



From the Rabbi's Desk

Freedom and American-Israeli Relations

We are entering what is known in our tradition as “the season of our freedom,” centered on the observance of Passover. This unique holiday inspires Jews to support people around the world who are struggling to attain basic liberties. It also calls us to be introspective, looking at the ways in which we are not free to realize our best selves.



When we consider the pressing problems of our time, it seems to be nothing less than an evolutionary imperative that we become “free thinkers” in the best sense of that term. People whose minds are enslaved by old hatreds, greed, and prejudices cannot look at a problem, whether it be global-warming or unrest in the Middle East, clearly and respond judiciously. Having committed to a particular political position or party, there is a tendency to edit the truth to confirm their sense that their judgments were correct. Neither knee-jerk conservatives nor knee-jerk liberals can tolerate cognitive dissonance, the experience of having one’s cherished biases disconfirmed by new information, or participate in the kind of open dialogue that might alter long-held beliefs with rational discourse and empathy for the viewpoints of other stakeholders.

Nowhere is the freedom to transcend biased thinking needed more than in regard to the Middle East. The relationship between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Israel has never been so personally and publically frayed, making for sensational press coverage and political opportunism that further plays on the fears and prejudices of all parties. There is plenty of blame to go around, but there are also reasonable voices calling us to maintain our clarity and support for the work that matters most.

I admire many of President Obama’s domestic initiatives, particularly to make health care available to all Americans, and I believe he has had to contend with extraordinarily aggressive and undermining opposition. I am personally concerned with some of his foreign policy positions, and chagrined by his continued open hostility to Prime Minister Netanyahu while there are many world leaders whose behavior toward their own and other peoples is far more egregious. At the same time, it was undiplomatic of the Prime Minister to address the U.S. Congress at the invitation of the other party and overriding the President’s will.

I think it is essential to move past the blaming rhetoric from both capitols and to focus on what is at stake in the current negotiations with Iran and the recent Israeli elections. The President believes that the best possible option is to make a deal to obtain limited time constraints on Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.

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Many Israelis, who live increasingly surrounded by Iran sponsored terrorists, feel that this is a moment of existential crisis, and that Iranian leaders who have vowed to destroy the Israeli people will actually do so if they acquire the means. Netanyahu expressed their unwillingness to gamble on a regime that has been in compliant in the past and continues to sponsor terrorism.

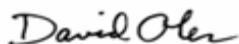
Many Israeli citizens are also concerned that a Palestinian State along Israel's entire Eastern border would quickly become a base for deadly terrorist activity, as happened in Gaza after Israel's evacuation. An election on the West Bank, which has not happened in years, would most likely result, as it has in Gaza, in a Hamas terrorist government committed to the destruction of the Jewish State. While most Israelis (Netanyahu likely included) believe that a two state solution is ultimately the only way to maintain a democratic and Jewish Israel, following a summer of kidnappings, missiles and tunnel attacks, they are weary of negotiating against themselves.

I think the Prime Minister's remark about Arab-Israeli voters has to be seen in this context. Arab citizens of Israel, a rapidly growing demographic, tend to support an agenda diametrically opposed to that of the recently victorious parties in Israel. While I think he should have phrased it differently, calling on his supporters to get out the vote to counteract the heavy voting of an opposing party is not comparable to attempting to prevent another racial group from voting, as has been alleged.

Forty-seven United States Senators wrote directly to the Iranian leadership stating that any nuclear agreement would need to be reviewed by the Senate. Instead of addressing their legitimate concerns to Mr. Obama, they acted to embarrass and undermine the authority of the President and to interfere with his ability to accomplish an agreement.

None of us possesses foresight about the ultimate repercussions of a nuclear deal with Iran, the recent Israeli elections, or each step in the painful saga of Israeli-Palestinian relations. Whether we lean right or left, we each have to struggle with ourselves to keep learning and revising our viewpoint. We can't afford to be complacent in our assumptions or strident in assigning blame; we need to be free to understand as fully and deeply as we can without prior prejudice and support those efforts that seem most promising for the accomplishment of a lasting peace for all people.

Best wishes for a joyous and meaningful celebration of our Season of Freedom!



Rabbi David Oler

Join Us for Our New Program!



Jewish Ethics for Personal Growth with Rabbi Oler

**On Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. at the Kadima Facility
1020 Milwaukee Avenue, Deerfield, IL**

Get ready!

Hide the Afikomen!

Passover starts on Friday, April 3!



Happy Passover!

When someone is sick



Rabbi Oler requests that if you are being hospitalized or know of someone in the congregation who is going to be, please contact him at:

davidoler@nrck.org

or call the Kadima office at 847-229-9500.



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President's Letter

One of the most effective ways to achieve personal development is to cultivate character attributes we associate with a divine and holy ideal. A thoughtful path we are exploring on this journey can be taken at the Kadima Saturday morning 9 a.m. class led by Rabbi Oler.

This has become an essential component of my weekly routine, It refreshes my soul and strengthens my ability to relate to friends, family, coworkers and new acquaintances in the six days that follow. The guidance we pursue is called Mussar, a Jewish rabbinic ethical movement started in the mid-19th century that resonates today. Mussar means "instruction" passed down to us as a method for self examination and refinement. Its main objective is enhancing each person's awareness, compassion, learning and relationships. Attendance is growing and makes Saturday mornings a joyous and peaceful circle of friendship and growth.

Instead of gulping down my usual airplane thrillers on Saturday mornings, my focus on Mussar has stimulated me and in a parallel fashion has allowed me to find and read several amazing books over the last month, which I want to recommend strongly to Kadima friends.

