



October 2015

Congregation House of Israel

18 Tishri - 18 Heshvan, 5776



#### **Sukkot 2015**

Begins in the evening of  
Sunday, September 27  
and ends in the evening of  
Sunday, October 4

**S**ukkot, a Hebrew word meaning “booths” or “huts,” refers to the Jewish festival of giving thanks for the fall harvest. It also commemorates the 40 years of Jewish wandering in the desert after the giving of the Torah atop Mt. Sinai. Sukkot is celebrated five days after Yom Kippur on the 15th of the month of Tishrei, and is marked by several distinct traditions. One, which takes the commandment to dwell in booths literally, is to erect a *sukkah*, a small, temporary booth or hut. Sukkot (in this case, the plural of *sukkah*) are commonly used during the seven-day festival for eating, entertaining and even for sleeping.

Sukkot also called *Z'man Simchateinu* (Season of Our Rejoicing), is the only festival associated with an explicit commandment to rejoice. A final name for Sukkot is *Chag HaAsif*, (Festival of the Ingathering), representing a time to give thanks for the bounty of the earth during the fall harvest.

# Thank You

We would like to thank the following donors (as of September 30, 2015)

## General Fund

**Bill Ginsburg**

*In honor of the High Holidays*

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*In memory of Oscar and Eathel Greenberg*

**Millie Baron**

*In honor of the High Holidays*

**Michael and Sharon Waxler**

*In memory of Bob Gartenberg  
In memory of Nathan Litwack  
In memory of Louise Levi*

## The Shofar

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## Schedule of Events

Fri	Oct 2	6:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service with Millie Baron
Sun	Oct 4	9:30 am	Religious School
Mon	Oct 5	11:00 am	Sisterhood Meeting -Hibachi Sushi Grill
Fri	Oct 9	6:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service with Rabbi Chapin
Sat	Oct 10	9:30 am	Torah study
Sun	Oct 11	9:30 am	Religious School
Fri	Oct 16	6:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service with Rabbi Chapin
Sat	Oct 17	9:30 am	Torah study
Sun	Oct 18	9:30 am	Religious School
Fri	Oct 23	6:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service with Rabbi Chapin
Sat	Oct 24	9:30 am	Torah study
Sun	Oct 25	9:30 am	Religious School
Fri	Oct 30	6:00 pm	Erev Shabbat service with Patti Fleischer
Sun	Nov 1	9:30 am	Religious School

## From the Rabbi

What a joy to celebrate another Holy Day season with all our dear friends in Hot Springs. May the inspiration of our liturgy and our promises to lead better lives accompany us in the days and months ahead.



CHI is a strong community. It has a long proud history and congregants who are dedicated to its preservation. But we are all aware of the challenges

that lie ahead. The most important question we face: How does a community survive when its numbers are declining? Clearly, our religious school population has diminished over the years. We most likely will never see as many students, or as many *B'nei Mitzvah* candidates, as we once did in years past. That is no one's fault; it seems to be a demographic reality. Young Jewish families raising children are not frequenting Hot Springs as they did in the past. We are becoming almost entirely an "adult" congregation that will certainly be considered "elderly" in another generation.

Our Temple President, Stuart Fleischner, addressed our congregation's material concerns during the

Holy Days. That is the job of a president -- to be concerned about the temple's present and future. The fact that this is Stuart's third presidential term speaks of his ongoing commitment to House of Israel. But therein lies the problem. Other temple members must step up and accept leadership roles in the congregation. And when I speak of leadership I am not just speaking of board membership. We must preserve the temple spiritually and materially, or its survival will be endangered. There is an expression from the Sayings of the Fathers worth noting: *Ain Kemach Ain Torah*. Literally, it means "If there is no flour, there is no Torah." Flour is interpreted euphemistically. In other words, if we can't afford the upkeep, this wonderful 140-year Jewish enterprise might some day have to close its doors. We've seen this happen to other congregations in Arkansas. We certainly don't want to see it happen in Hot Springs.

So...as you have prayed, so may you now come forward to the aid of CHI. We need all the support you can give. Together, as a whole, we can continue to serve our community. And together we can fulfill the age-old promise: to move from strength to strength and blessing to blessing.

*B'Shalom*

Rabbi Richard Chapin

## Sisterhood



Happy New Year to all.

Hope everyone has had a peaceful Yom Tov. Thanks so much to all our Sisterhood members that volunteered to make all those wonderful goodies for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast. You're always

there when needed

Our next Sisterhood meeting will be on Monday, October 5th at 11:00 and we will be having our meeting and lunch at Hibachi Sushi Grill. Bring your chopsticks! We will have a private room so we can have our meeting.

