

Rabbi Lewis' Message for March, 2012

There are two empty spaces in the pews of our sanctuary, one in the front where Charlotte sat and one in the back where Eric sat. We shall miss hearing Charlotte read Maftir Yonah on Yom Kippur; we shall miss Eric's blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. Their absences are already palpable and will be for some time. The enormity of this great loss to our small congregation is still hard to appreciate.

The very location of Charlotte and Eric's respective sanctuary seats reflects the differences in their personalities. Charlotte liked being front and center, in the thick of the action; Eric preferred being behind the scenes, unobtrusive in his presence. Charlotte basked in the love of her students; Eric dismissed praise and shrugged off gratitude. Yet both came from backgrounds that valued Jewish learning. What they shared was their love of learning Torah and of being part of our Jewish Center.

They have left us with the challenge of how to grieve their loss in a way that is in keeping with their commitment to our temple. We honor them best if we can support the congregation they both loved. Giving tzedakah to the temple represents one traditional way of honoring their memories. We will have time to decide whether that tzedakah should be dedicated to a particular goal. Remembering the importance of the giving of yourself to the ongoing life of the Center is another. Worshipping together as a community is a third way of honoring their memories.

In honoring their memories, we are guided by the words of Pirke Avot which tell us *Al shlosha devarim ha'olam omed: al ha'torah, al ha'avodah, v'al g'milut chasadim*: "The world stands on three things, on Torah, on worship and on deeds of lovingkindness." Eric and Charlotte were committed to living these values. It would make them both happy to think they had inspired us to do the same.

In the middle of March, I will be attending the 123rd annual convention of the CCAR ([Central Conference of American Rabbis](#)) in Boston. The convention theme is *Creation, Revelation, Revolution*. In honor of the 40th anniversary of the ordination of Rabbi Sally Priesand, our [Women's Rabbinic Network](#) is offering a pre-convention Yom Limmud (Day of Study) at [Mayyim Hayyim: Living Waters Community Mikveh](#) in Newton, Mass. Mayyim Hayyim is a recently-built creative place that describes itself as, "... a threshold into Jewish life—a place where the spiritually diverse needs of 21st century Jews are met by reclaiming the ancient tradition of immersing in the mikveh." It has been too many years since I have attended a CCAR Conference: I promise to return with a full report.

The month of Adar begins Feb. 24 with a familiar phrase: *Mishenichnas Adar, marbim b'simcha*: When the month of Adar arrives, we should increase our joy. Rashi says that the reason given for increasing joy in Adar is because they were days of miracles for Klal Yisrael, specifically Purim and Pesach. (Rashi) Why mention Pesach when it doesn't occur until next month, the month of Nisan? One commentator says it is to teach us that, "Purim isn't a one-time miracle that was performed like Chanukah, rather it ushers in an era of Geulah and redemption, beginning with Adar and running through Pesach." We are entering a season marked by hope and deliverance. Despite – or perhaps because of – our feelings of sadness, we pray that our joy increase.

Rabbi Ellen Lewis