

Kol HaLev Happenings

The Newsletter of Cleveland's Jewish Reconstructionist Community

MAY 2012

A FAREWELL LETTER FROM JUDY VIDA

Dear *Chaverim* (friends);

We are moving back to California after 11 1/2 years here in my home town. Peter is ready to go back to his home town which is the San Francisco Bay Area. I'm not quite as ready but the Bay Area was also my home for 35 years so it qualifies as my second hometown. This move is both sad and happy for us. We are sad to leave my family of blood relatives; and we are sad to leave our Kol HaLev family of friends. Kol HaLev has been our spiritual home, our social network and our support group; together we have shared life cycle events, mourned our losses, and celebrated our simchas.

As you all know, Kol HaLev is a very special and unique community. Within this circle we have flourished and been nourished, and we are

grateful for all the opportunities we have had to give back as much as we received. Soon after we joined KHL (which happened our first week in town) Peter wished there were a KHL book discussion group; he has to be careful what he wishes for because he ended up starting such a group and facilitating it



[continued on page 4](#)

Please join us at
Shabbat Services on Saturday, May 5, in
a Congregational Blessing for
JUDY VIDA & PETER GRAY
as they leave Cleveland and Kol HaLev
to return to California.

BAT MITZVAH

Please join us as our daughter

LILA ROSE MILLER

is called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah
Saturday, May 19 at 10 a.m.

The whole Kol HaLev community is
invited to join us for a kiddush luncheon
following the service

RSVP to rsvp@bmitc.com by May 10
Brian and Jean Miller

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DIRECTORY

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Brian Miller

TIKKUN OLAM

Greg Millas

TORAH STUDY

Anna Kelman

USHER CORPS COORDINATOR

Mike Armin

WEBKEEPER

David Conn

WEEKLY UPDATE

Ron Kohn

Art Lieberman

YOUTH AND FAMILY EDUCATION

Lynn Liebling

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: TUESDAY, MAY 15

As we find ourselves on the seven-week path leading from Passover to Shavuot, I am struck by the way this period of our sacred calendar brings us into resonance with our Christian brothers and sisters. That resonance is far greater now than during the Hanukkah-Christmas juncture, despite the energy of Jewish concern that so often surrounds the co-incidence of those holidays. Hanukkah and Christmas are, in fact, completely different from one another in almost every respect, save having pagan roots that precede the emergence of either tradition.

On the other hand, Easter and Passover are quite closely tied together, due in large part to the story in the New Testament that tells of the last supper of Jesus being a seder meal. Similarly the Christian holy day of Pentecost is closely tied to our observance of Shavuot. They both occur 50 days after their respective initiatory holy days of Passover and Easter, and each in their own way celebrates a profound moment of revelation for their nascent religious communities.

One of the significant changes that has taken place in interfaith relations over the past generation was the decision by the Catholic Church, which was later duplicated by many western Protestant churches as well, to begin to take responsibility for the historical anti-Semitic orientation of church doctrines and practices, and to pursue pro-actively a policy of reconciliation with the Jewish community.

We often think of the Second Vatican Council initiated by Pope John XXIII, which ran from 1962 through 1965, as the official beginning of this change. Since that time, there has been a veritable explosion of Jewish-Christian dialogue and cooperation between our respective religious institutions and a strong interest among many Christians in reconnecting with the Jewish religious culture that profoundly informs every aspect of the life and teachings of Jesus.

There has been less interest, for understandable reasons, among Jews in deepening our understanding of Christian religious culture and/or of exploring the life and teachings of Jesus from the perspective of Jewish thought and practice. However, within the past decade, this too has begun to shift, with the publication of numerous books by and for Jews on the basic ideas found within Christianity. This trend has recently reached an apex with the printing of the first ever annotated copy of the New Testament with commentary from an explicitly Jewish perspective edited by two well-known and impeccably credentialed Jewish scholars of Christianity, Rabbi Marc Brettler and Professor Amy-Jill Levine (*Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Oxford University Press, 2011). [Ed. note: *The May issue of Shm'a has a brief article by Brettler and Levine on why Jews should read the New Testament: <http://tinyw.in/QccB>*]



It is very compelling to me that we have reached a point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations when Jewish people are beginning to feel comfortable looking at the Jewish dimensions of Christianity, not only to learn about the “other,” but also to potentially learn something about ourselves as well. May our mutual relations with the Christian community and with all other religious communities continue to generate light in our world.

