

# MINYAN MONTHLY

Vol.10 No. 1

September/October 1996

Tishri 5757

## 5756: It Was A Very Good Year

### A Note from the Chair, Alan Broidy

I find it hard to believe that over a year has gone by since I became the Chair of the Library Minyan. It has been a remarkable year, and I want to reflect briefly on the events at the Library Minyan during the past year.

First and foremost, the Library Minyan is now meeting in the Dorff-Nelson Family Chapel, the site of the former Mirror Room. The pews have been installed, and by all accounts, they add comfort and beauty to the environment (even though you may have to look under someone else's chair to get a siddur). While the B'nai Yisrael may have lusted for the perceived good life in Egypt, I do not believe there is a single member of the Library Minyan who would yearn for returning to the school building where the Library Minyan met while the Chapel was under construction.

Not only has there been a new home for the Library Minyan, but moreover, I have noticed increased participation from members of the kahal, particularly the teenagers in our midst. As Chair of the Minyan (as well as one of the five gabbaim), I urge everyone to participate in some capacity for the Minyan. The Minyan motto is "pay, come, and serve." As a traditional egalitarian Minyan which is an integral part of Temple Beth Am, simply paying membership dues is not enough. Everyone is encouraged to become involved with the Minyan in whatever capacity he or she feels comfortable, whether it be leading services, giving a drash, volunteering for child care, or sponsoring

a kiddish. (As an aside, when I became chair of the Minyan, my "platform" was a kiddish every week. I am pleased to state that this is one promise which has been fulfilled).

No review of the year's events would be complete without mentioning the close vote with respect to the use of a microphone on the Yamim Noraim. Whether to use a microphone on the Yamim Noraim has been an issue which has been of great concern to many members of the Minyan. I have been a member of the Minyan for fifteen years, and one of the reasons that I opted to become chair of the Minyan was to ensure that whatever the outcome of the microphone vote, there would be unity and harmony among the members of the Minyan. While the vote was exceptionally close (104 to 95 against using a microphone), I believe that everyone believed the process went smoothly with everyone acting L'shem Shamayim, for the sake of Heaven.

Finally, as we are about to close the year ה'שנ"ו let me share with you my favorite drash with respect to the Yamim Noraim. The question is asked, what does it really mean to have a Shana Tova, a good year? The root for the Hebrew word year - שנה - is the same root as the Hebrew word Leshanot, to change. The root שנה is also the root for the word mishna, which means learning, or repetition. If one can change (leshanot) the bad things and repeat (mishna) the good things, then it can truly be a Shana Tova, a good year. May the new year be one of learning, blessing, prosperity, health, and peace for all of us.

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שנה טובה תכתבו



5756 was a year of great changes for the Shul. Beth Am has undergone a remarkable renovation while maintaining its distinct personality. Our shul is a unique institution. It is a house of prayer and a house of learning -- a place where people of all ages gather for a meeting or a party (from USY Kadima to the Happy Seniors).

5756 was also year of change for me. It was a year I learned that I could give service to our community in other ways than through the P.T.A. and the Temple board. I found that Beth Am was a place where I could search for and find spiritual solace. Rabbi Rembaum, Rabbi Netter and Hazzan Lipton became my teachers and spiritual leaders. Just before the *Yamim Noraim* I called one of our Rabbis and said, "Doctor, Rabbi, I'm feeling sick, my soul is unprepared for the holidays. Can you help me? Can you give me a G-d Shot?" That afternoon I spent an hour with the Rabbi. I thanked him for his time, knowing he was busy preparing himself for the holidays. He responded, "That's what I'm here for".

I don't know if this could have happened if I hadn't developed a meaningful relationship with our synagogues religious leaders. I've spent hours with Hazzan Lipton learning Haftorah Trope and with Rabbi Netter and Rabbi Rembaum discussing my spiritual needs. I've led Torah and Musaf services in the Main Sanctuary, Beit Tefila and the Library Minayn, I celebrated my Bat Mitzvah with our community and now can participate in shul on an even "greater" level. Being of service in a spiritual sense has given me rewards much different from and much greater than the rewards I receive from doing other services for our community.

