-Jewish neighborhood. It was referred to as the South Side Jewish "ghetto" in Chicago. Realtors and bankers would not rent or sell property to Jews, except in certain places.

I liked going outside my friends and acquaintances' "Jewish" box when I had the opportunity. As I matured, I struggled with the question, "Why be Jewish?" Who needs it?

All religions fall short of their promises. Horrible things have been done in the name of religion. Seems like the main use of religion has been to make people feel like they're the only ones who are right and everyone else is wrong.

I thought it's better to live an ethical life without religion, but my inner core needed to grow spiritually. There were other people left behind from the House of Love and Prayer who were eager for more events such as we'd experienced. Reb Zalman Schachter came to teach us. I joined the beginnings of the Aquarian Minyan, among the other things that I was doing.

After breaking away from the roles that bound me, I looked deeply inside to develop a more true self. I spent years going to workshops and therapies to help me become more wholly and positively myself. And, to my surprise, inside myself I found Jewishness.

I also found a core of anger in reaction to the Holocaust. Remaining Jewish is my revenge to Hitler. For many years, I couldn't bear the thought that the chain of Jewish generations would end with me, if I didn't act responsibly towards my Judaism.

But that wasn't enough. For me to bother with being Jewish, Judaism had to become a positive force in my life. As the years passed, only through the Aquarian Minyan was I able to make Judaism the positive experience I wanted.

At the services of the Aquarian Minyan I found positive answers to my existential questions, "What is religion for? Why bother, if you don't have to?"

First of all, it's for comfort. There's struggle, conflict, fear, pain, disappointment and loss inherent in life. We all need vitamin-like doses of perspective, faith, courage, certainty, acceptance, peace, positivity, joy and love to help us metabolize our life experiences.

Some of us need comfort from a sense of transcendence, of living in the light, or of touching the divine more often than others, but we never outgrow our needs for "life experience vitamins" completely. Religion is for giving us "life experience vitamins." At every Aquarian Minyan service I went to, service leaders strove to touch these emotional areas in personal ways for those who attended.

Secondly, we need to grow as human beings. Life-long learning is important. We each need to continue to become a better person. I was given opportunities to express my thoughts during the gatherings at Aquarian Minyan services in a non-judgmental atmosphere conducive to important inner growth.

Third, at the core of my being is an even bigger question than "What is religion for?" The question is, "What is life for? Why do I live?"

The only good answer for me is, "To leave the world a better place than it was before I came." I actually feel my basic purpose in life in this way. It involves action to better the world. I can't be true to myself without feeling personal progress in this area.

The focus on Tikkun Olam in renewal Judaism meshes into me in very deep, personal levels. My experience at the Aquarian Minyan taught me that the core of Judaism contains something that resonates deeply with me.

Democracy and Religion

In a lot of ways, I still don't have much use for religion. So a religion that's light on the religiosity, has humor, and is heavy on ethics and tikkun olam is right for me. I like the Aquarian Minyan's way of bringing social and political issues to the congregation. I like to be

part of organizing efforts for liberal issues through this community. It's helped me focus on things outside of my personal concerns and take social action.

From the time I began living in the SF Bay area, I admired grassroots organizing. It's a wonderful thing to be part of a movement that empowers ordinary people like myself. "Power to the people," we said in the early days.

The issues have changed through the years, but the basic values remain. Strive for equal opportunity among people. Hierarchy, authoritarianism, privilege, and exclusivity must be purged. The position of women must be raised. Respect everyone--and their culture. People should be able to affect things that affect them, so give the people the tools they need.

We in the Aquarian Minyan spent years striving to do religious services and conduct our congregational affairs in light of these values. The solutions we developed have become second nature to me now.

The Aquarian Minyan made it a priority that Jewish services be loving and heart-opening. This is in contrast to much of what is happening in other Jewish groups. We learned from the leadership of wonderful people, like Barry Barkan, how congregants can have hearts open to each other, and how to bless and be a source of blessing for one another. We learned to draw spiritual riches from many people for our events, and to appreciate more than one leader at a time.

I can no longer feel truly comfortable in a Jewish congregation that centers around one Rabbi who operates in an authoritarian mode. I value people having power to express themselves. The "service coordinator" type of rabbinical leadership appeals to my sense of values. Group-led religious services, as developed by the Aquarian Minyan, is one of the most positive manifestations given to Judaism by Jewish Renewal.

To feel happy and proud, I need to see women leaders among the mixed-gender leadership group. I've also become uncomfortable with sexism in the traditional liturgy, and so I seek leaders who will change this.

To be led through the religious service by many different people working together is like going to a very good potluck supper. Each person putting her or his best effort into one part can make each offering very fine quality. At the potluck, we have lots of interesting food. For the hosts, it's a more reasonable amount of work to create a supper for large numbers of people as a potluck because the hosts don't have to do everything themselves.

Professionals may create nicer suppers, but they're not my friends. I like to view the other members of my congregation as creative, expressive friends. I support their efforts. I like what they do because they're doing it. I like that they're growing and exploring. I understand them. I'm tolerant of their short-comings. And I want to be regarded by them in that way, too.

Participation and responsibility can be difficult, but they come in the same package as democracy. I want my religious congregation to embody tikkun olam and be a vehicle for social action.

This was the thinking and feelings that motivated me and shaped my participation in the Aquarian Minyan. I grew quite committed to creating the joyful, positive ways of being Jewish and embodying tikkun olam that we developed in the Aquarian Minyan.

In 1983 I meditated in her succah with Estelle Frankel to help me change my last name. I got my new name, but also received clear instructions during one of the most profound meditative experiences I've ever had. I had to go to Israel after about ten years. Years later a series of strange incidents, meditative experiences, doors in my life closing and other doors opening convinced me (and eventually persuaded my husband, Bill Finn) that we should actually move to Israel. It's been awful, and also a very good move for us. We're basically pleased with what we've done and are happy here. We made our aliya in 1994.

The Minyan as My Framework for Living a Spiritual Life in Israel

What I learned in my experience with the Minyan has made many difficulties for me in living a spiritual life in Israel. I have had a taste of spiritual growth, meaning, and spiritual love through Jewish religious services, but here in Israel, in the Jewish state, social organization bars me from this.

Synagogues here are Orthodox. Non-Orthodox synagogues are very rare, with only a few existing per metropolitan area. Any religious expression that is non-Orthodox has been actively discriminated against and repressed with the power of the State for the last 50 years. The reality of this is a big topic that I'd like you to learn more about--but not now.

From Rabbis David Wolfe-Blank and Zalman Schachter, I learned that the Jewish service should be a vehicle for each individual's spiritual experience and growth. I have learned to regard Judaism as a spiritual path.

Here, Judaism is something else. In the vast majority of situations, even if people are having spiritual experiences while doing the customs and ceremonies, they're taught to hide it, maintain their demeanor, not react. It's not considered proper to be enthusiastic while doing ceremonies, or to pause to savor meaning, like we're taught in the Aquarian Minyan. Here revelation is always an object of suspicion. What is valued is always words from the past or from some authority.

There is also a spiritual materialism that is pervasive. What's valued is accumulating quantities of Jewish knowledge and doing ceremonies.

There is a perverse shallowness. In the social ethos here, a person's character is inconsequential compared to what he or she is wearing.

What a person wears also indicates whose side they're on. It's hard for someone who is not here to imagine how the hold of the Orthodox state establishment has affected everyone.

Suffice it to say that over the last year, much to my surprise, I've become "anti-religious". I have changed from living here. I've changed from my exposure to what's happening. (Friends I've spoken with about this smile and sagely say reassuringly, "It's a normal part of absorption into Israeli society. Everyone changes. You become either anti-religious or more religious.")

I, like most Israelis today, feel disgusted and angry with the religious. I feel put down by them and impotent to change the situation. I react with strong feelings of rejection for them, or how they look, or anything they do, or anything associated with them.