Rabbi Steve is available to meet with Kol HaLev members on a range of issues by appointment on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings. Please contact him by phone at the office (216-320-1498) or at rabbisteve@kolhalev.net to schedule a meeting time.

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for eight years. I have been empowered as a member to be a lay service leader and to chant from the Torah. It has been my calling and my joy to initially welcome many of you to Kol HaLev as Membership Chair.

God-willing we leave May 9th for Walnut Creek, which is about 50 minutes from San Francisco. We plan to buy a small condo in Rossmoor, an active senior-living community, where my mother and my aunt enjoyed the last 20 plus years of their lives. We are very familiar with Rossmoor; it is a beautiful community and close to the BART (rapid transit) to Berkeley and SF. We will be going home to Peter's four children who live in CA, and friends from all our years there.



Hopefully we'll be frequent visitors here, and maybe we'll see some of you in the Bay Area. We would be open to considering house/car-swaps which might enable us to come back and stay in someone's home and use their car while they do likewise in our home: two-week minimum stay and not in winter! We don't have an address out there but you can reach us by e-mail.

We are so grateful for Kol HaLev and for each and every one of you.

L'hitraot (til we meet again);

Judy and Peter
judyvida@sbcglobal.net
p.gray1@sbcglobal.net



Editor's Note: For those of us who joined Kol HaLev during Judy's tenure as membership chair, Judy will forever be the human embodiment of the welcome, acceptance and warmth we've found here. She has been the first to greet us, the one who always remembers us and our willing conduit to meaningful experiences and new friendships. Like the biblical Miriam, she's led, advised, and (most delightfully) always been among the first to start the dancing. For all those things and more, we'll miss her. -- Lila Hanft (who pilfered these photos from the Kol HaLev website and Judy's Facebook page)

BOOK SALE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

What? More books? Yes!

Thanks to generous donations from two families, Kol HaLev will be holding a book sale at the annual meeting, June 3. There a lot of books on Jewish subjects, from novels to Hagaddot, and a few other topics, too. The sale will be cash or check only, no credit cards.

Interested in helping out? Contact Barb Truitt 216-258-7825

At the April board meeting, much of our time was spent reviewing, amending and finally approving our budget for our next fiscal year, which begins in July. This is the traditional task of the April board of trustees meeting: make any necessary changes and approve the budget so it can be made public in May, one month prior to our Annual Meeting in June.

When we began our strategic planning process six years ago, one of our objectives was to create a “giving culture” within Kol HaLev, a culture in which giving was a naturally occurring phenomenon. At that point, we had done very little formal fundraising. We created “special events” as opportunities for fundraising. They were “special” because they were unique, new one-time events designed to both build our community and raise money above and beyond our dues, for our dues alone had stopped being sufficient to support our needs.

Many of these events, such as our Sacred Space drive and the Silent Auction, were very successful. But even as these events came close to helping us raise income to match our expenses, they were still one-time events, and the board realized that our needs would continue to grow as our community grew. In other words, one-off fundraisers were only temporary fixes. In response, we institutionalized the best fundraising ideas on an annual basis, while we also looked at creating a marquis fundraising program that would generate excitement not only within Kol HaLev, but expand outside to the general community.

Six years later, we have established a regular fundraising calendar. We all know that there is an annual fund raising drive that begins around the High Holy Days and ends at the end of the calendar year. We know that each year we will have a Mishloach Manot drive for Purim. We can count on these events in our community, and they are important contributing elements to our ability to support our programming. We also found our sought-after repeatable fundraising event in our annual Biblical Mock Trial. This event, to be repeated this year with “The People vs. Eve,” is a superb vehicle for raising money while generating enthusiasm, bringing learning to the forefront in a creative and fun manner, and attracting an audience that extends well outside our Kol HaLev community.

These three events, our annual Fund Raising drive, the Mishloach Manot, and the Biblical Mock Trial, represent the realization of a cultural shift within Kol HaLev. While this is exciting and a wonderful accomplishment, today we are larger and growing still. We are doing more and are involved in more as a community, and as is our nature, we have continued to look at how we can improve our core services while also providing better and more creative services. This means that while our dues and three main fundraising activities pretty much cover all of our main expenses, they also are still not quite enough to meet our expanding needs. Realizing this, the board created two vehicles for ongoing giving over the past several years, our Values Funds and our Named Funds.

Our budget is relatively simple from both an income and expense perspective. Traditionally, the bulk of our income comes from annual dues, with the remainder coming from fundraising, typically a 70/30 split.

