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Jewish Reconstructionist
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Important Dates

Shabbat Morning Services 10am 10/12

Tot Shabbat 6pm 10/18

Shabbat Service 7:30pm 10/18

“The Temple Shofar”

October, 2013

Rabbi's Message

I heard a segment on NPR last May, and later found the essay to which it made reference – a piece called “Drowning Doesn’t Look Like Drowning.” The author of the essay, Mario Vittone, comments that “Drowning is almost always a deceptively quiet event.” In movies and TV, the primary concern is with the dramatic impact, so it is typical for them to represent people flailing about and crying for help – but this kind of dramatic scene isn’t an accurate portrayal of how drowning actually looks. Vittone notes that this behavior is characteristic of aquatic distress, which is a serious situation and can precede drowning, but is not yet to the level of drowning.

As the second leading cause of accidental death in children under 16, it is perhaps less surprising that when the Talmud (in Tractate Kiddushin 29a) discusses a parent’s obligations to children – swimming is one of the three things a parent is obligated to teach (with Torah and a trade being the other two). Vittone cites statistics that half of all children who drown do so with a parent or other adult within 25 yards, and 10 percent of the time the adult will actually watch it happening and yet be completely unaware that they are witnessing a drowning.

This is because of what is called the Instinctive Drowning Response – an involuntary process that makes it physiologically impossible to wave or cry out for help. The Instinctive Drowning Response is described in a Coast Guard magazine, which explains that speech is a secondary function to breathing, so the struggle to breathe takes precedence – a drowning person’s mouth only briefly emerges above the water, and there just isn’t time to breathe *and* call for help so the body’s need for air overrules the capacity for vocalization. Similarly, it is an instinctive response for drowning people to spread their arms out and try to lift the mouth out of the water by pressing down against the water’s surface. This instinctive reaction makes it impossible to lift the arms up to wave for help, or to

exercise any other voluntary control over arm movements. The body is in a vertical position in the water, often with head tilted back and arms out horizontally, and it only takes a minute or less before the person goes under.

So, how does a drowning person look? Glassy-eyed, and easy to miss. And how does a drowning person sound? Largely silent, but possibly emitting relatively quiet gasping sounds. This year, I was wondering if this is how Jonah looked and sounded after he was tossed overboard from the boat to Tarshish. In the Haftarah for the *minchah* service on Yom Kippur, the text relates that Jonah was tossed overboard and that God sent a huge fish to swallow him, but it doesn’t immediately describe the terrifying moments in between. It is only from within the (relative) safety of a fish belly that Jonah prayerfully reflects on his experience in the water. In his description, he was surrounded by waters, breakers and billows swept over him, waters encompassed him, the deeps engulfed him, and he sank to the bottom with weeds twined around his head. One might assume that Jonah was drowning because the seas were so rough from the storm sent by God, but the text notes that the sea stopped raging as soon as Jonah was tossed overboard. I can only assume that Jonah didn’t know how to swim, even in these now-calm waters. Throughout history it has often been the case that even sailors didn’t know how to swim. Certainly, Jonah’s parents didn’t have a Talmud to instruct them in the importance of swim lessons...

Unlike Jonah, I was swimming from a young age. I spent as much time as possible at the pool every summer, and some of my happiest memories are of time spent at a lake with my maternal grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins – swimming, water-skiing, and fishing. My High School was across the street from a YMCA, and the school took advantage of that. We were all required to have a semester of swimming, and those who already knew how took a semester of life saving. Of course I was placed in the life saving class, where we learned how drowning people, or more accurately people in aquatic distress,

(continued on page 2)

Rabbi's Message (continued from page 1)

can take down those who try to help them – tending to grab on and attempt to use other people as buoys – endangering their rescuers, but never with malicious intent... We were taught how to swim to a person, but stop out of their reach, then approach them carefully. Swimming them to safety meant supporting their body with our own underneath, one arm across their chest, the other free to swim a modified sidestroke. Over and over, we practiced rescuing each other this way, swimming laps while carrying the weight of another student.

Despite my former love of swimming, and the importance of a life saving class, at that stage of life I resented the requirement. I was in High School in the late 80's and early 90's, the era when girls, even me, wore big poofy hair. I resented the swimming requirement because we didn't have 45 minutes to an hour afterwards to properly style and really *elevate* the hair... Sometimes our priorities in life can be really out of whack... Not that I was ever presented with an opportunity to use my life saving skills. In the years that followed, my grandpa died, we stopped going to the lake, eventually I started to gain weight and didn't want to be seen in a swimming suit, and before I knew it 20 years had passed without my swimming.