Being a member of the Library Minyan gives each of us a chance to give back to the community that which we've been given. Remember our motto: "Pay, Come and Serve". *Services is it's own reward.*



# Paintings of the Five Megilot

By Paul Nisenbaum

Several weeks ago many members of the Library Minyan, including myself, were surprised to discover that paintings representing the five megilot had been mounted on the walls of the Dorff-Nelson Chapel. The gift was quite generous and the artist invested months of study and design in their creation.

While we appreciate the intent of the artist and the donation, we are uncomfortable both with the process whereby the paintings came to be hung in the chapel and with their placement there. First, the Minyan which prides itself on its consensus for any major change, did not have the opportunity to openly discuss and ratify whether the chapel would be the most appropriate venue for these works of art. Second, the paintings are dramatic statements that unintentionally dominate the chapel, overwhelming the stained glass windows, and filling the enclosed space. As such the paintings distract us as we try to focus on praying.

I suggest that we now have public discussions, then vote on whether to leave the paintings as hung or to move them to another location in the synagogue building, which has no other decoration.

**Editor's Note: If you have any specific feelings with respect to the new art work in the chapel, please contact Rabbi Rembaum or Marilyn Zering, Chair of the Temple Arts Committee. The Library Minyan will address this and other important issues at the next Minyan Meeting to be scheduled soon.**

# Yom Kippur 5757

By Bob Braun

*The following is a reprint of the Dvar Torah given by Bob Braun at the Library Minyan Yom Kippur Service*

Someone once asked the Rabbi, "How should I repent?" The Rabbi replied, "You should repent like Yankel the tailor." "Yankel? He's not even such a good tailor!"

The Rabbi answered, "Every evening, Yankel the tailor sits down at his table, and says, 'God, I was not such a good man today. I failed to say certain prayers, I mixed milchig and flaishig dishes, and I even kept some cuttings that I rightfully should have returned to my customers. But God, you haven't done such a good job either. I looked around today, and there was war, and homelessness, and hunger, and many injustices. So, let's call it even!' And he drank a glass of schnapps to seal the deal."

I have always loved this story, because it encapsulates what it is that makes our Jewish tradition of repentance so unique, so powerful. We do not crawl on our knees to repent; it is an open, public observance, in which we approach G-d nearly as an equal. We demand our forgiveness.

How can this be? How is it that on this, the "holiest", "most solemn" day of the year, the day on which again and again we remind ourselves of our individual and our collective sins, our unworthiness, our failings and our falling down, that we can approach G-d like this?

The answer is that Tshuva is our gift; Tshuva is our right.

Again and again in the Tanach, we are presented with a formula that is so ingrained in us — we are a stiff-necked, sinning people, who have been given the land and lost it through our sins. But this is only half of the story. Just as we are bound, "destined", in a sense, to sin, we are also bound and destined to repent. And when we repent, we will be given back that which we have lost. This is, simply, part of the deal: if we repent, G-d must accept that repentance. It is this that allows us to approach G-d at all, and to approach G-d with assurance.

The day is filled with reinforcements of this concept.

Think of the mishna of the high priest's preparation for entering into the holy of holies. The story emphasizes not the wise, observant, tzaddik, but the "average" priest, the high priest who could not be expected to stay awake, to remember the prayers, who was not learned. Yet there is not question that this priest,

like every other priest, will create for us the national tshuva.

Maftir Yonah, which we will read this afternoon, is an affirmation of the inevitability of tshuva and acceptance of tshuva — why, after all, does Yonah object to prophesizing to Ninveh? Because he knows two things. First, that the Ninevites will repent; and second, that faced with a sincere repentance, G-d will accept and forgive.