This year as we prepared our budget, we created a new column titled “Contingent Upon Funding.” Our board-approved budget balances our income and expense. In addition, Values Team Leaders and their [*continued on page 6*](#)

FROM OUR PRESIDENT, CONT'D.

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respective committees and task teams looked at what we could fund if we had the income, compiling a list of the many things we need as well as the new things we could do to make us stronger, provide a greater level of service, and add new dimensions to Kol HaLev. The “Contingent Upon Funding” column in our budget contains these items.

Of course, it is possible that any of our existing three annual fundraising events could be at such a high level of success that money raised above and beyond what we anticipate would support our funding and implementation of some of these items. However, it is more likely that these additional “Contingent Upon Funding” items will only become real through contributions to a Values Fund or a Named Fund to specifically assist in their procurement and implementation. Following are the Values areas and the individual line items that are “Contingent Upon Funding.”

In the Welcoming & Caring values area, “contingent” items are:

- New software to help run and manage the daily needs of our congregation, \$4,800
- New signage at Ratner, \$1,000
- Sound improvements in the Ratner Chapel, \$3,500 to \$5,000
- Equipment to improve our ability to live-stream services and events, \$2,500
- CRM Software to better provide the vehicle to manage our volunteer efforts, \$1,200

In the Spiritual values area, while we have approved \$3,000 for needed repairs on our Torah, the costs for repair may in fact be higher. We already have a Torah Fund that anyone can contribute to on an ongoing basis, or someone could create a Named Fund specifically for that purpose or to assist in the future in the procurement of a second sefer Torah.

In the Learning values area, “contingent” items are:

- The hiring of a new Hebrew Language Coordinator, \$2,000/year
- Adult Education Speakers Honoraria of \$2,000 to support bringing in speakers for programming

In the Informed & Involved values area, a member has already stepped forward and funded, for the next several years, the \$2,000 a year membership dues for the GCC.

Each of these contingent items represents an opportunity as individuals and a community to make a contribution to something important. Please know that any contribution you make and designate to one of these Values Funds, or if you wish to create a Named Fund, it will directly make a difference to Kol HaLev in increasing our ability to provide these services and programs and fund these “contingent” items that can add so much to enriching our experience of Kol HaLev.

HESED

Refuah Shlema to **Celia Jennings** and to **Lynn Leibling** on recovery from surgery

We send condolences to **Kareen, Mike, Kevin, Julian** and **Roman Caputo** on the loss of Karen’s grandmother, Lucia Bris, may her memory be a blessing.

We also send condolences to **Carol Karabin** on the loss of her brother-in-law Robert Coury, may his memory be a blessing.

GET CHARGED UP ABOUT KHL FUNDRAISING WITH THE KOL HALEV CAPITAL ONE™ VISA CARD

A couple of years ago, when we recognized the need for a more diversified income stream for our annual budget, we discovered a program sponsored by Capital One™ that makes it possible for a percentage of a credit card holder's purchases to be donated to a non-profit organization of one's choice. This seemed like a great way for members of Kol HaLev—or even for people who are not members but who support what we are doing—to help us out in a very concrete way without spending any extra money or taking any extra action besides signing up for the card. Since then 17 members of our community have signed up for and used the Kol HaLev Capital One™ affinity card. This past year, Kol HaLev received nearly \$2,000 in donations as a result.

We have set a goal to have 25 members using one of these cards by this coming Rosh Hashanah. Even if you do not use the card very often, just signing up and making a single purchase with the card generates an initial \$50 contribution to Kol HaLev.

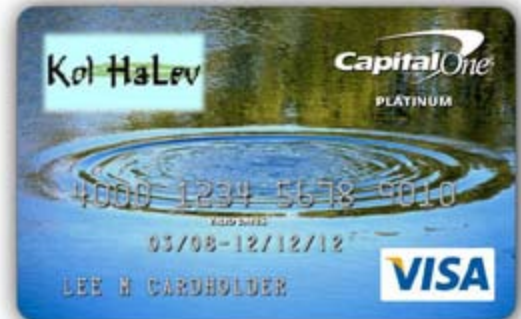
Features of the Kol HaLev Capital One™ affinity card include:

- Choose of our organization's creative card designs
- Earn a \$50 initial donation to Kol HaLev
- Earn 2% cash rewards at most major gas and grocery merchants
- Earn 1% cash rewards on all other purchases
- Earn up to 10% cash rewards at select merchants.