I finally ended up back at the pool this summer after breaking two toes and being rendered unable to work-out in my usual fashion. At 60 pounds lighter and with short poof-free hair, my former impediments to swimming were gone, so into the waters I went. What I *didn't* expect from this disruption to my fitness regime was spiritual growth and reflection, but that has been an unintended outcome of my entrance into the swimming pool. As I have swum lap after lap, I have often discerned a connection between experiences of swimming and experiences of prayer. As if, while swimming through the warm waters of my gym's pool, my mind and heart have been moving through spiritual waters.

Probably the first insight I had was about muscle memory. After 20 years without swimming, it felt natural and instinctive to swim. 22 years after life saving class, the modified side stroke we practiced so much came naturally to me and I still remembered how to rescue someone. I was able to instinctively swim the breaststroke, various styles of backstroke, and the American crawl, which apparently is now just called freestyle. The only stroke I couldn't do, because I don't think I ever learned it, is the butterfly. They say you never forget how to ride a bike – that remains to be tested for me – but through swimming I have now experienced the principle that when your body learns something, it remembers.

Habituation is a powerful force – and just as there is muscle memory for swimming, so too is there muscle memory for prayer and other religious practices. The Talmud, in Tractate Sanhedrim 91b, comments that denying a child religious knowledge robs the child of an inheritance. I think this is because an opportunity is lost to gain that kind of deep muscle memory for prayer and ritual practice – muscle memory that can be reactivated later in life even if it

lies dormant for a long time. Learning later in life can still engrave memory into our minds and muscles, but it sometimes comes with more difficulty. I've been leading High Holidays services now for about 8 years, and that kind of muscle memory for prayer has become ever more deeply ingrained with each passing year. I find such comfort and beauty in the way the prayers flow from me now, without the need to desperately practice for months in advance the way I used to as a student. High Holiday prep used to *feel* like aquatic distress, but now it flows naturally and feels unspeakably comforting.

This leads me to another observation from my time in the pool. When I try to swim freestyle, I've noticed that my body wants to swim faster than I am able to keep up with in terms of breathing. In freestyle, you turn your head to the side to take a breath at a certain moment of the stroke. Swimming a fast tempo can increase heart rate and the amount of oxygen needed, and I have noticed that at certain speeds I need more oxygen than I can take in during that quick breath. Sometimes different parts of us need us to move at different paces, and this doesn't only apply to swimming.

Sometimes when I am praying the repetition of the Amidah during the High Holidays, my mouth starts to move faster through the Hebrew than my eyes – my eyes might want to linger on a word to take it in, and then I will stumble. Or my eyes might start going faster than my mouth can keep up. Any one of us can have experiences in prayer or in Jewish ritual when parts of us want or need to flow at a different pace than other parts of us. We can become disruptive to ourselves if we don't account for the parts of us that want to meander through prayer like a lovely garden (or a leisurely swim), and if we don't account for the parts of us that just aren't trained for speed... No matter what is happening during prayer, no matter how much Hebrew, please don't feel driven to keep up. Take the time to flow through the prayers at your own pace, breathe when you need to breathe, pause where you feel moved to pause, don't move on until all of you has caught up so you can bring your whole self into your journey through prayer.

There is another prayer-related lesson that I learned in the pool – a paradox actually. They say that swimming is one of the best forms of exercise because the water offers resistance to every movement, so it works every muscle. At the same time, swimming is easier on the body, less jarring. In the water, I experience a flow and ease of movement that I don't experience on land. The pool is a place where "I can't" becomes "I can" – I *can* exercise with a broken toe, I *can* jog without knee pain. In the water, the rules are completely different. When I swim for an hour it feels effortless, but when I am done my exhaustion tells a different story. The realm of prayer offers a similar potential so long as we don't get in our own way.

In the mystical tradition, water is associated with God's *chesed*, God's loving-kindness. When we pray, *this* is the water in which we are invited to swim. It is a place where we can float in love, we can rebuild strength after being injured. When we use our prayer muscles in these divine loving waters, it gently builds up parts of us that aren't accessed in other settings. Although spiritual swimming won't burn any calories, it

(continued on page 3)

Rabbi's Message (continued from page 2)

has the potential to be soothing and comforting even as it gives us a good workout. Like swimming, prayer at its best is a paradoxical mixture of effort and easy flow. We have to remove some of our encumbering outer layers, make ourselves vulnerable. We have to put energy into the task, and stretch ourselves at least a little bit. But always with a sense of being encompassed by divine love to gently cushion our efforts at vulnerability.