Thank goodness I'm a mature adult from the United States with experience in psychotherapy. I can recognize my feelings, and I don't always have to behave according to them.

I have had sublime experiences through Jewish religious practices in social atmospheres consistent with my egalitarian, democratic values. It's something that most Israelis can't even imagine. But I can.

The Aquarian Minyan and My Efforts to Create a Jewish Renewal in Israel

From the long years I've been with the Aquarian Minyan and Jewish Renewal in the U.S., I've developed certain assumptions and values that exist here very weakly, if at all. Among these are:

Democracy and egalitarianism in religious matters is good and is proper. Updating the liturgy to speak to our modern consciousness is good and is proper. The most important thing about a religious gathering is communicating joyful, loving spirituality which can become a vehicle for spiritual experience for the participants. Jews of many different levels of halachic observance can worship together successfully in the same place at the same time.

I bring to Israel these values from my experience with the Minyan as a vision to provide a framework for my efforts to create a Jewish renewal in Israel. And so I will continue to work to organize venues to create Jewish gatherings for spiritual purposes here that are consistent with egalitarian, democratic values.

Another part of the what I got from the Aquarian Minyan in Israel has been contacts with people. When I answered God's call to go to Israel, we didn't have one connection to a single person here. People from the Shlomo chevra were the ones to whom we turned. Their homes and hearts provided us a base to establish ourselves in Israel.

The aliya of Reb Shlomo's followers has been very successful. They have gone deeper and deeper into Judaism along the lines the beloved rebbe taught, observing deep, meaningful, spiritual, Orthodox halacha with joy. Within weeks of our aliya, came Shlomo's sudden death. We grieved together with the chevra. It was hard to recover from his absence. It was hard to make our peace with the scandal about him that grew after his death.

Now, outstanding individuals and young people from a second generation are spreading music, joy and yiddishkeit like Shlomo did. Chaya Eden (formerly Chaya Leader), who came to Israel with the original House of Love and Prayer group, is becoming active in Israeli Jewish Renewal. Another close follower of Shlomo who was not part of the original aliya, Hannah Leah Bogost, is on the Board of the Shlomo Carlebach Foundation in Jerusalem and is also on the Board of AHAVI: The Association for Jewish Renewal in Israel. As in San Francisco years ago, there's an important cross-fertilization happening here in Israel.

Actually, in my daily life, all of the above is rather removed from my current thoughts and feelings. I'm in a very practical stage of life where almost all my effort is centered on practical



matters. I sought out people whose hearts and minds are like mine, but I don't think much about values, philosophy, thoughts, and feelings anymore. I'm eager to take action. I am now also on the Board of AHAVI, which was founded in 1987 by Yoram Getzler and Miriam Eiron.

From my experience with the Minyan, I learned that a group of disparate people who probably might not otherwise choose to associate with each other but who share a common philosophy and common beliefs and aspirations can come together. I learned that such a group can create something out of nothing, become friends while doing it, and maintain the friendships despite hardship.

In my thoughts and motivation, I constantly hold onto my experience in the creation of the Aquarian Minyan. Not the *atzilut* part. Not the very beginning. The memory of that isn't enough to sustain me for what I'm doing now. It was too easy, too idealistic, a product of another time and a unique cultural *zeitgeist*.

No, the memories I hold onto are of the *beriah* and *yetzirah* parts, the coming down into formation from the high levels. I remember long, arduous meetings. How the best intentions often go awry. People's failings. People failing. Egos. Vision wars. Struggle. Anger, frustration. Overcoming anger and frustration. Blocks to action. Re-grouping, going on.

I remember the time seeming very long. Nothing seeming to be becoming. Wondering if we were really building anything. Persisting simply because to be ourselves we had to. Persisting because this is what we do. Feeling like I lost connection with the inspiration, but going on anyway.

I remember the long learning curve as the group slowly learned to manage the real things necessary to our projects. Organization. Practical arrangements. Getting it together and keeping it together.

These are the memories that are sustaining me in my efforts here. I was part of a group of ordinary people getting together to create something out of nothing. We did it without the support of any established organizations--without Federation, without foundations, without large donors, without outside funding of any kind. We did it with only a minimal amount of internal fund-raising among our group of mostly low-income people.

I don't want to create our Israeli Jewish renewal efforts this way, and I don't think ultimately we must. But when I came to Israel four years ago, I found that AHAVI is also a tiny, disparate group of a few ordinary people. There is no membership, no office, no staff, no budget, no funding, and few activities. We have ideals but very little else. We are coming together for a common purpose in an unsupportive environment. It's very familiar.

In this situation, because of my experience with the Minyan, I'm more mellow than I would be otherwise. I get insights and senses of direction. I have a feeling for what it takes to get things done--and how much time.

Reb Zalman and the Aquarian Minyan Inspire a Peacebuilding Project

Lynn Feinerman

"Great is peace, for we seal all
benedictions and prayers with 'peace'."

Talmud

1963. My friend Wendy and I were on our way to our first history class in high school. Wendy asked me, "What do you think of the war?" I said, "What war?" "There's a war in Vietnam," she chided, as if I should know. A war in Vietnam? What was Vietnam? I considered a moment, and answered her. "I'm against all wars."



Our history teacher, fresh out of Berkeley, got the class rolling by writing in huge letters on the blackboard, V-I-E-T-N-A-M. "I want you all to know about Vietnam, because you may have to go there." That was 1963. Little did we all reckon with the implications of our wrestling with the incipient war in Vietnam. Little could we foresee of our years of activism against that war, and the terrible costs of it. One thing became clear to me from that time on, however. I was against all war, wars to end wars, deterrent wars, arms races. I was against them all.

I returned to Judaism after spending a very rich period of my life learning meditation. As my involvement with my Jewish identity deepened, the question arose: How was I to view the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors? Were these wars different? Were they "justified" by the precarious position of the people Israel on planet Earth? I determined that such a question wasn't the one to ask. The question to ask was, how long can we sustain ourselves in the Holy Land if we are on constant alert, and embroiled in constant wars great and small? How long can we last, physically, morally, spiritually, emotionally? My answer was a firm commitment to work in some way to bring peace to the Holy Land.

From the time I joined the Aquarian Minyan in 1985, I was looking for a way to express my unique Jewish vision. I always found myself most moved when the Shabbat prayers for peace included a call for peace in the Holy Land --- or when the martyrology prayers on High Holy Days dealt with the Middle East conflict. I sensed in many Aquarian Minyan members a passion for activism on behalf of peacemaking there. When I pursued my television documentary project about grassroots peacemakers in the Middle East, I felt a special integration of my personal destiny with my Jewish identity. I was inspired and supported in my work by many members of the Aquarian Minyan.

And it was at an Aquarian Minyan event with Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, that I heard Rabbi Zalman talk about his own efforts on behalf of peace in the Middle East. Zalman recounted his experiences in Hebron at an Aquarian Minyan Farbrengen in March 1994. He told of how he led a group to Me'arat haMachpelah --- the cave of the ancestors --- on a day-long pilgrimage. The group was having difficulty getting in to the Ibrahim mosque. Zalman asked the group to

wait outside and he went in to see the Sheikh in charge of the tombs. The Sheikh was in a little office in the mosque, and Zalman said to him,

"May I speak to you for a moment?"

"What can I do for you?" asked the Sheikh.

"I've come to ask your permission to do our pilgrimage here."

"You need my permission?!" the Sheikh said bitterly, pointing to the Israeli soldiers with Uzis outside.

Zalman said to him, "You and your family and your ancestors have been the keepers of this sacred tomb for all these years, and it isn't fitting that I should ignore that."

The Sheikh got up from behind his desk, hugged Zalman and kissed both his cheeks, and then escorted the group around the tomb himself.