If you wish to talk with a fellow Kol HaLev member about his experiences signing up for and using the Kol HaLev Capital One™ affinity card, David Conn would love to hear from you. Feel free to contact him at david@estophile.com or (724) 982-0505.

For more information or to apply now: <http://www.cardlabconnect.com/AffinityPortal/visitorAction.do?affinityName=supportkolhalev>

Credit approval required. Terms and conditions apply. Offered by Capital One, N.A. © 2012 Capital One.



BOARD REPORT

The board met on April 9 at the home of Barry and Barbara Epstein. The meeting began with a D'var Torah presented by Barry Epstein in which he reflected on Kol Halev's place in relation to Passover.

The treasurer reported that there is still \$44,000 in outstanding receivables that will need to be collected in order to end the year with a balanced budget. **Any members who still owe dues for this year and who are not on a scheduled payment plan are encouraged to remit their dues before the end of the fiscal year.**

The board spent the remainder of the meeting carefully reviewing each line item of the proposed FY2013 budget so that a balanced budget can be presented at the annual meeting on June 3, 2012. Based on projected income, the board was unable to approve any expenditures on the "wish list," but should unexpected income materialize, the board will revisit proposals. The board voted unanimously to approve the proposed budget.

Allen Binstock presented the report of the Nominating Committee with the officer, value team leaders, and board members for next year. The slate (which can be viewed in the absentee ballot on [page 11](#)) will be presented at the annual meeting.

The board also voted to participate in the JECC's camp recruitment program for summer 2013. The JECC will reimburse congregations up to \$1500 for expenses used for activities to increase awareness of and boost attendance at Jewish summer camps.

The rest of the agenda was tabled for the May meeting. **Members should mark their calendars for the Annual Meeting to be held on Sunday, June 3 at 9:30 a.m. (bagels), 10:00 a.m. (business) at Ratner.** The next Board meeting will be Monday, May 14, 2012 at 7:30 p.m. at the home of Robin Shell.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Kol HaLev gratefully acknowledges contributions from:

- **Sue Wolpert & Ray Lesser** to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- **Mike & Kareen Caputo** to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- **Kirby Date & Richard Litwin** to the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- **W Philip and Ann Ardrussi** in honor of Beth Grace's conversion
- **Ralph & Selma Gwatkin** in commemoration of the yahrzeit of Ada Gwatkin, Ralph's mother
- **Nancy Dudwick** in commemoration of the yahrzeit of Ida G. Dudwick, Nancy's mother
- **Roberta & Mario Tonti** in commemoration of the yahrzeit of Charlotte D. Dangler, Roberta's mother
- **Ralph & Selma Gwatkin** in commemoration of the yahrzeit of Sylvia Oken, Selma's sister
- **Maureen Hack** in commemoration of the yahrzeit of Sylvia Hack, Maureen's mother
- **Connie Friedman** in honor of Mark & Adina Davidson's 25th wedding anniversary

KOL HALEV KVELLS

Mazal tov to Kol HaLev teens **Rachel Lieberman** and **Gabriel Baznik** on their respective recent recognition for written work. Rachel is one of ten finalists in the Stop the Hate essay contest sponsored by the Maltz Museum of Jewish History (you can read her essay on the next page.). Gabe's essay, "L'dor v'dor" was awarded third place in the annual Yom HaShoah creative arts contest sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. Both essays were published recently in the Cleveland Jewish News.



Mazal to three Kol Halev teens who competed in the Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair (NEOSEF) held at Cleveland State University in March. Eight grader **Dani Bieler** and seventh graders **Julian Barnett** and **Gabe Sugerman** represented The Agnon School in the competition. Dani received the United States Navy Special Award. Gabe, who will move on to the next level of competition, has qualified for the Broadcom Masters, national science, math, engineering and technology competition.



Do you know of a child or an adult with an accomplishment we should be kvelling over? We'd like to be able to congratulate them here. Email your kvells to newsletter@kolhalev.net.

YAHARZEITS

They are now a part of us, as we remember them.

