



THE STAR

NEWSLETTER OF TEMPLE BETH TORAH ■ MARCH/APRIL 2017 ■ ADAR / IYARR 5777 ■ VOL. 20 NO. 4

Message from Rabbi Seth

For the early years of our marriage, my wife and I used the widely disseminated Maxwell House edition of the Hagadah for Passover seders over which we presided. I had gotten these from my parents, who no doubt had used them during my early childhood (I don't remember if that's so but am guessing because they had a large number of them to give me). Nowadays my family uses a sophisticated Reconstructionist version with glossy pictures and elaborate commentary. The bare-bones traditional approach favored by Maxwell House still remains, hovering reassuringly, in the back of my mind, however.

At the time I had no interest in coffee. The closest I came—this occurred during my graduate school years—was a temporary, quickly passing phase of mocha Breyers ice cream consumption (except on Passover, for which that stuff is not kosher). However, I always liked the idea that a for-profit American coffee company was sponsoring a Jewish religious ritual.

Over the last couple of years I have become a caffeine fiend. Whether it's good or bad for me, only time will tell. Members of our congregation's once-a-month Shabbat morning Torah study group, along with the various friends with whom I meet at Starbucks and other local cafés and restaurants, can attest to this new fixation—or should I say addiction? Members of the study group (you know who you are!) supply me with a ready stream of the liquid stimulant, and by the end of my hour-and-a-half or so with the group I am more or less hovering close to the ceiling of TBT's social hall.

I am not sure if coffee is for me a purportedly innocuous gateway drug leading to something far more menacing: Peppermint Tea? Oreos? Free-

market economics? I favor Starbucks (cappuccino, latte) and Dunkin Donuts (straight, black) and tap into this stuff as often as I can get away with doing so: on my way home from work, during Shabbat Torah study (as stated above), or whenever. For my most recent birthday, Barbara bought me an espresso maker, with which I have been experimenting in my spare time.

Pesah is the festival that celebrates our people's liberation from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. However, and ironically, Maxwell House exploits this Jewish festival of freedom as a pretext for deploying a strategy to addict people like me into enslavement—to a physical substance!

Could it be, though, that the line between freedom and slavery is not really very sharp? In the Hagadah we read that God turned us from being avadim / slaves of Pharaoh to being avadim / servants of God: the same word, avadim, applies in both cases. Freedom and slavery are thus not objective conditions in which people find themselves. They're states of consciousness that reflect our commitments—the values by which we live. My coffee fix, although in itself a form of chemical dependency, has the paradoxical virtue of uplifting my spirit and helping me break out of mental isolation and into social communion.

It helps me rise above my inhibitions and achieve a euphoria reserved not for saints but for introverts.

Every form of freedom has its price. Mine, apparently, is coffee.

Wishing you a sweet, stimulating, mentally liberating and, if you like, caffeinated Pesah!

Message from the Executive Committee

During the doldrums of March, when the weather just won't cooperate, it's cold and dreary out, and one might feel more inclined to stay home on a Friday evening after a long week of work or other activity, rather than head out to Old Wethersfield to participate in a religious service.

But, once you get there, you do feel a calming of the spirit. Reciting the ancient prayers, communing with something greater than oneself, if only for an hour, has some restorative value to the soul. And, of course, the comradery of the Kiddush ceremony and "breaking bread" with friends, new and old, is a nice way to usher in the Sabbath as a community. For those

of you who joined TBT for the sake of having a place to go for the High Holidays and are just "too busy," or otherwise engaged each Friday night I extend this invitation:

Join us on a Friday night, for a Service and a Smile, and see if it doesn't make a difference in your outlook on life.

Rabbi Seth's take on current events as they relate to biblical passages are often discussed among the congregation and everyone has the opportunity to offer their opinion. It promotes interesting and cathartic discussion. Just what is needed at the end of a long week.