And, we have to learn how to swim if we don't know how yet, or it could be easy to exhaust ourselves and drown. A novice swimmer shouldn't try to race 500 meters freestyle just because other people can do it, and similarly it isn't always good for someone to try to whip through a bunch of Hebrew prayers just because others can do it. Because once the Instinctive Drowning Response sets in, it may be too late... A person could end up struggling so hard just to prevent being overwhelmed by waves of Hebrew prayers, that they lose their own voice. You could be sitting near someone drowning in prayers and never even realize it. But if you see someone glassy-eyed and silent, possibly gasping for breath, shoot them a smile and see if they're able to respond – if not, they might be in danger.

The waters don't even have to be choppy for someone to drown. Jonah couldn't swim even when the waters had calmed. He probably struggled to stay at the surface for 30-60 seconds before the waters encompassed him and he just sank. For a true beginner in Hebrew prayer,

even a few words can induce the drowning response – and as a convert, believe me, I remember that feeling! The message of hope from the Jonah story is that, unlike a normal instinctive drowning experience, when it comes to prayer there is *always* hope. As Jonah floated at the bottom, tangled in seaweed, he felt his life ebbing away and he remembered God. He didn't have to wave his arms or vocalize anything to get help. The wording for his experience is poignant – the text says “*b-hitatef alay nafshi et adonai zacharti*” – This is translated in our *machzor* “When my life was ebbing away, I called the Lord to mind” but the verb *l-hitatef* is also the verb we used tonight for the act of wrapping ourselves within our *tallitot*. Perhaps his *nefesh*, his own soul, enfolded him like a *tallis*, an internal wordless prayer, an intimate connection with himself, a memory of God. *And that was all it took.*

Remember *that* during prayer or new forays into Jewish ritual practice... My hope is that we all experience the paradox of effortless effort, of a gentle but rigorous spiritual and emotional workout, at a pace that will challenge us without drowning us. These waters are safe, full of divine love, and you are surrounded by companions who will want to help you if you are in danger of drowning. And no matter what happens, the Blessed Holy One will hear and respond to the silent movement of your own soul.

Shalom,
Rabbi Pfau



Sisterhood News & Announcements

The September meeting was a good opportunity to chat with each other, handle Sisterhood business for the year ahead, and eat well! Special thanks to Ellen Benowitz for an interesting and informative presentation about the Jewish National Fund and her trip to Israel with the organization. Thank you to Debby Weiss for leading the meeting- you are terrific!

The next Sisterhood event will be a trip to the Jewish Film Festival presented by Rutgers at the Regal Cinema Commerce Center, Route 1 South, North Brunswick. You will receive more information about this shortly. We will try to pick films that are showing on one of the two Sundays of the festival- October 27 or November 3. We hope that you will be able to join us.

Robin Affrime presented information regarding the cookbook at the September meeting. Please begin to input your recipes on the cookbook website. If you are unable to use a computer, please send your recipes to Randy or Robin and we will enter them. It is important that everyone participate in the cookbook so that it represents our entire community. Thanks so much.

Thank you to Karen Nissim for volunteering to chair Break-the-Fast and doing such a beautiful job. We really appreciate your efforts!

Have you checked out the Temple's new website- we have arrived! Have a good month,

~Randy Bloom

Yom Kippur Booklet-

The Yom Kippur booklet raised about \$1450 this year!!! Thank you so much for your generous participation. You make it well worth it to put the time and effort into this fundraiser. Next year's goal will be to get over \$1500- and we will have a new donation plan. We will eliminate the cost per name in favor of a donation of your choice. Thanks again.

Thank you to Sandy SchwartzBird for a lovely Temple New Year's Card!

Sisterhood Officers

Sisterhood President
Randy Bloom

Vice President
Debby Weiss

Treasurer/Financial Scty
Marcy Schwartz

Recording Secretary
Ellen Wehrman

Corresponding Secretary
Patricia Light-Tolomeo

Trustees
Susan Giachetti
Susan Roth

Memorial & Sisterhood Donations

In memory of Sam Beck : Sid and Charyl Morginstin

In memory of Loretta Klein: Phyllis and Is Kamer

Charyl and Sid Morginstin

Neil and Karen Nissim

Susan Roth

Get well Gay Levinson from Sheila Lamonsoff

Happy Birthday Harriet Gould and Jay Trackman from Is and Phyllis Kamer



Temple Donations

Arlene Speiser in memory of Pearl Fishman, Deane Klein

Phyllis Chudoff for the Yahrzeits of Frank and Bea Schwartz

Elaine & Jay Trackman for the Yahrzeit Elinor Roth

Rita Nissim for the Yahrzeit Nissim Nissim

Get well to David Caldwell from Marcy Schwartz and Rick Shain; Eileen Gale

In memory of Howard Goldstein from Renee Harrison

In memory of Loretta Weiss from Elaine and Jay Trackman; Marsha and Joel Dowshen; Eileen Gale; Randy Bloom and Michael Scolaro; Robin and Steve Affrime

Thank you to Andrew and Rhonie Smulian for their generous donation of High Holiday flowers for the pulpit in memory of Andrew's parents, Dr. Nathan and Leah Smulian. It is always wonderful to remember your parents as we enjoy the flowers.