Members of Kol HaLev will mark the following yahrzeits during May

Morris Silverberg – father of Judy Vida
Dudley Stuart Dinner (David) – husband of Maureen Dinner
Ada A. Gwatkin – mother of Ralph Gwatkin
Ida G. Dudwick – mother of Nancy Dudwick
Lena (Lee) Warsh Baum – maternal grandmother of Heidi Gorovitz Robertson
Irmegarde Lewisohn – mother of Peter Gray
Rella Gilletz – grandmother of Michal Scher-Marcus
Jean Roth (Sprinza Laya) – sister of Muriel Chasin
Earl Dresden – cousin of Phyllis Maris
Sylvia Oken – sister of Selma Gwatkin
Sylvia Hack – mother of Maureen Hack
Alice Lesly Friedman Biales – sister of Joyce Wolpert
Charlotte Davidoff Dangler – mother of Roberta Tonti
Leon Sidney Imrey – father of Peter Imrey
Samuel Dash (Shmuel) – father of Judi Dash

Kol HaLev members may include the yahrzeit of family members in *KHL Happenings* by submitting the name of the deceased, the relationship to the member, and the date of death, including the year, in either the secular or Jewish calendar to JudyHerdering@kolhalev.net.

RACHEL LIEBERMAN SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST



RACHEL LIEBERMAN

is a senior at Orange High School. She is very interested in politics, current events and advocacy, as she believes it is important to be an active citizen and voter. She is involved with the Know Abuse program, Write for Israel and Interact Youth Fellows. Rachel is considering a career in counseling or mediation and will attend The Ohio State University in the Mount Leadership Scholars Program this fall.

Concentrating on the dangerous task ahead, I noted the locations of the twists and rocky spots in the river. As my group of 45 fellow American Jewish teens talked and laughed, I prepared myself for the worst-case scenario: the raft tipping over, the jagged rocks popping the lining- but in retrospect, my fears became inconsequential compared to what I was about to experience.

As my group and I made our passage down the Jordan River in northern Israel, a conflict slowly started to emerge between oncoming rafts filled with Arab children and rafts with my traveling companions. Gentle splashes turned forceful. Suddenly, my American friends used their paddles to redirect the Arab rafts as the Arab youth used their paddles to redirect our own. Soon this water fight was not a friendly exchange- it exemplified a microcosm of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I wish I could say this incident was isolated, but on the four-week tour of Israel I witnessed vicious hatred. When a new friend on the bus proudly announced that Arabs were not human beings, I did not know how to respond. Once, my counselor announced that Islam was a violent and evil religion, claiming that all Muslims were Jihadi terrorists. I helplessly tried to disagree, but I was ignorant in defending my convictions.

I never experienced this overt prejudice against Arabs. My impression was that the media made up most of the animosity between the two groups; I did not realize that people held beliefs so fully ingrained with this hatred.

Returning home from Israel, I was unaware of how to deal with the multiple forms of prejudice. I decided to join Interact Youth Fellows, a group consisting of local teens from different faiths dedicated to promoting respect and understanding of other religions through community service and discussions. Through this year-long program I have visited different places of worship and learned respect by not only gaining knowledge of other religions but by creating friendships.

So far, my visits to three holy sites have not only made me aware of the differences but the striking similarities. A visit with a rabbi brought awareness that a common core in most religions is a holy text, whether it be the Torah, the Koran, or the Holy Bible. Our group studied with a Unitarian Youth Minister who impressed upon us the need for community and the interconnectedness of religious ritual. At the Islamic Center, I hid my hair in a scarf, took off my shoes and learned about the Five Pillars of Islam. The parallels of Islam to my own Jewish faith were simply remarkable. My preconceptions disappeared with all these educational and spiritual experiences.

I never want to be in a situation again when I hear cruel claims based on ignorance and fear. It is my hope that if I was ever in a situation like that sunny day on the Jordan River, I would be able to speak and act in a very different way.



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VISIT US ONLINE AT MALTZMUSEUM.ORG

**KOL HALEV ABSENTEE BALLOT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION
2012**

This absentee ballot is to be used by all members unable to attend the annual meeting to be held in June. Please return attached ballot to the Kol HaLev office, or e-mail your vote to Judy Herdering at the KHL office by **May 28, 2012**.

Slate of Officers and Board Members

President – Barb Truit for 2 year term

First Vice Presidents – Hallie Barnett for 2 year term

– David Conn for 2 year term (2nd year of Values Team Leader Welcoming and Caring)

Secretary – Molly Berger for first year of second 2 year term

Treasurer – Pete Robertson

Values Team Leader Participation and Volunteerism – Leah Kamionkowski first year of second 2 year term

Values Team Leader Learning – Sue Kisch first year of second 2 year term

Values Team Leader Fiscally Responsible – Barry Epstein for first year of second 2 year term

