

# MINYAN MONTHLY

Vol. 5, No. 5

March 1991 Adar 5751

## FROM A READER:

--Glenn Massarano

I found this article by Rabbi Daniel Shevitz of MIT Hillel in SH'MA magazine. In it, Rabbi Shevitz articulates many thoughts and feelings that I have wanted to share for a long time. He has graciously granted permission to print the article in our MINYAN MONTHLY. I hope it is helpful for all the ba'alei kriah and gabbai'im and informative for everyone in the minyan.

This article appeared in SH'MA, issue 20/400, November 2, 1990 and is printed here with the permission of the author.

## A HOLY DAY ECHO:

DEAR GABBAI

By Daniel R. Shevitz

We don't normally talk like this. Our conversations are generally formal. In fact, I have never spoken to you in my own voice. You see, I am a Torah reader and I'd like you to keep some things in

mind this year. Week after week you stand above me on the bimah, waiting for me to drop the ball. I want to tell you of my nervousness, my fear of failure. But you remain impassive, inscrutable. You care nothing for my successes; I could read three whole columns flawlessly, but miss one sh'va and you pounce. And I must meekly, humbly submit to your rule. But now, just for now, I will find my own voice. I will come out from behind my role and talk back you you, my accuser.

First of all, please understand, I have my own rhythm. I am faster than some, slower than others. If I am looking for the trop, give me a moment before you interrupt. If I am lost, I will let you know.

Nobody likes to be corrected publicly. I know it's your job, but you don't have to shout. Please speak loud enough for me to hear you, but not to embarrass me. The latter is frowned upon by our tradition.

(continued on page 3)

**DUELING DECIBELS**  
---David Ackerman

A few months ago, Lida Baker suggested that the Minyan use a microphone during High Holiday services. I would like to add my support for this idea, as well as to respond to the arguments against using microphones that have appeared in the Monthly. (In this discussion I refer only to the use of a microphone for High Holiday services; while I would not object to the use of a microphone on Shabbat, I do not find it necessary.)

The shaliach tsibbur serves two important functions. First, described by Lida, is providing musical leadership for the service: setting melody, key, tempo, and mood through the choice of nusach. This is important and would certainly be helped by the use of a microphone. However, the shaliach tsibbur also serves a halachic function, that of permitting members of the kahal to fulfill the mitzvah of tfillah by listening to the chazzan and responding with "Amen." It is clear to me that if you cannot hear the chazzan, you cannot be made "Yotzah." This is an important concept, particularly on the High Holidays when there are many guests who may not be fluent with the liturgy. Since the Mirror Room is a particularly "dead" room acoustically, a microphone would permit the shaliach tsibbur to be heard to all.

I do not find the halachic question to be a serious barrier to using a microphone. After all, this is hardly a ground breaking issue. The JTS Law Committee has published tshuvot permitting microphones. The Minyan has merely to make a decision.

I also do not find the issue of the weight of communal minhag to be compelling. The Minyan has made many changes in minhag in previous

years. If we can change brachot (adding the eemahot) why can't we add a microphone?

The question of aesthetics is harder to argue. After all, matters of taste are personal and require no external justification to be valid. However, I think the aesthetic argument presented by Mitch Miller is a description of a "Worst Case Scenario" which doesn't have to occur. I have participated in many services with microphones where none of these things have occurred. For the Minyan as a group, it really comes down to how many like it and how many don't.

As to the argument that there is only one shaliach tsibbur who feels the need for a microphone on the holidays: Well, there are at least two.

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**CONDOLENCES**

The Library Minyan extends its heartfelt condolences to Isabel Arshawsky on the passing of her husband.

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**PASSOVER SCHEDULE**

If you want to daven for Passover, please contact one of the Gabbai'im in charge of scheduling now.

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**PLEASE SEND YOUR ARTICLES  
OR STORIES TO THE  
MINYAN MONTHLY**

Submission Deadline  
March 20, 1991  
Mail to: Susan Grinel  
1127 11th St. #204  
Santa Monica, Calif. 90493  
Or Call: 445-4282 (W)  
395-2572 (H)

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From A Reader

(cont'd from page 1)

Please coordinate your act with your fellow gabbai. When you both correct me at the same time, it only serves to frazzle me. One of you should have primary responsibility to catch my mistake; the other one should hold back long enough to see that the first one has missed the error. It might take some close timing, but hey, I prepare for my job, and you should prepare for yours.

Speaking of jobs, there is more to yours than shouting out every deviation. The trop is not critical; the words are. Don't correct me if I get the trop wrong, unless you think I'm hopelessly lost. And in that case, don't sing the word correctly; our versions of the cantillation are probably slightly different, and you're likely to confuse me even more. Just say the word, and tell me the name of the correct trop. This may not be as elegant, but it's much safer. After we've worked together for a while, and you know my nuances, you may cue me by singing the word correctly (but, remember, not too loud).

