



SINAI DIALOGUE



Warming Up Before the Holidays



Rabbi Alex Lazarus-Klein

Former major leaguer Doug Glanville had a chance to throw out the first pitch at a Cubs game this summer. This is a symbolic gesture used to honor people before the official start of a baseball game and is not intended to be arduous. To perform it, a person stands on the pitcher's mound and tosses (usually softly) one ball 90 feet toward the awaiting catcher — in this case, Cubs outfielder Tony Campana.

For Glanville, who played eight years (from 1996 to 2004) as an outfielder for three different teams including the Cubs, this should have been a cinch. However, it was anything but. When he let loose on that particular day, the ball sailed out of hand, over Campana's head, and all the way into the stands. How can this be, you ask? Here was a person who had thrown thousands upon thousands of balls accurately at much greater distances throughout the course of his life. Well, Glanville had forgotten the most basic part of any athletic act, he had forgotten to warm up.

While High Holidays are not a baseball game and do not require anything more strenuous than standing, sitting, and holding a machzor, they do require warm-ups. Not for your arms and your legs, but for the most important muscle in your body: your heart. To properly prepare for the High Holidays, you need to spend the month beforehand — the month of Elul, which this year almost exactly coincides with September — warming yourself up. In the

Sephardic world, this means rising at 4 am every morning for penitential prayers and the blowing of the shofar. Luckily, American Jews follow the more reasonable Ashkenazi custom of meeting for a late-night service on the Saturday prior to the start of Rosh Hashanah.

This service is known as Slichot, from the root of being sorry, and is traditionally filled with music from the High Holiday liturgy. In the past, each local synagogue has held its own service, with somewhat sparse attendance (although Sinai's service was particularly beautiful and often led by the choir). Last year, our Buffalo Board of Rabbis decided that this would be a wonderful occasion to bring the entire Buffalo Jewish community together to study and pray. Held at Beth Am, it was a tremendous success, with well over 200 people in attendance.

This year, Temple Sinai will have a chance to host. So, mark your calendars for Saturday, Sept. 24th at 8:30 pm. We will have light refreshments and schmoozing to begin with as we wait for Shabbat to fully come to a close. At approximately 9 pm, we will have a brief Havdallah service, followed by a study session led by the rabbis. At 10 pm, the cantors (including our very own Audrey Kaufman) will lead us in the actual service. We will conclude in silence, moving back to our cars together with our families, friends and neighbors to prepare for the week ahead.

The High Holidays will begin in earnest on Wednesday night, September 28th at 8 pm, with the first day of Rosh Hashanah services the next morning at 10 am. While we will have Tashlich early that afternoon, Michael Rosenberg and Alan Lemanski have graciously invited us over to their house on Grand Island (1559 East River Road) on Friday night, September 30th at 5:30 pm, for another round of Tashlich, a potluck meal, and Friday night services. They live alongside the Grand Island bridge, right on the river. The view is spectacular for everyone who can come out.

Good luck with all your High Holiday warm-ups,
Rabbi Alex

NORA SLONIM'S BAT MITZVAH PROJECT



Thank you to everyone who helped me with my Bat Mitzvah project. Thanks to everyone who donated art supplies. I appreciate it. They will be put to good use. It made everyone at Summit Educational Resources very happy.

Nora Slonim

HIGH HOLYDAYS AROUND THE CORNER

Please find enclosed a schedule for this years High Holyday services. Remember to bring your ticket to each service. You will be asked to show your ticket by the volunteer ushers. If your dues are paid up-to-date you will receive your tickets within the next week.

Please remember to confirm your High Holyday honors with the temple office. Please return your Simcha Book messages to the temple office by September 15th so they can be included in the October Dialogue. Order form is enclosed as a flyer.

L'shana tova Tikatevu

FROM THE PRESIDENT



President
Jill Hamilton

We spend most of this month in reflection and preparation for the High Holidays. In addition to our personal assessments of how we have behaved toward others, this year, as a temple, we are considering a very big decision, which is on the minds of most members. As you know by now, we are considering a merger with Temple Beth Am.

I hope it has become clear, over the last several months, that I LOVE Temple Sinai (one doesn't undertake a demanding volunteer position like president unless there is an abiding love for the organization and the community). And I would love nothing better than for Temple Sinai to continue exactly as it is today – or better yet, as it was 10 years ago when I joined, and we had approximately 300 member families. However, we are shrinking and aging rapidly. Our shrinking population makes balancing our budget an increasingly difficult task. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, we need young families to continue to add to the energy and vibrancy of the community.