Values Team Leader Spiritual – Bill Marcus for 2 year term

Member at Large – Elise Hagesfeld for first year of second 2 year term

Member at Large – Margaret Cohen for 2 year term

Continuing Board Members

Member at Large – Alan Weinstein second year of two year term

Immediate Past President – Greg Selker

Rabbi Steve Segar – Ex-Officio Member of Board

_____ I vote in favor of Nominating Slate.

_____ I vote against Nominating Slate

Member Names (s)

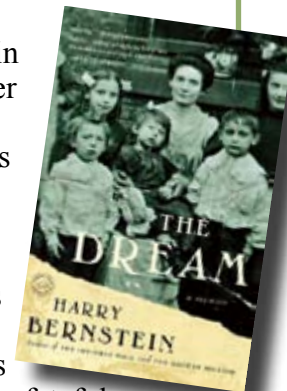
Submit an absentee vote by May 28, 2012 by:

1. Emailing this ballot to Judy Herdering at judy@kolhalev.net, or
2. Mailing a paper copy of this ballot to Judy at 2245 Warrensville Center Rd., #215, University Heights, OH 44118

HUG HASEFER: BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

The May book group meeting will be Thursday, May 24th, at 7:30 at the home of Selma and Ralph Gwatkin. We will be discussing [*The Dream: A Memoir*](#) by Harry Bernstein. (288 pages, a Kindle edition is available).

Amazon's Book Description: During the hard and bitter years of his youth in England [recounted in *The Invisible Wall*], Harry Bernstein's selfless mother never stops dreaming of a better life in America, no matter how unlikely. Then, one miraculous day when Harry is twelve years old, steamship tickets arrive in the mail, sent by an anonymous benefactor. Suddenly, a new life full of the promise of prosperity seems possible—and the family sets sail for America, meeting relatives in Chicago. For a time, they get a taste of the good life: electric lights, a bathtub, a telephone. But soon the harsh realities of the Great Depression envelop them. Skeletons in the family closet come to light, mafiosi darken their doorstep, family members are lost, and dreams are shattered. In the face of so much loss, Harry and his mother must make a fateful decision—one that will change their lives forever. And though he has struggled for so long, there is an incredible bounty waiting for Harry in New York: his future wife, Ruby. It is their romance that will finally bring the peace and happiness that Harry's mother always dreamed was possible.



The book for June is [*The Free World: A Novel*](#) by David Bezmozgis

All KHL members are welcome to attend. For more information about the group look at our web page www.kolhalev.net/book_group and contact Kevin Weidenbaum (KJW@oberlin.net) to be added to the e-mail list.

RECONSTRUCTIONIST RABBINICAL COLLEGE

The new, [interactive annual report](#) from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, is out, with features several interesting stories and live links to video and related websites.

[A lively interview](#) with Rabbi David Teutsch, Ph.D., about *The Guide to Jewish Practice: Everyday Living*, a National Jewish Book Award winner. (Our own Leah Kamionkowski serves on the editorial board of this project). You can also read about:

How students like Anne Feibelman are helping to [advance Harvard's case-study method](#), as RRC adapts it for rabbinical training.

How RRC students and grads such as Rabbi Isaac Saposnik, '08, are [helping kids at Camp JRF build Jewish identity 24/7](#), each in a unique way.

Or browse the complete RRC 2012 [annual report table of contents](#).



YICHUD AND YOU: PERFECT TOGETHER?

It was the summer of 1990. My wife Liz and I were selling our home in Scranton, Pennsylvania. One afternoon we had a showing with a prospective buyer, a “Black Hat” Orthodox man relocating for his job with the Scranton Hebrew Day School, directly behind our house. I automatically extended my arm to shake hands with him and his real estate agent. The agent—a woman—declined. Likewise, the prospective buyer declined to shake Liz’s hand. This was my first exposure to *yichud* and *negiah*.

You may already be familiar with the Hebrew word *yachad* (“together”); *yichud* is *yachad* on steroids: the seclusion of a man and a woman together when intrusion is unlikely. *Yichud* is part of a traditional wedding: the married couple’s first few moments alone. However, seclusion of a man and woman not married to each other is strictly forbidden by *halacha* (Jewish law). *Negiah* is physical contact, also prohibited by *halacha* between members of the opposite sex other than spouses or close family members. Together with *tzniut* (modesty in all things), *yichud* and *negiah* serve to protect the sanctity of marriage (the institution) and marriages (in practice).

Details of the *yichud* and *negiah* laws are beyond the scope of this article, but in typical halachic fashion are very robust and multi-layered. Men and women not married to each other are not permitted to be alone except in very controlled situations with responsible Jewish adults present or nearby. Furthermore, the man and woman must never come into contact with one another directly or indirectly through an object being passed from one to the other, though debates rage about whether quick, formal handshakes are permitted in a business context. (Current consensus seems to be NO.)