Now, about correcting mistakes in the text. There are rules about which mistakes are correctable. Only if my mistake changes the meaning of the word should you intervene. In most cases, that means reading a long kametz for a short kametz is not an impeachable offense. Of course, there are some exceptions. To be good at your job, you really need to know Hebrew well. If you're not certain, make your correction, but then wait for me. If it was not an error that needs correcting, I'll just proceed. At that point, stop me only if you're really certain.

If I make a mistake in reading one of the names of God, bring me back to the beginning of the verse. If I'm not sure about the trop or a

proper pronunciation, I'll look up at you for a cue. Just give me what I need, not more. If you give me too much, it can be distracting.

We are a team, you and I. Everyone is happy when we work well together. We should not be fighting each other. And please, do not let your job be taken over by those unruly yahoos in the congregation who shout out mistakes even before they happen; this is undignified and unproductive. If it should happen, please turn to them and say, let the gabbai be the gabbai. Remember me for blessing in the new year for you're the one with the voice.

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TREASURER'S COLUMN

--Norman H. Green

Thank you to all of the following people whose contributions to the Minyan fund for sponsoring Lyudmilla Orlovskaya and Roman Zverev have not yet been acknowledged here:

Marshall F. & Hannah Kramer  
Allan Tobin and Janet Hadda  
Jules & Cathie Kamin  
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Elliot & Marlynn Dorff  
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Vera & Simeon Katz  
Baruch & Teri Cohan Link  
Phil & Sherrin Rosenthal  
Elliot Sturman & Ann Schwartz  
Mark & Dale Bodenstein  
Misha & Ruth Askren

As of February 15, this fund has received \$2,049; at least \$5,000 of sponsorship contributions will be needed.

**LIBRARY MINYAN MEMBERS ARROW AND DANIELSEN WRITE/DIRECT FIRST MUSICAL**  
**--Michael Beals**

Think back to some of the most popular musicals and art shows presented in the last 15 years.

"A Chorus Line," "A Day in the Country," "Les Miserables," and "Monet at Giverny" could easily top the list. Last night's world premiere of the new musical "At the Cabaret Chat Noir" (at the Zephyr through mid-April) synthesizes aspects of all of the above in an intimate, circa-1900 Parisian cabaret setting.

"At the Cabaret Chat Noir" (a real cabaret established in Montmartre in 1881) is basically about the life and times of Impressionist-period painter Toulouse-Lautrec and his Bohemian friends who occupy the stages and brothels of the Montmartre District of Paris. The production is the fruit of a three-year collaborative effort between Actor-Director David Arrow and Actor-Musician Carl Danielsen.

David and Carl's other claim to fame is that they are both active members of the Library Minyan. In fact during preview week of their first musical production, David and Carl arranged for free tickets for any congregant who told the box office that they were with the Library Minyan. Both actors have donated their services to the shul, from playing piano at a fund raising event to staging a Tish B'Av ceremony. Carl recently celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at the Library Minyan, chanting both Torah and Haftorah portions in full as well as giving the drash. In addition, David and Carl are active in the greater Los Angeles Jewish community, having co-directed Hollywood Temple Beth El's production of "Fiddler on the Roof".

"At the Cabaret Chat Noir" was originally created as a theatre

exercise by David Arrow and fellow drama students at the East 15 Acting School in London back in 1985, long before David or Carl had heard of the Library Minyan. They spent years researching the music and personalities of turn-of-the-century Paris and have brought this music to life with original English translations.

The songs speak of love, death, sex, wine and are imbued with a sentimentality not found in current musical productions. The cast works well as an ensemble with each member having his or her own starring moment before receding back into the group. The choreography is noteworthy under the gifted direction of Francisco Martinez. Especially memorable was the Offenbach "Can-Can", complete with high kicks, pantaloons and screams, as well as a provocative, violent "Apache Dance," choreographed to the music of Johann Strauss.

Perhaps the most endearing part of the production is the way these actors embrace their audience by involving them in the production. Upon entering the intimate 99-seat Zephyr, the bartender hands you a glass of wine and bids you welcome. During intermission you may be asked to waltz with some of circa-1900 Paris' greatest entertainers. Audience members are randomly selected to be serenaded or insulted depending on the actor.

"At the Cabaret Chat Noir" is a wonderful experiment in musical theatre that works. You will leave the theatre actually able to hum the music unlike many of the big-name Broadway productions which fetch big-production prices. "At the Cabaret Chat Noir" offers Broadway theatre entertainment at a small theatre price.