"What a difference there is in the approach! How important it is not to forget that," reflected Zalman.

I was riveted and penetrated by his words. I was at that time on my way to produce my documentary, and his story was like a blessing on my efforts. Somewhere I recall a sage of the Jewish tradition saying, "One who makes peace is the same as one who has performed every commandment in the Torah." And yet it seems so few people on Earth, Jew or non-Jew, seek peace or pursue it. So much of our time here on Earth seems to be spent in generating or reacting to controversy --- and warring with one another over myriad things. So pervasive are our excuses for waging war, that those engaged in peacemaking endeavors are often viewed cynically as dreamers, idealists, losers, fools. Wherever I've screened my documentary portraits of grassroots peacemaker activists in the Holy Land, some viewers invariably wondered, "Aren't these people marginal? How much does their work count? How much power do they really have? How effective are they?"

Their questions belied their dismay at the recent turn of events in the Middle East peace process. But they also communicated a fundamental distrust of "peacemaking" per se. In response, I would recall what Nafez Assaily, a Muslim pacifist featured in my film, did on the day of Dr. Baruch Goldstein's 1994 massacre of over 40 Muslims in Hebron: When he heard what had happened, Nafez drove his van out to Hebron, and asked to sit shivah with Mrs. Goldstein. Rabbi Menachem Fruman, also featured in my movie, was acting rabbi for the West Bank at that time. It was Rabbi Fruman who ruled that Goldstein could not be buried in Hebron. He publicly repudiated the "Goldstein memorial" a year after the massacre --- saying that Dr. Goldstein was a murderer.

These men have taken great risks in pursuit of peace --- including the risk of being ostracized or targeted by their own communities as "traitors," dreamers, idealists, fools. And they were particularly courageous in their responses to the crises in Hebron, a major flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hebron, where militant Jewish settlers live nose to nose with Palestinian Hebronites, in constant tension and hostility. Where 1,200 Israeli soldiers are guarding about 400 settlers living in the old town of Hebron. Where incidents of violence occur daily.

Once Hebron was the place where Jews and Muslims prayed just ten feet from one another --- in the Ibrahim mosque housing the tombs of our common ancestors. We could see and hear one another worshipping, our chanted divinities mingled in the air of the Me'arat haMachpelah. Now, as a consequence of the Goldstein massacre, there is a steel and reinforced glass gate --- locked --- between the "Jewish side" and the "Muslim side." Israeli soldiers guard the only small doorway through which Muslim women can sometimes be seen lighting votive candles.

We cannot listen to one another praying now. When I think of that gate, the way it seals us off from one another, my heart feels a clanging heaviness, like the sound of a prison door shutting. I want to help reopen that door.

When I screened my movie at Brandeis University, a speaker had been invited to talk about her work in worldwide peacebuilding. She was Dr. Paula Green, sister of Rabbi Arthur Green, and a conflict reconciliation specialist. Paula'd been collaborating with communities in conflict --- to teach them methods of nonviolence and coexistence --- in Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Rwanda, Zaire, and the Middle East. Paula and I were inspired to work together on a peacebuilding project in the Middle East. So, why did we choose to focus on Hebron? Why El Khalil? That is the town's Arabic name, meaning "The Friend" --- for Abraham, who was called "the friend of God." Why couldn't we have tried Beit Sahour, or Nablus, or Qalqilyah, or Jerusalem, or even Tel Aviv --- where peacemaking efforts had succeeded before?

When Paula and I recently made our first fact-finding trip to the Middle East, to get to know Hebron and to initiate The Hebron CommUnity Project, Palestinian Hebronites and Israeli settlers with whom we consulted unanimously reported feeling abandoned by the peacemakers, by the peace process and by their own governments. Few truly serious peacemaking efforts have focused upon Hebron. It remains isolated. It has a bad reputation for toughness and intransigence on both sides of the conflict. At the same time, we found that an effort to engage settlers and Palestinians in direct dialogue at this time would prove futile, for three principal reasons:

- 1) there is deep political resistance, on both sides, to dialogue, as it is seen as validating the claims of "the other."
- 2) there is pressure within both groups now --- against anything that might be viewed as "collaborating" with the enemy.
- 3) there is not yet a deeply trained group with which to build successful dialogue.

But we did find that both Kiryat Arba --- the larger Israeli settlement outside Hebron proper --- and Palestinian Hebron have asked to be educated in techniques of nonviolent communication. They want to be able to deal with the violence in their own separate societies. Each society has found that violence against one's "enemy" is also turned inward against one's own. That is what war --- especially protracted war --- makes. So, in partnership with expert Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers, we have established a program designed to provide education in nonviolence and conflict transformation to the separate communities in Hebron. We hope that the work of this project will eventually result in the cultivation of a group of Israeli and Palestinian Hebronites who can talk and listen to one another. But that may never happen. The primary assumption behind this project is that the training in nonviolent communication and other peacebuilding techniques will cause enough transformation in each separate community to justify the project.

I am aware that I haven't sufficiently answered the question, "Why Hebron?" There is a mystery in the choice, which is difficult to elucidate. Perhaps in my mind, Zalman pointed to Hebron with the story of his own personal experiences there. As Zalman said, approach can mean so much. If we can help the Hebronite Israelis and Palestinians to demilitarize their approach to one another --- even a little bit --- it could be so useful. This is the goal of the Hebron CommUnity Project.

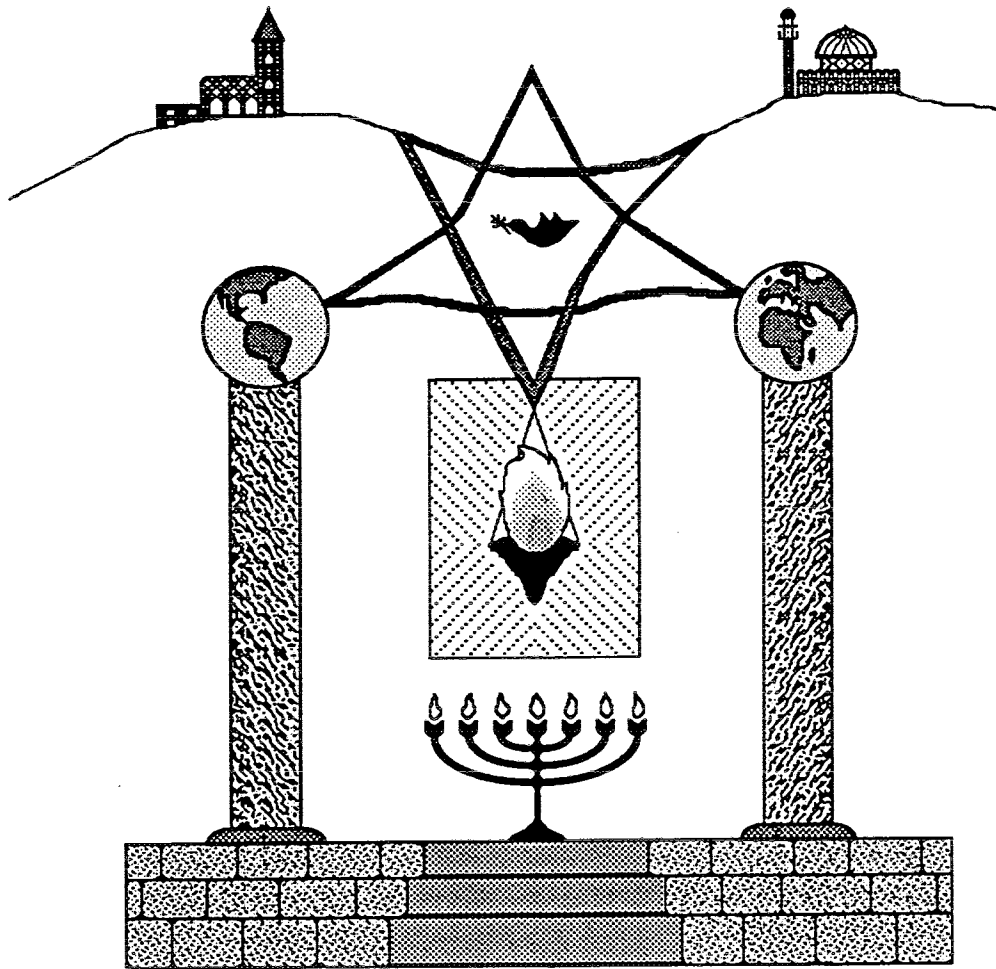
This past year, our Israeli teacher/coordinator was invited to meet with groups of women in both Beit Hadassah and Tel Rumeida --- the most militant settler outposts in the Hebron area. The women wanted initially for Hagit to listen to them --- just to listen to them ventilating. It is a tribute to Hagit's listening skills that one of the women called her not long after those meetings. "We discussed your visit here after you left, and we decided to ask you to train us in

nonviolence," said the woman. She added, "I can tell you from my own personal experience, being one of the most militant residents here for over 20 years, that I realize now that the militant way doesn't bring me to achieve my goals."