Our Friend AZ Soforenko

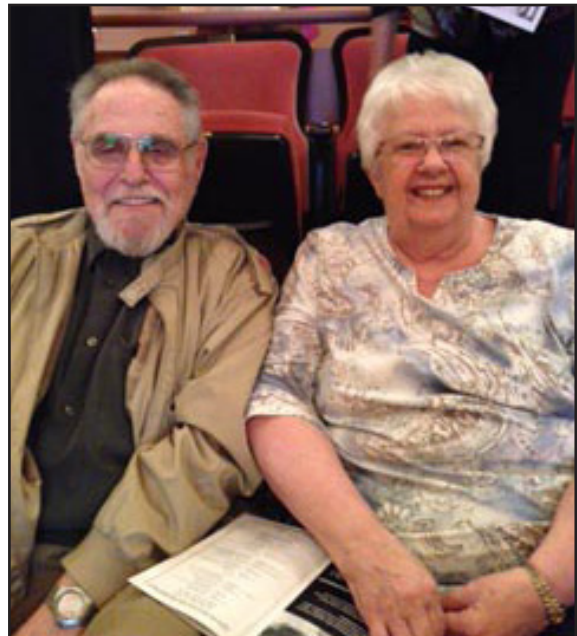
We at TBT are so lucky to have an amazing friend like AZ Soforenko. AZ and his family were members of TBT many years ago. His children celebrated their Bnai Mitzvahs in our sanctuary.

AZ and his wonderful wife, Evelyn, have not forgotten our little synagogue in Wethersfield. They have always been incredibly generous when help was needed and for that we are forever grateful.

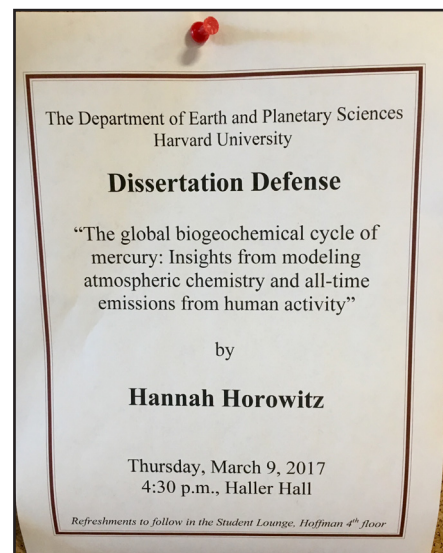
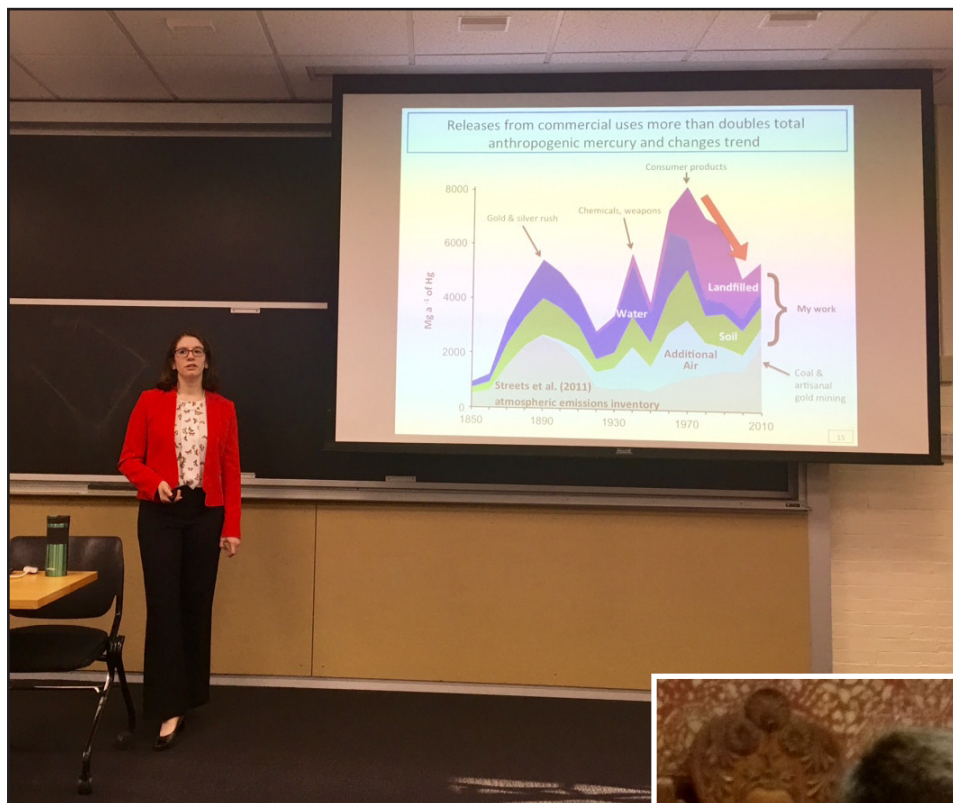
AZ has worn many hats over the years. He has a Ph.D. in Psychology and Adult Learning from Ohio State University, and was the Deputy Commissioner of Health for the State of Connecticut. He was Superintendent of the Department of Developmental Disabilities for the State of Ohio and in 1986 founded Occazo Inc. This facility helps people with disabilities like Mental Retardation (ICF/MR) by offering comprehensive and individualized health care and rehabilitation services to individuals to promote their functional status and independence in New Castle, Indiana.