This is one of the things that makes Yom Kippur not simply a solemn day; but an uplifting day, a day on which we know, in advance, that if we repent, we will be forgiven — we will succeed.

This works, of course, on a communal level as well. For the past month, we have been totalling our sins to each other, and have asked each other for forgiveness. And, just as we know G-d will forgive us, we know that our neighbors will forgive us. We are given the same "power" as G-d — the power to accept tshuva.

Finally, we recognize that the magic of tshuva is not just that it sets things right; it does more than that. It reestablishes the covenant between G-d and man, and between man and man. Upon acceptance of tshuva, we not only receive forgiveness; we are made whole, and our relationship with G-d is whole once again, our relationship with our fellow man is whole as well.

Thus, we stand here today, expectant, proud, ready to claim our rights, ready, as Yankel the tailor to obtain and accept forgiveness.

So, if we stand as equals before G-d, why are we not equals of other Jews?

Tomorrow, or next shabbat, or sometime soon, we will hear that Hareidim are, once again, throwing stones on Shabbat for driving on Bar Ilan or some other street, or parking too close to the community, or some other infraction. The validity of the conversion of Jews in America will be questioned. Someone community leader will make grossly inflammatory statements, statements which threaten the viability and acceptance of what is still, today, mainstream Jewish practice. Perhaps we will hear the Haredi Press say again, as they did a few weeks ago, that the President of the Israel Supreme Court is an enemy of the Jewish People, and that pagazim, shells, should be aimed in his direction. The kind of words that, in the past year, brought violence to our people. Words like these, that set Jew against Jew, that tear the fabric of the

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# TREASURER'S REPORT

By Dale Bodenstein

Thank you for the following contributions to the Library Minyan:

Mayer and Sandra Brenner

*In honor of Marilyn and Sigi Ziering.*

Luann Shuer Garber and William Garber

*For the friendliness to their family at Pesach.*

Paul Nisenbaum and Lida Baker

*In honor of Sandra Braun's Bat Mitzvah.*

The Library Minyan has continued to sponsor at least one Shabbat Kiddush per month since we have been in our beautiful, new Nelson-Dorff Chapel. However, our Kiddush Fund will be out of money very soon. Please send contributions and mark them "attention Kiddush Fund" so that we may continue this wonderful part of our weekly Shabbat experience with friends at the Library Minyan.

#### Editor's Note:

When sending contributions to The Library Minyan, c/o Temple Beth Am, be sure to make your check payable to "Library Minyan-Temple Beth Am" or mail your contribution directly to:

Library Minyan

Dale Bodenstein, Treasurer

1121 South Spaulding Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90019

## Looking For Jewish Housing?



THE BAYIT IS BACK! The Westwood Bayit is the only Jewish Copperative house at U.C.L.A. and they are currently accepting applications for this year.

The Westwood Bayit has resasonable rents, a kosher kitchen, "tons" of Jewish friend and, a swimming pool. It is a Center for Jewish Life at U.C.L.A. and Beyond!

Get in on the fun. Pick up an Application and call the **BAYIT PHONE: (310) 824-3811.**

*A personal thank you to my friends and family who made donations to the Synagogue in honor of my Bat Mitzvah. Sandra Braun  
Dvora and Jack Colker  
Marcy, Paul, Rebecca and Josh Klein  
Susan and Arthur Mishler  
Jackie and Paul Drucker  
Lida Baker and Paul Nisenbaum  
Marshall and Susan Temkin  
Julie Shuer  
Elaine and David Gill  
Joe Rasky*

## Mitzvah Request

**NEEDED:** Child-sized furniture--tables, chairs, play tables, etc. and preschool and early elementary toys and books, etc.