Every time I recall these words, I am reminded of the importance of our work there in the Holy Land. I am also reminded of the strength, support, and inspiration provided me by Zalman and the Aquarian Minyan.

Blessings to the Aquarian Minyan on its 25th anniversary.

Lynn Feinerman has davened with the Aquarian Minyan since 1985. She is a professional film and video maker, whose television documentary "If You Make It Possible" appeared recently on KQED. Produced in the Holy Land, the documentary profiles Palestinian and Israeli grassroots peacemaker activists. She is the U.S. Director of the Hebron CommUnity Project.



It's Possible to be a Jew

Bill Finn

Fifteen years ago I was sitting in an auditorium on Mt. Madonna listening to Reb Shlomo, blessed be his memory. His face was transfixed in holy concentration.

"It's always so wonderful to meet a Jew," he said, "I think I've met one or two."

What did he mean by that? In one sense I knew exactly what he meant. Many religious traditions emphasize the rarity of genuinely holy individuals. Few Buddhists achieve enlightenment, and the number of saved Christians is so low that's it hardly worthwhile for Heaven to keep its doors open.

The problem is that Judaism is not one of those traditions. True, we can't all be tzadiks (saints). They are as rare as they are precious. However, it is significant that the Alter Rebbe wrote his master work, Tanya, not for other tzadiks, but for the ordinary good man.

Almost alone among the major religions Judaism emphasizes not just possibility of average people living righteous lives but their responsibility to do so.

So what did Reb Shlomo mean? Are true Jews really that rare?

What is the major responsibility of a Jew? Hillel summarized the Torah by stating that "Do not do unto others what you would not have done to you."

If I cause a slight irritation, I am very forgiving to myself. If someone else commits a similar annoyance, I become angry. Hillel's summation of the Torah means that we are to treat others with the same compassion and tolerance that we reserve for ourselves, and visa versa.

During morning prayers, a religious Jew forgives those who have transgressed against him. Prayer has replaced sacrifice as our service to G-d. A sacrifice needs to be whole and unblemished. Anger against others is a blemish in our prayers. If our souls are to be whole when we pray we must forgive our fellow Jews, for we all share the same soul-root, the same neshama. We do not do unto others, because we are the other.

What does G-d pray for? He prays that we pray for mercy rather than justice. When we forgive others as we forgive ourselves, we do not ask that they be punished for their crimes. When G-d hears prayers for mercy, He knows we have transcended our differences.

When the universe was created, the G-dly energy was contained in vessels. The vessels saw only the divine essence in themselves, and not in the others, so they shattered. Our task is tikkun, to repair the shattering by seeing the divine in others.

The ability to see G-dliness in others is called love. The major obligation of Jews is to love one another. Many Jews have extended this mitzvah to all humanity. With my entire heart, I acknowledge the essential divinity of all people, but I remind my Jewish brothers and sisters that loving non-Jews does not free us from the responsibility of loving Jews. It is often easier to be in harmony with strangers than members of our own family.

So what is a Jew? A true Jew loves all Jews. Certainly the late revered Shlomo fulfilled this definition as no one else did. Whether he was talking to Israeli soldiers in the Sinai, orthodox yeshiva bokers in Benei Brak, reform Jews in Arizona, his holy hippileh in San Francisco, the Chief Rabbi of Israel, or the most secular Tel Aviv imaginable, Shlomo's genuine affection poured forth on all.

Now let me tell you about Israel. The haredi and the Chillanim hate each other.

The Chillanim (secular) feel that the haredi (religious) are corrupt parasites that collect welfare from Israel but refuse to serve in the army to defend it. The haredi feel they are a persecuted minority that is routinely vilified in the left-wing press.

Every time a Jew says something terrible about another Jew, G-d cries. Unfortunately, this small country has caused the shedding of many a Divine tear. The haredi and the Chillanim say terrible things about each other. The verbal incitement has been so extreme, that a religious Jew felt it his holy duty to shoot the Prime Minister. Rabin wasn't murdered by one man, but by the slander of thousands.

If even religious Jews do not observe the essential mitzvah of loving all Jews, who does? There are millions of Israelis, but are any of them Jews? Was Shlomo the last Jew?

Now let me tell you about the Aquarian Minyan. Imagine an event happening motzi Shabbos. A young woman enters the house where the event is happening. She is very active in seeking justice for the Palestinians. She feels that witchcraft is a natural expression of her lesbianism. She is wearing cutoffs, and an open revealing shirt. She has short stylish hair, and carries a drum slung on her back.

Across the room is her friend, who always wears long dresses, even when hiking. Not one hair shows through the scarf on her friend's head. Her friend is shomer Shabbos, keeps a glatt kosher house, and visits the mikvah at the appropriate times. One of her many children is studying at a yeshiva in Hebron.

The two friends see each other. They run to embrace each other. They bless each other as naturally as they breathe. They love and respect each other, not in spite of their differences, nor because of them. They both know that they are essentially the same. When G-d sees these two Jews embrace, He cries, but this time with tears of joy.

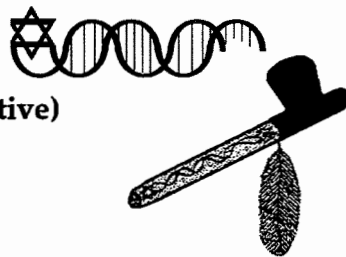
People transcending their differences to worship together is what I most admire most about the Aquarian Minyan. The Aquarian Minyan taught me that it is possible to be a Jew. It is possible for all of us.



Reflections on 22 Years of Jewishing with the Aquarian Minyan

(as filtered through a
Jewish-Native-American-cell-biologist perspective)

Miriam Stampfer



When I connected with the Minyan in 1977, I was at a low point in my Jewish being. Although I retained generally very positive feelings about my suburban orthodox upbringing, clearly, Orthodoxy was not my path. But I didn't see an alternative. Reform and Conservative didn't have for me the juice, depth, yearning for the post-Tikkun Olam world that my Orthodox background led me to believe was part of my Jewish inheritance. What else was there?

Jewish Renewal in the form of the Aquarian Minyan. A friend and I checked out the High Holyday services in 1977 and it was an immediate knowing - this was what I had been looking for, hoping for, and didn't know existed. I quickly immersed myself in the still young community. Of course, the Minyan didn't perfectly match all my needs or desires for ideal Jewish spiritual home. It could also be a non-harmonious collection of flawed individuals. But it was good enough. Key for me was taking part in what I felt was a shared vision, which wove us together in Jewish Renewal spiritual community.

So - one of the first things I learned from being a part of the Minyan: communities can have significant elements of individual and collective dysfunction, and still be powerful agents for evolution as long as there's sufficient sense of shared vision, mission, meaning; a common set of values to hold us all together (especially during times when disruptive forces are flying) and lead us forward.