We are truly blessed to have AZ and Evelyn as part of our TBT family!

Sallyanne



KVELL KORNER



Mrs. On March 8th and PhD on March 9th

Hannah is now Dr. Horowitz after 5+ years in Harvard Grad school.

On March 9th she successfully defended her dissertation and earned her PhD in Atmospheric Chemistry.

She starts a post doc fellowship on April third at the University of Washington, funded by the National Science Foundation.

On the day before that major event Hannah and Cristian Proistosescu were married in a civil ceremony at Cambridge City Hall attended by Ralph & Maureen and Cristi's uncle & cousin.

Cristi and Hannah met in graduate school at Harvard three years ago. Both were majoring in Earth and Planetary Science. Cristi also has his PhD and a fellowship at The University of Washington.

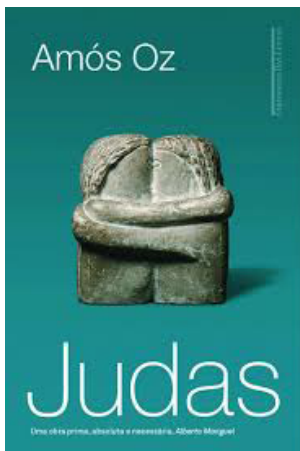
Wedding parties are planned for the summer of 2018 in Connecticut and at Cristi's home in Romania.



Busy couple of days for the Horowitz family!

KVELL KORNER (continued)

Susan and Jonathan Reuben are very proud of their daughter, **Kayla**, for making the Dean's List, again, at UConn. She is majoring in Finance and Anthropology. Kayla will be spending her alternative spring break in Oklahoma with the Cherokee people through a community outreach program organized by UConn.



TBT Book Club

The TBT Book Club met on Thursday, March 23rd at the Synagogue to discuss “**Judas**” by Amos Oz. Oz is my favorite Israeli author. This novel slowly reveals the interactions and backgrounds of 3 colorful people living together in a house in Jerusalem. Shmuel Ash is a young biblical scholar. Atalia is the daughter of a deceased Zionist leader. She is an attractive widow in her 40's who charms Shmuel but keeps him at a distance. The third character in the house is her father-in-law, a cantankerous old man named Gershom. He has strong opinions. The book is a fascinating character study that takes place in Jerusalem in 1959.

We are now going to read “**The Marriage of Opposites**” by Alice Hoffman. It is about a forbidden love story set on the tropical island of St. Thomas about the woman who gave birth to the painter Camille Pissarro - the Father of Impressionism.

We will meet to discuss it in early May.