The first is *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande, a physician and student of Public Health, who brings empathy and wisdom to the experiences of debilitation and old age that most of us must deal with for our parents, and eventually for ourselves. The lesson is one of living better as we age and weaken rather than just longer, where the latter is more a medical model. The stories of the author's family and of his patients are powerfully moving and call us to the highest standard in honoring our elders.

The second book is *12 Steps to a Compassionate Life* by Karen Armstrong. She is an accomplished scholar of comparative religions and their history. She also is someone who has extracted the important conclusion that apparently disparate faiths share much more in common than the differences that divide them. Recognizing this common humanity is a critical first step in achieving a compassionate world view.

I also recommend *People of the Book* by Geraldine Brooks, which is a historical fiction based on true facts of the discovery of an ancient, beautifully illustrated Haggada. This Haggada, which was created and then enabled to survive centuries of oppression through the heroic self-sacrifice of Jews and non-Jews, again reinforcing our common humanity and need for mutual respect and appreciation by all peoples. The proximity to Passover makes this story especially timely. Finally, don't miss *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson an Alabama lawyer only too familiar with racial injustice, who has saved many innocent prisoners languishing on death row. He spoke at Evanston High School this week to an audience of about 1300, and received a standing ovation. His book brings many a tear to the eye and shows us how much injustice needs to be corrected in our super-incarcerated society. Do read one or more of these inspirational works and attend Mussar class Saturday morning whenever you can, it will be a pleasure to see you on Saturday and see each other at the upcoming Kadima Community Seder on Saturday, April 4.

Shalom

Jack Henkin

President, The New Reform Congregation Kadima

Educational Director's Letter

We had our Model Seder at the Religious School on Friday, March 20. Our students enjoyed the rituals and holiday foods, and they clearly understood the message of this ancient Festival of Freedom and were able to apply it to their own lives.

Wherever your family celebrates the holiday, the Rabbi, teachers, and I wish you a Happy Passover!

Religious School will be closed on Friday, April 3 for Spring Break. If you will be in town, please consider joining our congregation's Community Seder at Max and Benny's on the second night of the holiday, Saturday, April 4.

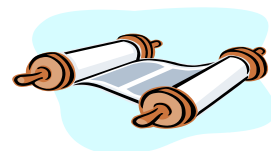
When we return from break, students will continue to study Hebrew and Torah, but they will also have lessons about Israel in the final weeks of school and leading toward our observance of Israel's Independence Day. Current events remind us that many Jews have an ongoing need for a refuge from persecution and that the modern Jewish nation faces great challenges that test its integrity and resolve. The Rabbi and I especially enjoy our discussions about these issues with the thoughtful members of the Sunday morning youth class.

As you make summer plans for your children, please remember that there the Reform movement offers summer camps for children and has volunteer and employment opportunities for teens, as well as sports and music activities. Please contact me if you are interested in learning more.

Shalom,

Mary Oler

עֵבֶרִית



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Religious School

When: Fridays
Time: 4:30 p.m.
Where: Shepard Middle School Library (*unless otherwise noted*)
440 Grove Place, Deerfield, IL

Shabbat services for students takes place at 6:10 on days when Religious School meets.

All Kadima members are welcome to attend.



**** PLEASE NOTE ****

No Religious School on Friday, April 3, 2015 for Spring Break

Classes resume Friday, April 10, 2015

אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקרשת

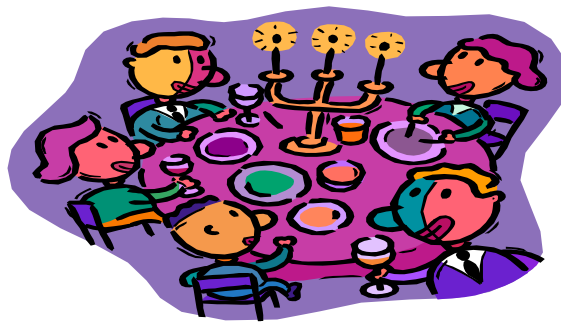


CONGREGATION HAPPENINGS

Keep an eye on <http://nrck.org/events!>

Kadima Community Seder at Max & Benny's

Saturday, April 4, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.



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Mazel Tov!

Mazel Tov to Simon Kellman and his family on his
Bar Mitzvah



Adult Events

Kadima adult members are enjoying our international dinner program!

Following on the success of a meal at a Turkish restaurant that was arranged by Oya Dubey, 30 members gathered on March 22 for a Russian dinner arranged by Julia Koyfman. We are looking forward to Polish, Italian, Mexican and Scandinavian dinners.

Join us!

Note: Further details and additional congregational activities are likely to be sent out in additional emails



"It's okay, the children aren't effected."

But what if you knew they were?

Shalva clients will often say that they can withstand their husband's abuse as long as he never directs his anger toward their children. What many women don't understand is that children are the silent victims of abuse and that they often repeat the behaviors they have seen.

According to a recent study, over 90% of children are aware of domestic abuse in their home. These children are affected emotionally, cognitively, and physically. They are at great risk and often experience low self-esteem, shame, fear and guilt. Many distrust adults, fail to thrive or suffer from depression and anxiety.

What can we do?

The issue of domestic abuse is not just a women's issue; it affects the entire family as well as our Jewish community.

SHALVA offers free counseling to Jewish women who are or were in an intimate partner relationship. If you or someone you know needs our help, call 773-583-4673.

***Giving voice to the unspeakable...
responding to domestic abuse in Jewish homes.***