I imagine each of our ways of understanding what constituted that shared vision was somewhat unique, as well as shared. For myself, I saw it like this:

- ✧ Judaism can be a rich and valid spiritual path for our time and place. Certainly for those who see themselves as Jewish.
- ✧ Underlying reality is an awesome creative spirit-force, within which all of creation is encompassed and inter-related.
- ✧ Mitzvot provide valuable methodologies for channeling the holy spirit of creation into our created (and imperfect, fractured) world.
- ✧ The Jewish task is to bring about the world renewed - Tikkun Olam - wherein
 - humanity knows its interconnectedness with itself and all of creation, Oneness.
 - humanity lives in a world governed by justice, united in love, enjoying beauty.
- ✧ Actualizing this vision is real and possible. In our highest moments, we've all tasted this; it draws us.
- ✧ As a Jewish spiritual community, our communal task is to help actualize this vision. For this goal, we bond together, assembling a structure in which the sum is greater than the parts. So the principles guiding our actions derive from optimizing our ability to perform our collective task as best possible (which is not going to be perfect, or even very close).
- ✧ The medium is also the message, so let's demonstrate a community respectful of each other, serving G-d with joy, having fun, with childlike-wonder, while gaining wisdom from experience and learning.

Well, I suspect I inherited some of this viewpoint from my father, who conveyed to me the message that as long as there was pain and injustice in this world, Jews should not rest from trying to bring about Tikkun Olam (a down side of this message: whatever you're doing - it's not good enough!).

Along the lines of the medium being the message, I recall that one of the most striking things for me from that first High Holydays with the Minyan (in addition to feeling elevated by the spirit of the service leaders), was the force of the liturgy. Still in its earliest form, put together by Burt Jacobson and other early Minyanites, I was deeply moved by its language, novelty of layout, and ability to speak in ways that had meaning for me. It's been very pleasing for me that one of my contributions to Jewish Renewal (first with Yehudit Goldfarb and then for many years in close partnership with David Wolfe-Blank) has been to continue in this tradition of providing stimulating, novel, and meaningful liturgy.

Important learnings for me from this and other "contributions" (the whole range -facilitating High Holyday services - putting out mailings - cleaning up halls after events):

♥ I can do best (for me, for my community, for Tikkun Olam) those things about which I truly deeply feel love and caring.

♥ Passion, yearning, an inner fire, can provide the necessary energy to "contribute", especially when doing so may involve majorly energy demanding, difficult, tedious, even unpleasant aspects.

♥ Having real partners for this *avodah*, friends I could respect, love, play and learn with, greatly augmented my own capabilities and enjoyment.

So, even in the midst of our frequent individual and communal *mishegas*, as long as I could feel the bonds of love connecting me with others in the community, the draw of the collective vision and the power of holy fire - it was good enough.

There has been an ongoing learning process that I find myself still reflecting upon, still looking for insight. It is the dynamic, quest for balance, between:

The power, radiance, creativity that the Minyan gained from having coalesced as a smallish community bound together by a high level of respect, love, and intimacy (which, by definition, exists only within limited numbers);

The needs of the larger community which formed in response to that power, radiance, and creativity. Meeting the needs of larger groups requires a certain degree of organization and effective means of communication.

Wrestling with this dynamic - in reference to the Minyan, and also in reflection of many other kinds of human communities, collective enterprises (my science community, political, ethnic, religious, social groups in general), has become a major stimulus to my inquiring analytic scientific mind. From this, my version of "The Theory of Everything" has been slowly emerging.

It's still emerging. In its current incarnation I'm referring to it as "Multicellular Diversity" (or, one needs only to look to one's own body to find a beautiful model of how great individual diversity can function in harmony while simultaneously existing as One Being). Of course, being a cell biologist has no doubt influenced my choice of model.

Biological evolution has taken life on this planet from a single cell stage (one cell does all) to multi-multi-multi-cellular organisms with extremely high degrees of specialization of their individual cells. Which make it possible for the whole to be so much greater than the sum of its parts. The human body is the most complex and skilled, even allowing for the capacity of self-awareness, wonder, awe.

For our body as a whole to function well, each cell does what it's supposed to do the best it can - based on its destiny, developmental history, and current environmental conditions. Clear, efficient forms of communication among the many parts are necessary. Cells can serve so many different and important roles: structural support, synthesis of necessary products, energy management, cognition, communication, transport, reproduction, defense

This is a system that inherently respects and honors diversity, respects and honors boundaries and limitations, recognizes that there are many different appropriate ways of being. All cells in one body have the same unique genetic DNA coded signature. By progressively limiting the amount of the overall genetic potential expressed in a particular cell, specialization can occur, finer and finer branching of diversity. In a complex organism, a given cell is inherently better at doing some things rather than others. Beauty and strength derive from that.

I wish we could function in our larger scale human communities with a similar sense about our diversity, about the variability of our skills, about the value of many different kinds of skills functioning in relative harmony for the good of the larger body, about respecting that different cells can do different things best. Some skills may be more uncommon than others, some more elaborate, some less flashy. They all can serve, in different ways.

So, thinking back to the Minyan, and its past and future evolution.

My own energetic participation in the community was grounded in and energized by working as part of a larger whole to create the kind of spiritual home, services, that I myself desired. For me, this required a close-knit core filled with passion and intensity (often found in conjunction with strong opinions, heated inter-personal exchanges). I've experienced concern that the vision, passion, and intensity that were such significant elements in the Minyan being the Minyan could get submerged, disrupted, for the sake of being more functional in attending to the needs of the larger community. I would like to see ways in which both sides of this dynamic can respect the value of what both contributes, each flourishing without compromising the other.

For me, it was essential that the Minyan foundation consisted of a small (though not of fixed composition) core, that naturally was more closely bound within itself than with large numbers of folks with whom one had less interaction. That smaller home-base provided the supportive environment enabling me to love what I was doing in contribution to the community, energizing my flame. That was my "organ system", my smaller scale community within the larger whole. In multi-multi-multi-cellular complex organisms, there can be multiple levels of sub-organization, identities. To the extent that I've felt my ability to function within my sub-organization disrupted by the larger whole, my desire and energy to contribute to the larger whole has been diminished.

Looking at my version of the shared vision, I see that it didn't include aspects relating to social functions of community - at least none more specific than that we should be respectful and have fun. I think I assumed that in a smallish group, the social benefits would come naturally. And to some extent, they did. They were though, of secondary power. It was the shared spiritual vision that drew and bound. With those with whom I could share that vision, I could also enjoy the social aspects of community. So for me, the primary task of the Minyan is our communal role in Tikkun Olam. Communities emphasizing social or spiritual values both have their roles in the larger body of humanity. My desires and vision for the Minyan though, have been and remain that the spiritual bonding is what draws, and then the social bonds form secondarily.

At the same time, to fulfill its role in Tikkun Olam, the needs of the larger whole, the whole Minyan community - itself in context of the larger human society - must be met. I don't think

there has to be conflict in fulfilling the needs of smaller, more active "cores", and the greater community. However, for that to be so, I think there has to be healthy respect and support both for intimate cores whose work for the community is motivated by a shared spiritual vision, and for an organization that has the necessary structure and communication channels to fulfill all who want to participate at their own appropriate level. As in the human body, different skills, different functions, each doing what they are best suited to do, while respecting the skills of others. Inspiring service facilitators may not be the greatest organizers; fund-raisers may not be good at putting out brochures; learned teachers may not always have the best inter-personal manners. OK, we're not all the same; none of us is perfect. My observation is that problems can develop when we try to play someone else's position, or get in their way. Or, we want to play a role without respecting the importance not just of having some innate talent for that role, but also that valuable endeavors require training, knowledge, experience, and patience.