*Tax Deductible Donation*

**Aviva Center Community Mental Health Clinic**  
(A Jewish Federation agency)

For information, please call Esther Lerner Brenner  
(213) 876-0550 ext. 18 *days*  
(213) 553-1687 *evenings*

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*Best wishes for a speedy recovery to  
Ronnie Cohen  
from  
The Library Minyan  
and  
Temple Beth Am*

בְּרַחֲמֵי שָׁמַיִם יִשְׁרָאֵל

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community which we, today, are trying to make whole. Words and actions that are entirely inapposite with tshuva.

And, of course, not to miss the point, we will, similarly, hear that other Jews are filling their cars with gas to cruise the street, solely to taunt other Jews.

The past year has defined new and deep schisms among Jews, not just in the traditional, "comfortable" badges of orthodox, reform, conservative, reconstructionist, but in new, less-defined, but perhaps more sinister terms, terms such as "liberal" or "traditional", or "Torah" Jews. And, increasingly, the question revolves not along questions of the unity and the future of the Jewish people as a whole, the unity of klal Yisrael, but around the badge of observance, of Chumrot, of the outward, not the inward, the dividing, not the unifying, badges of Judaism. And, in doing so, powerful elements of our religion are marginalizing not only Reform Jews, but conservative and modern orthodox as well. There is, increasingly, an assumption by fringe elements of our religion, of our culture, that they have a monopoly on faith. And we are excluded until we give up essential qualities in our belief.

Jewish history shows a recurring pattern of internal division. The story of Jacob's family is a story of division and antagonism. Hanukkah commemorates the end of a civil war in which the Syrians were induced to enter on the side of the Hellenistic Jews who had gained control of Jerusalem and the Temple. Indeed, rabbinic Judaism did not prevail without stubborn resistance from the Sadducees before the fall of the Second Temple and from the Karaites after the rise of Islam.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that this struggle is going on around us. We, in this Minyan, are not immune. We have, over the years, faced many potentially divisive issues: the egalitarian service, the imahot, the microphone. And, as we have faced these issues, we have resolved them, but at a price.

But there is more here, in this Minyan; there is something hopeful here among us. We have found ways to rejoin ourselves, to be inclusive rather than exclusive. I must recall that even in the multi-year discussion of the microphone issue, the question has not been one of halachic correctness; it has been one of inclusion, of what will best reflect and expand this community.

In the world outside this minyan, it is the failure, the inability, to compromise, to respect the views of others, that prevails. We would like to consider ourselves a single nation, a people whose common ground exceeds our differences. After all, our belief in klal yisrael, our belief in the wholeness of our people, has sustained us through literally millenia of varying degrees of oppression. It is the ability to accept klal yisrael that allows us to "integrate" Jews from any number of backgrounds into our culture, to accept our differences, and perhaps to gain strength from them.

However, given our history of division, perhaps Ismar Schorsch is right: unity is not the norm of our people.

We have a duty in light of these trends. Our duty is to do on a greater scale what we have done on a community scale — to unify. To believe in tshuva. And our tshuva is incomplete if we set ourselves apart, attempt to be happy in this happy little community, able to settle its little differences. If we, in fact, allow extremism to prevail, we will not have such a community to look to.

Conservative Judaism has a set of authentic unifying beliefs:

- The Centrality of Modern Israel
- The Irreplaceability of Hebrew
- Devotion to the Ideal of Klal Yisrael
- The Defining Role of Torah
- The Governance of Jewish Life by Halakha
- Belief in God

These core values should allow us not only to expand within ourselves, but to provide the model which can transcend the marginalization imposed by others.

The story I began with has a variation. The congregant asked the Rabbi, "what did you do when yhou saw Yankel doing that?" The Rabbi replied, "I told him that he was being to easy on G-d, that he should take him to task; after all, what are Yankel's sins compared to G-d's?"

This Yom Kippur, as we demand and obtain tshuva, as we recreate our brit with G-d, with our community, let us step out a little, let us stretch our capabilities, and extend our tshuva to become a unifying force for klal yisrael.

Gamar Chatima Tovah