The joint merger steering committee, comprised of members of both temples, has been meeting over the last several months. We enjoy the company of the Beth Am members we have met, and have found our meetings to be very positive (in fact, as they have come to know us, many of the Beth Am committee members have noted that they believe they have always been Reconstructionists at heart, and just never knew it). The proposed merger has the potential of many benefits for both temples, and can bring new energy to both of our communities.

Still, this is a very scary venture, with many unknowns. I have heard many questions, assumptions, and concerns expressed over the last several months. We want to answer questions as best we can, and get as much good information as we can to you, the people whose vote will ultimately decide the outcome of this process. In order to better update you on what has happened thus far, and where we feel things are going, we have scheduled the first of what we expect will be several town hall meetings. Please join us at the Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, September 8, at 7:00 p.m. at Temple Sinai. You will have the opportunity to meet the Temple Sinai and Temple Beth Am members of the merger steering committee, hear progress reports from the four subcommittees that have been actively meeting, hear what still needs to be done, and ask questions. If you are unable to attend this meeting, you are welcome to attend the Beth Am town hall meeting, which will take place on Tuesday, September 13, at 7:00 p.m., at Temple Beth Am.

Best wishes for a thoughtful and meaningful Elul.

Jill

LIBRARY CORNER

by Leslie Jaszczak

At the end of August this year, we enter the month of Elul, the last month of the Jewish year, which is traditionally a time of repentance and reflection leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which fall on September 29 and October 8 respectively. This month's "Library Corner" highlights some books that you might like to consult to deepen and enrich your experience of these days that are, sadly, only a dimly-understood obligation for many Jews.

Moments of Transcendence, edited by Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins, is a set of two books containing short inspirational readings from authors ranging from Hasidic rebbes to modern American authors on several different subjects relating to each holiday. Although our Reconstructionist High Holiday prayerbook contains many modern interpretive readings, most people do not own a copy and only have access to one during services. "This collection," as the inside front cover copy explains, "is designed to renew the meaning of the High Holy Day themes of sin, repentance, personal and social change, societal justice, forgiveness, spiritual growth, living with joy and hope, commitment to high ideals, becoming our truest and most authentic selves, deepening our capacity to love, and savoring the divine gift of life."

For those who would like to understand the holidays themselves better, the library has *Entering the High Holy Days*, a reader-friendly guide to their "history, prayers and themes" by Reuven Hammer. Just the first three chapters, charting the origin and development of the holidays and how to prepare for them, are worthwhile reading on their own. The remainder of the book delves into each service and its prayers and provides short commentaries on the Torah and haftarah readings for each day.



Our Resident Movie Critic

Extending a branch to “The Tree of Life”

by Jan Sandberg

Most Temple Sinai members are familiar with the notion of a Tree of Life – etz chaim. In fact, an image of the Tree (based on our brass donations plaque) used to be Sinai’s logo. Members are less certain about what the Tree of Life is, however; many to whom I posed the question said, tentatively, “It’s the Torah, right?” That is the term’s main meaning for us, but in Judaism it can also refer to the wooden supports of a Sefer Torah parchment; a tree in the Garden of Eden; and the process by which the Universe came into being, in Kabbalah.

This summer, a movie called “The Tree of Life” opened locally in June, and many people weren’t sure what it was, either. Written and directed by the non-Jewish Terence Malick (“Days of Heaven”), “Tree” received critical acclaim, yet many viewers disliked it — apparently because it lacked a straightforward story. I found it beautiful and touching, however, and would like to suggest a few things to those who might still see it or give it another try: 1) As critics have made clear, “Tree” is more like a poem than a story, so don’t expect the usual narrative. 2) As with poetry, don’t over-think it. I don’t know exactly what e.e. cummings meant by “these/first deepest rare/quite who are your eyes,” but I nevertheless allow myself to enjoy the language and sense of romance. What Malick shows us is actually pretty simple: Parents learning that their 19-yr.-old son has died; scenes of the family’s life in the 1950s when the three sons were little and more recently; and stunning images of nature accompanied by voiceovers of hurting family members questioning God and our place among such wondrous creations. 3) We can all relate to such things. Let yourself be filled with awe at the images, touched by the slices of family life, and stimulated to discuss and ponder the “big questions” this “Tree of Life” presents.