I believe the communal task of the Minyan, and Jewish Renewal, is beautiful and important, and that achieving it is within the realm of the possible. My 22 years with the Minyan, the long strange trip it's been, has served to reinforce that belief. We are one piece of collective players in the unfolding story of humanity's evolution. I am so thankful that my Orthodox background grounds me in a surety that this unfolding will mature and blossom into Tikkun Olam. This is my goodly inheritance. And I'm thankful that there are many other players, traditions, cultures, each with differing backgrounds and tasks, also contributing their pieces. May we all support each other to play our roles as best we can.

And, may the generation that follows keep the holy fire burning, offering the newness of their experiences and awareness into the evolving tradition.

Blessings and thanks to all those with whom I have journeyed - in the Minyan, in Jewish Renewal, and in all my paths.



You are building it, and they are coming
The Aquarian Minyan and The Field of Rebbetude

By Ben Habeebe
Special to the **Daily Cosmos**

Editor's note: The following is a report lifted from the ethereal edition of the Daily Cosmos. Shoresh Barry Barkan claims to have been the ether-hacker who intercepted this report. He attributes it to a disembodied, time traveling reporter named Ben Habeebe. Barkan claims to have met Habeebe when Habeebe briefly took intermittent possession of the body of an American newspaper reporter in or around Detroit, Michigan, just as Motown was becoming a wonderful harmonizer of American Consciousness. Barkan further claims that it was right after Habeebe disappeared that he began to be haunted by periodic penetrations of realtime by images from the Daily Cosmos. At times he says it drives him crazy distracting his attention from the business at hand. At other times, he says it provides him with something to say when he is confronted by the dense operating environment of the normal course of events. The really strange thing says Barkan is:

Sometimes the two become confused in Habeebe's mind and he begins writing first person reports of my own life. Sometimes I wonder though if in receiving the Daily Cosmos reports, it's me who begins to project my own experience onto this supposedly ethereal newspaper to which I appear to be the sole subscriber. In any event, I certainly wouldn't trust any of these transmissions from the ether any more than I would trust any other journalistic offering that we see on TV, read on the web or in the newspapers and news magazines...

What an interesting amalgam the Aquarian Minyan is. Its members have come together from many different worlds. In the early days of the Aquarian Minyan most of its members came from the various expressions of the counter culture that bore fruit in the sixties and seventies. Some put their lives at risk in the struggle for a world of peace, justice and compassion. Some came from religious Jewish backgrounds. Some dabbled in various spiritual traditions from the East and West and North and South, finding connection to spirituality in strange practices of distant peoples. Some ingested holy substances that introduced them to dimensions that stretched our understanding of reality. Some did some of it all. The common denominator among these early minyan pioneers was a passion for healing, justice and unification.

As the Aquarian Minyan came together as a new fusion, it was apparent that it was birthing and being birthed by an expression of Jewality that was new to the world. It reached into the old country and distant lands of our ancestors and it was native to this holy land that has its own deep spiritual reality. The essence of European Chassidism and the living Kabbalistic lineage immersed itself in feminism and the quest for justice and found its way to the holy city of Berkeley. There a fallow Jewish people with its roots in a world yet unborn seeded an egalitarian and accessible relationship to the profound and ineffable.

In Berkeley, just about as far away from Eastern Europe as you can be, Native American Chassidism took root as a native hybrid plant. During the journey through time and space the Jewish people have constantly expanded the G-d understanding of our ancestors bringing it to and enhancing it through the natural forces unique to each place where we have dwelled. In each setting, the Jewish people have become more than we had been as the living transmissions of Kabbalah have found new venues to bring G-d's presence into a fuller unfolding.

Native American Chassidism is uniquely of this sacred ground and connected to the earth where the Native Americans once walked, ate, lived, slept and did rituals to keep in harmony with the Great Spirit. Holy, holy, holy is the Force of all life, hosting us and nurturing the generations behind us and before us that express themselves in our lives and our practice. It is in America, with its free spirit and its own dangerous karma of slavery and genocide, that a new age is being birthed and a window to the fulfillment of ancient prophesy has opened up.

The Aquarian Minyan exists because of two awesome, profound and prophetic teachers, Reb Shlomo Carlebach, of blessed memory, and Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, may he live and be well for many years to come and see the fruition of the forests that he has planted throughout the world. These two guys are the modern day version of the *Frisco Kid*, safely transporting the holy Torah to some pretty wild and crazy places in this terrible time when the Jewish people was decimated by hate, global cultural insanity, genocide, and our own deep spiritual fallow time that was brought about by the titanic clash between the age that was and the age that will be.



Reb Zalman and Reb Shlomo were the sacred living bridges that enabled the tradition to take root in this West Coast community that was more oriented towards Woodstock, India and Selma than Jerusalem, Sfat and Bratzlov. How amazing these two Zaydes of Jewish Renewal who were able to accept us just as we were and initiate us into ancient ways with no precondition. How crucial they were in their understanding that fully half of the Jewish population has a spiritual lineage and a legacy for future generations that needed to be recognized, cultivated and empowered. The Aquarian Minyan could only have been born as a feminist community whose valuing of spiritual diversity created a safe haven for its people to come, to heal and to become renewed as Jews.

While Berkeley provided the venue native to America, the Lubavitchers, the Chabbadnicks, provided the Chassidic connection that goes all the way back to ancient days. It was the Freidicke

Rebbe, Reb Yacob Yosef Schneerson, father-in-law of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who recruited Reb Zalman and Reb Shlomo and inspired them to come out and find the hundreds of thousands of Jewish Americans whose connective tissue to European Judaism had tattered and frayed.

I wonder if in his wildest vision he could have imagined Jews such as our selves and a Minyan such as our own. May we continue to grow as is b'sheert (fated) for us and may we be ever connected in love and respect for all of the Jewish people. May our sisters without and our sisters within lead us to new territory where the heart is the sun and compassion is the gentle rain that brings forth renewal from the well tended gardens of our deeds.

(Editor's note. Uh-oh! It appears that Daily Cosmos writer, Ben Habeebe, is slipping into the persona confusion described earlier by Shores Barry Barkan and is describing Barkan's experiences as if they were his own.)

My life in Jewish Renewal began even before I imagined the existence of such a movement. While on an identity quest in New York's Central Park in the late sixties, I met some new friends who connected me with the living power of the ancient tradition. I read one line by Reb Martin Buber, "For me Chassidism was the restoration of the connection..." and I intuited that for me, too, the spiritual lineage of the Baal Shem Tov provided the connective tissue to a spirituality that I had not yet experienced. But where to find its living expression? It wasn't there for me in the Chassidic enclaves I visited in New York and Boston.

One day when I wasn't looking for it, I encountered the path to my own restoration of the connection in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, where I was on my own hegira across America, looking for my place, my community and my work. Our two VW busses, could have passed as ships as in the night, as I was leaving Eureka Springs and a van load of holy hippies from the House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco was coming into town. When we met in the parking lot of the Community Center where I was saying good by to new friends and they were asking directions, I asked, "Hey Brother, why are you wearing that funny hat on your head." I knew it was a yarmulke. But I didn't want to commit to the knowledge lest I be proselytized by an outreach worker for the *frum* world.

"Brother," said Mayim Chayyim David Hertzberg, may he live and be well at least until 140, "I wear the hat to remind me that there is Something-Bigger-Than-I-Am above my head. And by the way" he added, "when you get to San Francisco be sure to call me at the House of Love and Prayer. Come for Shabbos. Reb Shlomo might be there. He's a gevalt. He's unbelievable."

Nine months later, I woke up in the San Francisco house where I had recently taken up residency and out of the blue remembered about the House of Love and Prayer. I called information and dialed the number. Mayim Chayyim David Hertzberg, he should only know from miraculous healing in his life, answered the phone and immediately remembered our brief Eureka Springs encounter. "Brother," he said, "Come for Shabbos. Shlomo will be here."