At first glance, these laws seem hopelessly out of step with our modern society which, by the way, suffers from a 50% divorce rate. Is there any way we as liberal Jews might constructively apply them to our lives?

I have witnessed many personal tragedies over the course of 25 years in the corporate world: illicit office romances that ended marriages and careers, sexual harassment, even sexually-tinged blackmail. The root cause was invariably emotional and physical intimacy afforded by time spent in seclusion. Frankly, nothing good can come from personal intimacy in the workplace and I believe most if not all of these situations could have been prevented simply by following the laws of *yichud* and *negiah*. Therefore I suggest the workplace could be a perfect locale for us to apply these laws at some level. It need not be the only place, however.

“Safer than Safe Sex: Yihud, Making the Work Environment Sexually Safe” by N. Shuldig (<http://www.jewishmag.com/109mag/yehud/yehud.htm>) in the November 2000 edition of the *Jewish Magazine*, while very conservative in its approach, nicely weaves suggestions regarding *yichud* and *negiah* with realities of the modern workplace.

What is to be gained by applying these rules in our modern lives? As a practical matter, we avoid stress and trauma in our lives and the lives of our loved ones. We provide no grist for the ever-present rumor mill (read: *lashon hara*...the evil tongue of gossip). We sanctify our single most important human relationship, treating it with the care and respect it deserves. On an intellectual and spiritual level, we also have the opportunity to learn about, wrestle with and apply often-ignored aspects of *halacha*, mining and connecting with Jewish law, traditions and wisdom in ways that are deeply meaningful and improve the quality of our lives today.

How do YOU connect with our community, traditions or the Divine? Send YOUR connections to me at david@estophile.com for use in future columns!



*With great pleasure we celebrate the accomplishments
of our graduating high school seniors*

*Senior Siyyum Service
Saturday, May 5, 2012/13 Iyar 5772
Parshat Acharei Mot-Kedoshim*

Zoe Berns – Indiana University
Shoshana Bieler—has yet to decide
Nathan Gilbert—Case Western Reserve
Carlee Grace – Sacramento, California
Heather Hagerling – University of Chicago
Max Hersch – Michigan State—James Madison College
Rachel Lieberman - Ohio State University -
Mount Leadership Program
Moriah Lieberman - Ohio State University - Honors Program
Ian Limoli - Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
Nadav Marcus - AmeriCorps National Civilian Community
Corps, followed by Goucher College
Josh Petrack – Harvey Mudd College
Rachel Shafran – Columbia University
Simon Sugerman – University of Vermont

May you go from strength to strength!

LAG B'OMER

**CELEBRATE THE 33RD DAY OF THE OMER
WITH YOUR KOL HALEV FRIENDS**



From the second day of Passover through Shavuot, there are 49 days in which we count and prepare to move from the events of Exodus to the gift of the Torah. This period, called the Omer, is a time of partial mourning during which weddings, parties, and dinners with dancing are not conducted, in memory of a plague during the lifetime of Rabbi Akiba. On the 33rd day of the Omer (the eighteenth of Iyar) we celebrate a break in the plague. The holiday is known as Lag b'Omer. The mourning practices of the Omer period are lifted on that date. Traditionally Lag b'Omer is celebrated with singing, picnics and fires.

Join us for an evening by the fire, making smores and lots of singing! Be sure to bring your favorite instrument!

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2012/18 IYAR 5772
7-9 PM AT THE HOME OF CHIP MAY
7939 DINES ROAD, RUSSELL (NEAR CAVES & FAIRMOUNT)**

Bring your favorite seating. A-L ~ Drinks and M-Z ~ desserts.

THIS PROGRAM IS WEATHER-CONTINGENT! Contact Robyn with any questions or if the weather is iffy — robyn@kolhalev.net or 216-320-1498.