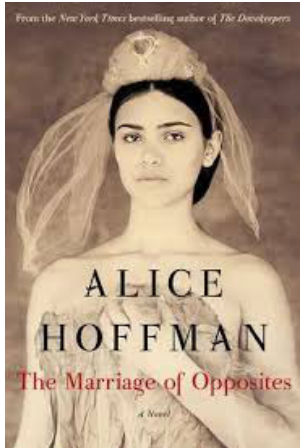
For more information about the Book Club contact **me** at cecile_bronfin@yahoo.com.

Cecile

And this from Leonard Lev:

I really enjoyed the book and was looking forward to our discussion. It was one of better selections for the club. Absolutely delicious reading with so many sub plots and precise artistic painting of characters and context, which reminded me Nabokov, Gogol and some of Chechov where you don't get tired with a background. Very sad but also very uplifting writing. I will definitely read more of Oz and now more of exciting Israelis.

Whoever suggested it, thank you.





The Bob and Karen Klein Building Fund
continues on its way...
 many thanks to our members who kicked off contributions

- Helene Rosenblatt,
 Carol Gershenson,
 Rhoda and Fred London,
 Debra and Joe Hammer,
 Joe and Janet Rosenblatt,
 Mara Dresner,
 Ellen Sue Moses and Mark Gould,
 Kathi and Eliot Mag,
 Sallyanne and Barry Scott,
 Bob and Karen Klein,
 Judy and Marty Gold,
 Alice Burstein,
 Gerald and Karen Waltman,
 Jonathan and Susan Reuben,
 Rabbi Seth Reimer and Barbara Checknoff,
 Cecile and Barry Bronfin,
 Barry Goldberg,
 Kristy Notarangelo and Leonard Lev
 and Gary and Sara Evans

And Leslie Levine has contributed since the last Star:

Let this campaign continue !!!!!!!

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Everyone,

I want to thank everyone who came to my Artwork exhibit at the Keeney Center this winter. The show was well attended and well received. It came down on March 27 to prepare the gallery for the *Taste of Wethersfield*. Now I have to fit all that stuff back into my flatfile.

Phil

A POEM BY RUTH BRAININ

Loving My Goal

The Bee Gees were a popular musical Rock group of the '70s
One of their recordings was titled, "Stayin' Alive!"
That, my friends is my goal, Stayin' Alive!
In these my later years, each day another ache or pain appears,
but I promise I will not be beat.
I have things to do and places to go.
I enjoy the challenges of a poetry meet,
My Mah Jongg group is a blast
And my opera class is one none can surpass.
For all these pleasantries, I'm Stayin' Alive,
My dear family is always by my side
And I watch with pride as they thrive,
Giving me more impetus for Stayin' Alive!

Recently I've had feelings of anxiety brought on
by the state of our society.
Our country has elected a new President and his administration.
Some of their policies have caused me fear, doubt and frustration.
I know as common sense and the rule of law prevail,
Our democracy will remain hearty and hale.
The many trips that I've taken added to the makin'
of my joys for Stayin' Alive.
A recent cruise on the Caribbean surely added to my well bein'
And to my joy of Stayin' Alive,
I hope the powers above that be will hear my wish and be kind to me
I'd like a little more time to plan and strive
to further my goal of Stayin' Alive!

This is clipped from **HAARETZ**, an Israeli newspaper known for its left-wing and liberal stances on domestic and foreign issues.

Bomb Threat Suspect's Identity Embarrassing for Jews, but Ultimately a Relief

by Allison Kaplan Sommer March 23, 2017

It may be a blow to Jewish pride and a political black eye to those who blamed the Trump camp for the JCC threats, but this means that a fearful Jewish community can finally exhale.