Shabbos? Shlomo? What did this have to do with me, a fully assimilated, American hippie, social activist?

That night changed my life. I encountered Shabbos. I encountered Shlomo. I encountered a visceral connection to the core of Jewish spirituality that I never knew existed. By the time Shabbos was over I had found my tribal root. I owned my lineage that went back to Aaron, the Kohane, and is the legacy of the people of priests.

Shlomo walked into the House of Love and Prayer and embodied love. He made a genuine connection with each person he touched. His davennen, his melodies, his singing, his stories, his dancing seemed to alter reality and transported me outside of time and space. The Baal Shem Tov, Reb Nachman, the Ishbitzer Rebbe, all became real and contemporaneous characters, awakening me to a reality that unbeknownst to me, was the home of my soul. All of this was presented as an unconditional gift. The ground on which I stood was sufficient for me to fully experience the living tradition.

Shlomo gave over a transmission, and I was tanked up with holy Chutzpah, the willingness to transcend my experience and be greater, holier and more outrageously G-d conscious than I actually was or maybe would ever be.

It seemed like Shlomo was in and out of town and whenever he showed up at the House of Love and Prayer, I was there. I volunteered to be Shlomo's driver. He apparently liked it that I just let him trance out as we journeyed to the airport, to a radio studio, to his hotel, or wherever else he had to be.

There is a Chassidic story about a student who goes to visit a rebbe. When he comes home he is asked what he learned while in the presence of this great scholar. "I followed him around and learned how he ties his shoes," was the response, "every move he makes is so awesome and so filled with wisdom."

One time we were late getting in the car to get to the airport. It was my experience that Shlomo lived in two temporal dimensions: Shlomo time and airline time. The only story I ever heard about Shlomo not making a plane was on the last day of his life. So, on this particular occasion we are driving to the airport when we pass a hitchhiker. In those days it was my own custom to never pass by a hitchhiker. Shlomo knew my custom and as I slowed as we approached the hitchhiker, Shlomo said: "Do one Mitzvah at a time."

What a teaching.

Another time after driving Shlomo and Steve Maimes to the airport, I sat in a coffee shop with my friend Donna Maimes, who was then married to Steve. Donna Maimes is a wonderful, universal sister whose Jewish soul roots called out to her from another generational lineage. From the start the Minyan has been enriched by and welcomed, loved and respected Jews by Choice as our fully Jewish sisters and brothers, our teachers and our friends. Both Reb Zalman and Reb Shlomo have often expressed their understanding that after the genocide of the Jewish people, there were huge numbers of Jewish souls wrenched from their bodies in an untimely fashion and needing to return to finish their incarnation. Because our numbers were decimated there simply weren't sufficient Jewish bodies for this to occur and so a number of gentile families provided hosts for these souls who later heard the soul call of their Jewishness.

As Donna and I spoke, I realized that there was another aspect of my experience that also needed a Rebbe. I told Donna that there was a part of me that was both universal and nurtured by sacred herbs and that part wasn't being fulfilled at the House of Love and Prayer.

"Have you ever heard of Reb Zalman Schachter?" she asked and continued without hesitating, "He's another holy Chassidic connection. Shlomo stays with the Jewish path and takes it to places it's never been before. He's not the only one. I once saw the Bobover Rebbe from Brooklyn. When he walks into a room, he looks like he's two feet off the ground. He's that high. He's on the level of a Satchianda. He gives blessings that go right through you," she added as it is remembered more or less by your **Daily Cosmos** reporter.

"Zalman is connected to the tradition. But he goes all the places you go and he's even more out there than you are," she told me. "You need to meet him." "More out there than I am," I thought, "I need to check this person out."

Editor's Note: Note again how in the Daily Cosmos peoples' identity tends to merge and we become one another and speak one another's longings and finish one another's tasks. We also experience for ourselves one another's pain, anger, hurt or disorientation. At this moment as he writes, Habeebe appears to be incapable of distinguishing between himself and Shores Barry Barkan.

At the Daily Cosmos, we take it as our editorial practice to clarify the voice with which our writers are speaking. It is our editorial policy to reduce the din of our contemporary Babel so that we may hear the compassionate and loving voice of truth. The most effective way for any journalistic media, cosmic or otherwise, to support the unfolding of the truth is through careful attribution, compassionate fact checking and constant self examination. We in the fourth estate, cosmic or otherwise, have a responsibility to not only seek to clarify our understanding of the truth but to understand that we, too, can have bias, blind spots or warped perceptions of reality and to expose these to our readers, viewers, listeners, etc.

There is not one among us who is free from blind spots. When Reb Zalman was in Berkeley community developing the floating crap game that became the Aquarian Minyan, he taught that we each have blind spots, parts of ourselves that are apparent to others but hidden from us. Forever the model of Teshuvah, Reb Zalman tells the following story on himself.

"There was in the House of Love and Prayer and Minyan communities, Bailah Tobias, who was called into this world to be a Rabbi and to bring a tikkun to the women. Back before it was common she held our hands to the fire until we gave her smicha. She particularly wanted Reb Shlomo's signature on the Smicha because he was so connected to the straight world.

"Anyway, Bailah took a bakery number and during our yechidus, she pointed out to me that I too had not overcome the conditioning of sexism within our tradition. 'Moir', " Reb Zalman remembered responding with exaggerated surprise.

"She and I quickly reached an agreement about how we were to check this out. We agreed that as I taught later that evening, any time I said something that was sexist, she would raise her right hand. In this way she would be able to help me out with specific examples of sexist behavior.

"Oy, did her right hand go up again and again," he said using the traditional Jewish form of the question statement to deliver the punch line on his holy teaching.

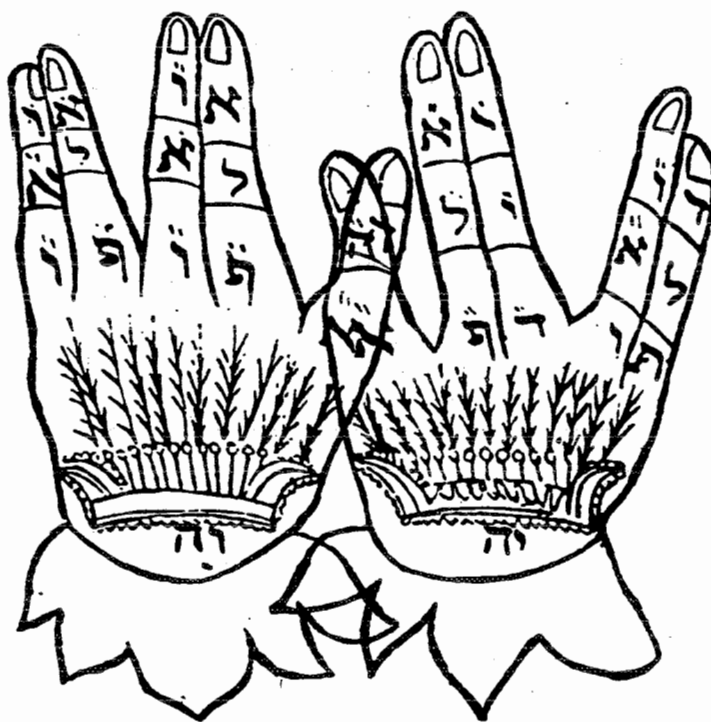
So six months after the conversation with Donna, there I was in the old Colonial Donut Shop on Euclid Avenue in Berkeley and there was a flyer on the bulletin board that informed me that Reb Zalman Schachter was coming to town to teach a week long workshop on Kabballah at Hillel House. Now, I have to confess that during that sojourn, I was a great frequenter of that particular donut shop. It is interesting to me that the morning I saw the flyer was the only time it was on the bulletin board. It was not there the day before I saw it and it was not there later that same afternoon.