"At the Cabaret Chat Noir" plays at the Zephyr Theatre, 7456 Melrose Ave. (between Fairfax and La Brea). Performances Thurs.-Sun. 8:00 p.m.

THE BALLAD OF PURIM  
OR "WHAT WE'D SING IF WE PUT  
PURIM IN PRIME TIME"  
By Evan M. Greenspan  
(c) 1991

PART I (to the tune of "THE BALLAD  
OF GILLIGAN'S ISLE")

JUST SIT RIGHT BACK AND YOU'LL HEAR  
A TALE

A TALE OF A PERSIAN KING  
WHOSE WIFE DECIDED TO SNUB HIM  
AT HIS LATEST PALACE FLING.

THE KING WASN'T ONE TO MESS AROUND  
OR FALL INTO A SLUMP  
HE DECIDED WITH HIS LOYAL MEN  
QUEEN VASHTI HE WOULD DUMP  
QUEEN VASHTI HE WOULD DUMP

THE CALL WENT OUT THROUGHOUT THE  
LAND  
A NEW QUEEN MUST BE FOUND  
AND THANKS TO HER UNCLE MORDECHAI  
QUEEN ESTHER SOON WAS CROWNED

A PLOT WAS LAID TO KILL THE KING  
BY TWO NASTY PALACE SPIES  
BUT MORDECHAI OVERHEARD THEM  
AND THE PLOTTERS HUNG TO DIE  
AND THE PLOTTERS HUNG TO DIE

PART II (to the tune of "THE  
ADDAMS FAMILY")

WELL SUDDENLY THERE CAME IN  
A MAN WHOSE NAME WAS HAMAN  
AND SOON HE STARTED BLAMIN'  
THE JEWS FOR EVERYTHING

WELL, WHAT PUT HAMAN'S BROW DOWN  
WAS THE JEWS WOULD NEVER BOW DOWN  
AND THUS THE JEWS MUST GO DOWN  
OR SO HE TOLD THE KING

HE MADE THE KING...  
AGREE...  
AND DECREE...

HAMAN'S PLOT WOULD FLOURISH  
AND ALL THE JEWS WOULD PERISH  
BUT THE MAN THE KING DID CHERISH  
WAS IT MORDECHAI!...OR HAMAN?

PART III (to the tune of "RAWHIDE")

THE JEWS WERE IN BIG TROUBLE  
MORDECHAI WENT ON THE DOUBLE  
WHO COULD SAVE THE JEWS FROM RUBBLE?  
ESTHER!

SHE RISKED TAKIN' A BEATIN'  
WHEN SHE SENT THE KING A GREETIN'  
TO HAVE A DINNER MEETIN'  
ESTHER!

HAMAN'S SONS WERE BANGING UP  
THE GALLOWS BUILT FOR HANGING UP  
FIFTY CUBITS HIGH FOR MORDECHAI!

THE KING GAVE MORDECHAI GLORY  
FOR SAVING HIS LIFE BEFORE-Y  
AND ADDED TO HAMAN'S FURY  
ESTHER!

ESTHER EXPOSED HAMAN'S PLOT  
THE KING TOOK HAMAN'S HANGMAN'S KNOT  
ON THE GALLOWS HAMAN HUNG TO ROT  
SO THERE.

PART IV to the tune of "THE BALLAD  
OF GILLIGAN'S ISLE")

SO THANKS TO ESTHER AND MORDECHAI  
THE FOURTEENTH OF ADAR  
WENT FROM SAD TO CELEBRATION  
WE'RE BETTER OFF BY FAR.

SO TELL THIS TALE EACH YEAR MY  
FRIENDS  
THE STORY'S NOT TOO TALL.  
THAT JEWS TRIUMPHED IN SHUSHAN  
A HAPPY PURIM TO ALL!

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**A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:**

We have received about sixty updates to our membership information records via the survey. This amounts to roughly one third of all the forms mailed out. A hearty Yasher Koach and THANKS to all of those who have simplified our task. You may find it interesting to note how many people indicated interest in participating and receiving training in the following Shabat services -- even though these results are based on a relatively small sample.

IN---Interest  
 TR---Training

	IN	TR
Psukei D'Zimra	6	5
Shacharit	11	4
Torah	18	5
Gabbai (1)	11	3
Gabbai (2)	14	2
Reader	12	5
Haftorah	15	5
Sermon	18	1
Musaf	14	5
Kiddush	13	1
Children	23	0
Hospitality	16	1
Council	18	0

This represents a large pool of talent and interest in our congregation. Please keep those surveys coming! We appreciate your support.

---Leon and Mike Rogson  
 Membership Committee

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 DON'T FORGET WE'RE STILL COLLECTING  
 CANNED AND PACKAGED FOODS FOR  
 \*\*\*SOVA\*\*\*  
 BRING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS SOON!  
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