Jews cried foul when President Donald Trump bizarrely appeared to pin blame on his opponents for being behind the disturbing waves of bomb threats at Jewish centers, hinting at a false flag operation designed to make him look bad. At the time, Trump seemed to be drawing his inspiration from white supremacist conspiracy theorists on the Internet who were charging that the threats and other anti-Semitic acts were a grand plot cooked up by the Jews themselves. His insinuations felt like classic victim-blaming and vilification. Coupled with Trump's reluctance to condemn the anti-Semitic acts, on top of his problematic Holocaust Remembrance Day statement, added up to what seemed to be at best, pandering to racist "alt-right" supporters at best, or at worst, a troubling indication that he believed it himself.

As it turns out, an American-Israeli teenager in the southern city of Ashkelon is suspected to be the culprit behind hundreds of the bomb threats that so rattled the American Jewish community. On Thursday, the cybercrime unit of Israel's national fraud squad, arrested the young man after it received information from the FBI and other overseas law enforcement authorities. In hindsight, it seems Trump's comments stemmed from the fact that he was briefed by the FBI at an early stage that a suspect was being tracked down in Israel, and not because he follows David Duke's Twitter feed.

A limited number of details about the suspect have been made available so far, but claims made by his lawyer suggests that the suspect might be a mentally unstable lone wolf, albeit technologically sophisticated enough to master voice-

masking and location-hiding computer software. It also seems that his behavior wasn't inspired by Trump. Israeli authorities are telling the media that he'd been up to this mischief, threatening institutions on a number of continents for as long as two years.

Justifiably, Trump's Jewish critics on the left - present company included - feel a measure of shock, dismay and embarrassed by Thursday's development. It already felt like a stain on liberals when a disgraced African-American former journalist from a left-wing website, Juan Thompson, was arrested in early March, charged with eight JCC threats, as some sort of bizarre revenge plot against his Jewish girlfriend.

Still, it was pointed out at the time that Thompson appeared only to be a small-time copycat. Surely the bulk of the automated hoax calls, Jews and non-Jews on the left told themselves, were perpetrated by the alt-right white supremacists they were sure committed these terrible deeds. Others were equally convinced that it was more likely that Islamist anti-Israel terrorists could be behind the threats.

The shock at the arrest hadn't worn off before Jewish Trump supporters quickly climbed on their high horse, demanding an apology from the critics who charged the president's supporter for a perceived post-election surge in anti-Semitism.

Leading the calls for an apology to Trump was Mort Klein, head of the Zionist Organization of America, who said that it was warranted since it is "clear that, unlike what many of the pundits said, it was not the work of a Trump-loving white nationalist." Klein and his ilk may well deserve a moment of vindication at the news of this arrest, but it doesn't change the fact that it took an unnecessary amount of effort to elicit a condemnation of the anti-

Semitic acts from the president earlier in the year. And, it should be pointed out, there's no way that a teenager sitting in southern Israel could also be responsible for knocking over headstones in Jewish cemeteries.

No Jews or Israelis - on the right or the left - should in any way feel good about this outcome. It is, after all, a real blow to discover that the person behind the terrifying threats was one of their own, and a troubling hit to the credibility of the community when it faces threats in the future. Still, a healthy dose of perspective and common sense should remind even Trump's harshest detractors in the Jewish community that this strange twist is far from the worst possible outcome.

As JTA editor-in-chief Andrew Silow Carroll tweeted wisely: "This is 'bad news' for Jews only if you discount the real fear and fallout at dozens of JCCs and schools and find it politically vital or emotionally satisfying to know that the perpetrator was the enemy you wanted him to be." Indeed. It may be a blow to Jewish pride, and a political black eye to those who blamed the Trump camp for the JCC threats, but the fact remains that this unpleasant but benign explanation - if this suspect is the sole perpetrator - means that a fearful Jewish community can now finally exhale.

After all, if it is confirmed that the disturbing threats were indeed a hoax perpetrated from overseas, it means there are and never have been real bombs. This is undeniably good news, no matter what one's political orientation may be. It means that the thousands of Jews and non-Jews at the threatened facilities across the country, many of them children, are not - and never have been - in actual imminent danger. That is what truly matters.