When I saw Reb Zalman speak for the first time before a large audience at Hillel House, I was introduced to the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Now, even I knew that you weren't supposed to teach Kabballah to people under 40 who had yet to be householders. Perhaps the rebel in me had met its master.

But the thing that really got to me that first night was Reb Zalman's expressed commitment to a learning process in which at different moments we change roles between the Rebbe and the Chassid (the spiritual leader and the follower). "In the Chassidic tradition," said Reb Zalman, "we don't learn *from* a teacher, we learn *with* a teacher. We are as much a part of the teacher's learning as the teacher is with ours."

It was clear who the teacher was. But the process was egalitarian and there was clear appreciation of the fact that we all carried a piece of the divine message or a refrain from the divine niggun.

During the following week, I experienced an introductory immersion in each of the four worlds into Kabballah, Chassidus, living in Jewish Peoples' Standard Time, giving blessings, telling stories, finding my place in the mystical lineage, and keeping joy alive even under the most repressive of circumstances. And that was just on the surface. Zalman mapped out the connective tissue I had intuited between Christianity and Islam and Chassidus and Kabballah and Hinduism and Biology and Buddhism and Environmentalism and Classical Music and Breathing and Meditation and Turning Contemporary Music into Niggunim and Nussach and the quest for justice, peace and opportunity. And that was just on the surface. He introduced feeding one another challah and blessing one another and receiving blessing from one another and group Alliyot and Eco Kosher and so many of the other innovations that each of us is reinventing day after day as we spread the teachings.



G-d bless Reb Zalman. G-d bless Reb Zalman's ancestors. G-d bless his children and his grandchildren and his generations to come. G-d bless Eve. G-d Bless Elana. G-d Bless Lindsay. G-d bless Fayge. G-d bless all of Reb Zalman's students and teachers and friends. The *heilege* Reb Zalman bridged worlds as he grounded everything he said and did in the great pool that nourishes the roots of all the sacred traditions. The awesome thing is that we all knew we were in the middle of the great paradigm shift. By virtue of personal practice and divine gift and wisdom and understanding, Reb Zalman was able to tie it all together. He gave his voice and his being to the new paradigm so that most of what he gave over embodied the change.

Interestingly, in a very different way, Reb Shlomo did the same paradigmatic bridging when I was with him at the House of Love and Prayer.

When the time came for me to have my bakery number with Zalman, I wanted to be humble and I didn't want to present myself as more than I was. Sometimes humility isn't so much humility as the understanding that if you play your hand as too much greater than it is, your bluff might be called. I also wanted to learn whether the individual respect Zalman promised in the large group would be present in the Y'chidus.

So I brought Reb Zalman a *Doctor Strange* Comic as a gift and shared with him what I understood about the presence of G-d in the funny places where traditional Jews seldom hang out. Zalman showed me that his passport was well punched for visiting those places and we formed that day an intergenerational friendship that is truly a blessing in my life, the life of my family, the life of our community and the life of my work.

At week's end, along with others in the class, I was initiated onto the path of rebbetude. I was provided with sufficient tools, baseline information and a network of partners in learning to enable me to begin to practice rebbetude in all of the aspects of my life—even though I wasn't religious and my Jewish education was limited. Although the spirit was joyful, there was a sense of urgency to the time. We had just survived the holocaust. It was time to rebuild and the rebuilding of the people had to be done with the imperfect human flotsam and jetsam that we are.

The core Aquarian Minyan concept that each of us has a Rebbe within was shaped at this time. The idea was not so much fuel for our individual and collective ego trip, although many of us may have ego tripped with the idea, but an enlistment call. We needed then and we need more so now to field a corps of activist champions of consciousness who are committed to constantly refining ourselves and becoming instruments of the great renewal. The survival of the people, indeed the survival of the world, depends on our expansion of what Zalman was to later call, the field of Rebbetude, into every realm of our lives.

What a time as the House of Love and Prayer was sunseting and the Aquarian Minyan was being birthed.

People say to me, "What's the difference between Reb Shlomo and Reb Zalman?" and just as I get ready to answer, I hear the voice of J.J. Franklin, an old teacher of mine who survived ten years in the Virginia State Penitentiary with his heart and soul intact. J.J. would say to me, "Barry, you have to always leave 'em Hungree. You don't need to give them everything at once. That way they'll want to come back for the rest of what you've got for them...."

Editor's note: At this moment as he quotes J.J. calling him Barry, Ben Habeebe hesitates as he catches for a moment that blind spot that enables him to confuse his life experience with that of Barkan. He dwells on it for a moment in his mind's eye and decides: "That's deeper than I care to go right now..." The window to the blind spot shuts down and Habeebe returns to his narrative in this Daily Cosmos special report in honor of the anniversary of this very special community. At this point your humble editor is completely confused. I have no idea if it's Habeebe or Barkan speaking. All I know is that it's good to be in the cosmos.

Many years have passed since those early sunny days that we thought would never end. In the intervening years we've seen more fire and rain than we had expected, but thank G-d, due to that seed work of the Frisco Kids, I don't think any of us in the wider Aquarian Minyan community has seen too many lonely times when we could not find a friend.

Many of the people in the Minyan and its many sister communities that have sprung up around the world do see ourselves as a uniquely American incarnation of an ancient Jewish shamanic tribal tradition which previously had its last major flowering in Eastern Europe in the late eighteenth century. Shaped and formed by the egalitarian notions of the sixties, many in our movement have advanced the notion that the Shamanistic quality of the Rebbe figure resides not in one person or in a dynasty, but in the community and in its members who take this form of service seriously.

Inspired, tutored and frequently accredited by our growing band of wise and learned elders, many of us in a number of walks of life have earnestly experimented with and practiced the art of Rebbe craft. The operant word here is practice. Although in this age everyone may be imbued with the gift of Rebbetude, it is only practice that brings it out, nurtures it and develops it.

Now we must be even greater than ourselves. Reb Shlomo is no longer with us. There are teachers from our generation who are no longer with us. All honor to the memory of Reb Dovid Wolfe-Blank, Reb Dov Ben-Khayyim, Reb Bélah Tobias, Reb Sa'adya Pesach Haya Garnet, Reb David Drexler, and Reb Ruti Hafsadi. Reb Zalman is in the Tzimtzum mode providing space, love and emanations of pure wisdom to empower one and all of us to fully embody our rebbetude. More than ever, the responsibility for the midwifing of the new paradigm is on each of us. We need to take responsibility to develop our self awareness, establish real boundaries on our own individual idiosyncratic behaviors, and master the craft of being the champions of the good.

The circle of rebbetude shall expand as we increase the scope, frequency and quality of our practice, as we bless the Source in one another, seek and share healing and pursue knowledge and understanding, as we sing, dance and tell stories, as we bring the presence of the Holy One, blessed be the Name, into all the realms of our personal, communal and work lives.

In time there will be hundreds of millions of us practicing Rebbetude, people from all nations and all traditions, and every day more and more people will give up the old trance states and embody a new vision of reality. And then the face of renewal shall be strong upon the earth. Even as we are so far away, we are so close to the fulfillment of ancient prophesy. Our lives matter. Our actions matter. Our efforts to expand the field of rebbetude matters. This is the mission of the Aquarian Minyan of our next 25 years. If we stay with the mission, we may be remembered for generations to come. If we don't, perhaps it is just as well that there will be other more significant historical phenomenon to remember.

May our teachers on this reality plane, may our teachers who have crossed over to other reality planes, be celebrated for their great and meaningful contributions and may they be forgiven their shortcomings just as each and all of us would want to be seen with love, compassion and understanding.

Editor's Note: Later editions of the Daily Cosmos shall revel in the details of the great shift as ancient prophesy will have been fulfilled. Stay tuned. Stay turned on. Don't drop out.