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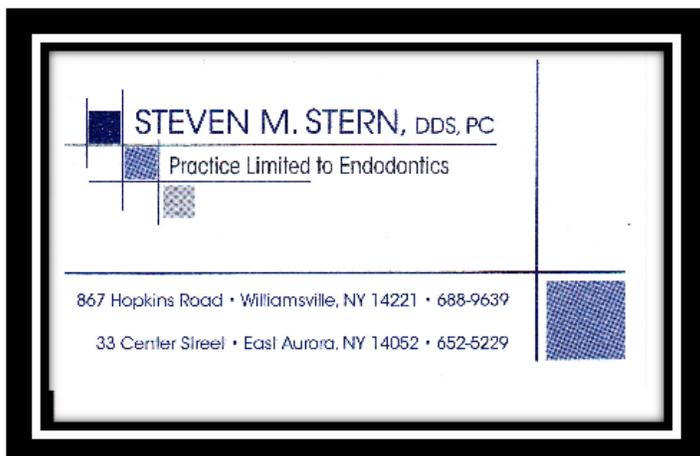
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TREE OF LIFE

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Myranne Feinstein on the loss of her mother Miriam Feinstein

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**Winners Announced for the 2011 Grinspoon-
Steinhardt Awards
for Excellence in Jewish Education**

NEW YORK, July 8 - Founded in 2000 by the The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, and joined two years later by The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education have touched the lives of 600 Jewish educators across North America. By recognizing outstanding educators, the Awards seek to both elevate the profile of Jewish education as well as develop a pool of promising teachers. As one recent winner explains, "The Grinspoon-Steinhardt award played a large role in my seeing myself as someone who can be an effective educator - not just in my own classroom but as an educator for other educators."



This year, 44 Jewish educators from 36 communities across North America have been honored as winners of the [2011 Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education](#). The awards recognize educators whose outstanding work enhances the engagement of their students and elevates the profile of Jewish education.

Einav Symons

Einav Symons, of Kadimah and the Geshar School is this year's Buffalo winner. With local award money donated from The

Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies, "Einav is the perfect recipient of this year's award", says Evie Weinstein, Executive Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education. "Her dedication to her students and Jewish education should be a role model for all of our teachers and educators! I am proud we are able to award educators in our community this prestigious award and I thank Peter Fleischmann for supporting this endeavor.

The prize for the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards is twofold. First, winners receive a \$1,000 cash gift from a local funder or organization within their home community, highlighting the local commitment to Jewish education. Second, a \$1,000 professional development stipend is awarded by The Harold Grinspoon Foundation and The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, providing opportunities to further improve the educator's pedagogical practice.

"Teachers are the core of Jewish education, and it is crucially important that they are recognized for their dedicated work and encouraged to further their professional learning," says JESNA President, Don Sylvan, "JESNA is proud to work with our partners to enable a strong Jewish educational future through these Awards."

The Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education are made possible by the generous support of The Harold Grinspoon Foundation and The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, in partnership with local communities. The Awards are administered by JESNA. For more information about The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, please visit www.hgf.org. For more information about The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, please visit www.jewishlife.org. For more information about JESNA, please visit www.JESNA.org.

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Upcoming Events

(Please see weekly email updates or check online calendar at www.templesinaibuffalo.org)

Tot Shabbat Friday September 2 @ 6:00pm **Family service @7:00 pm (no potluck dinner)**

Board Meeting Tuesday September 5 @7:30 pm (Everyone is welcome to Attend)

Town hall meeting Thursday September 8 @ 7:00 pm Temple Sinai

High Holyday Services (Please see enclosed flyer or the temple website for service times)

Tashlich Service, Pot-luck Dinner, Shabbat Service Friday September 30 @ 5:30 pm

at the home of Alan & Michael Lemanski-Rosenberg 1559 East River Rd., Grand Island, NY

(Please bring a folding chair and dress according to the weather)

Weekly Schedule of Services:

Shabbat Service, Fridays, 7:30 pm (Family Services on first Friday of month at 7:00 pm; Tots at 6:00 pm)

Shacharit Service, Saturdays, 10:00 am (unless noted above)

Beit Midrash Torah Study, Saturdays, 11:00 am (at 9:30 am on day of Bar/Bat Mitzvot)

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