CALENDAR

Sat. May 5	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat Service and Senior Seyum at Ratner Chapel; <i>Achrei Mot-Kedoshim</i> ; Service leaders: Rabbi Steve, Steven Kanner, Karly Whitaker and Judy Vida; Discussion leader: TBA; kiddush co-hosted by Chuck Hersch and Shahin Afnan and by Chuck Sheehe and Marianne Lax
	10:30 a.m.	Hagiga
	10:45 a.m.	Tot-Parent Shabbat Program for families with children in preschool and under in Rooms 113 & 114. The program is about a half an hour, led by Rachel Williams. Babysitting is available before and after Tot Shabbat, also in Rooms 113 & 114.
Sun. May 6	10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Women’s Group Sunday Brunch at the home of Selma Gwatkin, 25460 Bryden, Beachwood. RSVP to Selma at 216-765-8109 or selmag@ameritech.net . Lynn Liebling will be speaking on the topic “Daughter of Pharaoh.”
Wed. May 9	7:00-9:00 p.m	Lag B’Omer at the home of Chip May, 7939 Dines Road, Russell (near Caves and Fairmount; see page 15)
Fri. May 11	6:00 p.m.	Zorim Family Shabbat at the home of Margaret Cohen and Kevin Rahilly, 2701 Eaton Road, Shaker Heights; Questions or to RSVP contact Robyn, 216-320-1498 or robyn@kolhalev.net
Sat. May 12	10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m	Lay-Led Shabbat Service at Ratner Chapel; <i>Emor</i> ; Service Leader: Lynn Liebling; Discussion leader: TBA; kiddush hosted by Fred and Marsha Chenin
	3:30-5:00 p.m.	Torah Study at the home of Aurelia and Julio Pelsmajer, 24615 Sittingbourne Lane, Beachwood. 216-378-1805. All are welcome. Fred Chenin will lead a discussion of Midrash sources on Noah and the Ark. Bring golf size umbrella as needed .
Mon. May 14	8:30 a.m.	Schmooze With the Rabbi at the Stone Oven on Lee Road
	7:30 p.m	Board Meeting at the home of Robin Shell, 4111 Linnell Road, South Euclid, 216-482-6100; All Kol HaLev members are welcome
Sat. May 19	10:00 a.m.	Shabbat Service and Bat Mitzvah of Lila Miller at Ratner Chapel; <i>Behar-Bechukotai</i> ; Service Leaders: Rabbi Steve and Lila; Kiddush hosted by Brian and Jean Miller in honor of the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Lila

CALENDAR

Wed. May 23	7:00-8:30 p.m.	Mindful Jewish Practice at Nancy Rubel's NEW office: 24755 Chagrin #305. The building is called Chagrin Professional Plaza and is just behind the fire station near Giant Eagle at Pavillion. There is ample parking. You can enter off of Chagrin or from the road at the light that takes you toward the Giant Eagle, just across from Mercantile. As always, we welcome everyone who is interested, whether or not you have any meditation experience. Please RSVP to karlywhitaker@yahoo.com to let us know if you will be able to attend.
Thu. May 24	7:30 p.m.	Book Group at the home of Selma and Ralph Gwatkin. 25460 Bryden Road, Beachwood, 216-765-8109. We will be discussing <i>The Dream: A Memoir</i> by Harry Bernstein (see more page 12)
Sat. May 26	10:30 a.m.	Shabbat in the Park and Potluck in the Cleveland Metroparks North Chagrin Reservation at the River Grove – Chestnut (large/enclosed) shelter; <i>Bamidbar</i> ; Service leader: Rabbi Steve; kiddush co-hosted by Aaron Tetelman and Jessie Vigorito in honor of family and by Jonathan Gordon and Paula Klausner
	7:30 p.m.	Erev Shavuot Tikkun ; We will once again be joining a consortium of synagogues and day schools that will meet at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun. Early study session followed by evening service and all night study session
Sun. May 27	10:30 a.m.	Shavuot Service/Yizkor Service at Ratner Chapel; Service leader: Rabbi Steve; Kiddush co-hosted by Frank and Phyllis Maris and by Carl Hagerling and Gwen Glazer in honor of Heather's high school graduation

This calendar is accurate as of the time of publication, but sometimes dates, times, and locations for Kol HaLev events may change. To stay up-to-date, please read the Weekly Update emailed to you every Thursday and check Kol HaLev's [website calendar](#).

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Kol HaLev Happenings is the newsletter of Kol HaLev, Cleveland's Jewish Reconstructionist Community. This digital newsletter can be read onscreen in Adobe Reader or printed out on paper. Please email newsletter@kolhalev.net with comments, complaints, corrections, suggestions, or notices for upcoming issues. [Back issues of Kol HaLev Happenings](#) can be downloaded from the [Kol HaLev website](#).

Kol HaLev Happenings

The Newsletter of Cleveland's Jewish Reconstructionist Community

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216-320-1498

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stamp
here

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egalitarian, participatory spiritual community
Visit our website at <http://www.kolhalev.net>