***What the
caterpillar
perceives is the
end, to the
butterfly is just
the beginning.
(Anon)***

Yahrzeits for Fall 2013

Sept. 20 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nissim Nissim, father of Marty Nissim
Sept. 27 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mervin Groveman, husband of Seena Groveman
Oct. 4 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elsie Sternfeld, mother of Mildred Josephson Howard Sacks, father of Faith Hupfl Paul Goldfarb, stepfather of Charyl Morginstin
Oct. 11 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Myrna Morris, wife of Ron Morris
Oct. 18 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gertrude Herzog, mother of Madge Rosen, grandmother of Mike Rosen Walter Harrison, husband of Renee Harrison
Oct. 25 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selma Densky, mother of Sharon Coleman Abraham Zackler, father of Marsha Dowshen Helen Roseman, mother of Renee Harrison Lillian Brewis, great-grandmother of Brian Epstein



Supermarket Gift Card Program

It is always the season for sharing and giving. Please share with the Temple by purchasing your gift cards from Acme or ShopRite for your New Year’s celebration.

Please make checks payable to **Temple B’nai Abraham** and send to: **Marsha Dowshen / 502 Farnsworth Ave., Bordentown, NJ 08505 / (609) 298-5306**. Your cards will be sent to you the same day.

Tot Shabbat

Friday evenings, 6:00 PM
Coming Up: October 18th - Welcoming Guests
Craft: House Blessing Plaque

Includes candle lighting, potluck dinner, story time, a theme-related craft and songs. If you need any additional information, or would like to volunteer to help clean up or set up, please contact Kami Knapp at: kami.knapp@google.com.

Tikkun Olam / Social Action

TBA continues to make meaningful contributions to hunger relief in our area, and YOU can be part of it! Here are ways to help:

- Donating boxes of granola bars or cans of tuna or chicken for our monthly contribution to grocery bags for motel residents.
- Any non-perishable food items are welcome for the St. Mary’s Food Pantry, just place them in the baskets at the temple.
- We deliver hot meals prepared by the Friends Meeting in Crosswicks to the Pine Motel on the first Thurs. of every month.

All of these efforts are interfaith collaborations with area worship centers. Together we can make a difference!

Monthly Oneg Hosts

October 12 th	Affrime / Zeichner
October 25 th	Mitchell / Erickson
November 8 th	Berson / Fink
November 16 th	Morginstin / Coleman

Save The Date

October 12th	Shabbat Morning Services 10am
October 27th	Sisterhood – Jewish Film Festival
November 25 or 26th	“Holiday Flowers” by Sisterhood

Old Prayer Books & Kippot

Old prayer books, Tallisim, kippot, or other religious items that are no longer needed should be buried. Please place these items into the box (by the sanctuary stairs). Items will be brought to the local Chabad House in late October for burial. \$5 donations are appreciated.

Siddur & Tallit Donations

A new siddur (prayer book) can be purchased in honor of or in memory of someone for \$35. A tallis (prayer shawl) can be purchased for \$60. Please contact Marcia Rosen at: mjanrosen@comcast.net

Memorial Plaques

Plaques are available for \$250. To order a plaque, send the following to TBA: Marcia Rosen, Plaque Chairman
 PO Box 245
 Bordentown, NJ 08505
 or: mjanrosen@comcast.net.

English name of loved one, Hebrew name of loved one and date of death in the English cal-



**TEMPLE
B'NAI ABRAHAM**

58 Crosswicks
PO Box 245
Bordentown, NJ 08505
609.298.1527
www.bnai-abraham.org

*Shabbat morning services begin at 10:00 a.m.
(when there are B'nai Mitzvah, services begin at 9:30 a.m.)*
October, 2013 ~ Tishrei / Cheshvan, 5774

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 9am Sunday School 10am Hebrew School	30	1	2	3 4:30pm Hebrew School	4 7:30pm Shabbat Services	5
6 9am Sunday School 10am Hebrew School	7	8	9	10 4:30pm Hebrew School	11	12 10:00am Shabbat Morning Services
13 <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> No Hebrew School </div>	14	15	16	17 4:30pm Hebrew School	18 6pm Tot Shabbat 7:30pm Shabbat Services	19
20 9am Sunday School 10am Hebrew School	21	22	23	24 4:30pm Hebrew School	25 7:30pm Shabbat Services	26
27 9am Sunday School 10 am Hebrew School <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> Sisterhood— Film Festival </div>	28	29	30	31 <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> No Hebrew School </div>	1 7:30pm Shabbat Services	2