Sue Koppel

## Editor's Corner

Beginning with this issue of the Shofar we will be asking various members of the Congregation to share a little bit of information about themselves with us.

I will be contacting you. Please provide a photo and any information that you feel your fellow congregants would enjoy knowing about you. It could be your life story, your goals and aspirations or anything you feel will contribute to our congregation. I look forward to learning a lot about each of you.

Sincerely,

*David Kirsch*

## Getting to Know ...



### Stuart Fleischner

I was born in Hot Springs in 1955 at the old St. Joseph Hospital where the Arkansas School for Math, Science and the Arts is now located.

I graduated from Hot Springs High School in 1973. From 1973 till 1977, I attended the University of Arkansas after receiving a Physics Scholarship. I graduated from the UofA with a Bachelors in Physics.

In 1977, I started dental school at the University of Tennessee Center for Health Science and completed the dental program in 1981 with a D.D.S. degree.

From 1981-82, I studied at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in New Orleans in a General Practice Residency program. In 1982, I hung out a shingle and started private practice in Hot Springs.

In 1986, I purchased the dental practice of Martin J. Lax, D.D.S., a member of CHI till his passing. In 1990, I merged my practice with Richard Van Bebber, D.D.S. and we have practiced together for 25 years. His son Nicholas Van Bebber, D.D.S. joined the practice in 2006. Recently, Chad Matone, D.D.S., a classmate of Nicholas', joined our practice, also.

I have been very active in the Hot Springs community serving on numerous boards and committees. I have served as president of the Greater Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, Levi Hospital Board, Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club, Fifty for the Future, Friends of Hot Springs National Park, Sister City Program, Pocket Theatre, and a few others.

As my father taught my brother and me "it is very important to give back to our community that gives so much to us".

Shalom!



Friday August 21st was a special day for the members of CHI when our former Rabbi Harley Karz Wagman and his wife Barbara stopped by to lead our Shabbat services. It was good to touch base with the Rabbi and we wished them well on their journey. Rabbi Karz Wagman is currently the Rabbi of Congregation Gemiluth Chassodim in Alexandria, Louisiana



CHI had a special visitor during Yom Kippur services. It seems our little feathered friend dropped in to hear what all the commotion was about. Once he was satisfied that all his sins were resolved he was gathered up and sent on his way. Thanks to Dennis and Anita Williams and Glenda Kirsch and Lex Rofes for escorting him off of the property.

*Zolst leben un zein gezunt!*

## Leaving a Gift

Many congregants give monthly or annual dues to CHI, to ensure the on-going presence of our synagogue. But what about gifts when we pass away? There are numerous ways to make a gift, some simple, others more involved. One of the easiest methods is to leave a monetary gift in your Will (Last Will and Testament) or Trust.

If you have either document in place, and wish to add a provision for a gift, a Codicil to your Will, or an Amendment to your Trust, can be executed, stating your gifting terms for CHI. The gift can be a percentage of your net estate or Trust assets, or it can be a set dollar amount. Gifting can be done through a Charitable Remainder Trust, Charitable Lead Trust, or Charitable Annuity, or set in motion through a community foundation, such as Arkansas Community Foundation, Hot Springs Village Community Foundation, and Hot Springs Community Foundation.

If you designate CHI as a beneficiary on an insurance policy, IRA, or other account, it is imperative you seek the advice of your accountant and/or account custodian, to avoid any tax missteps or distribution issues.

Let your legacy be more than what you did during your life. Let your gift benefit the future congregants and secure the legacy of CHI.

*Thanks to Sherrill Nicolosi for this article*

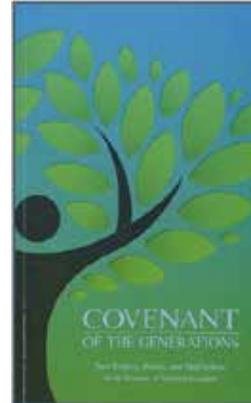
## Regard Meeting

Fourteen local women will present a reader's theater entitled "From Stanton to Steinem and Beyond" at the Regard meeting on October 20, 2015, at 5:30 PM at the Congregation Houae of Israel building. This project began in the early 1980's from research done by a group of women who belonged to the American Association of University Women in Colorado Springs. The readers theater was written as a way to inform others about what they learned. Ann Hair took this original material and modernized it. Some who have heard the program have been amazed at what they didn't know about women's history and what they didn't learn about it in school! The program will have meaning to both men and women.

*Thanks to Jerry Rephan for this article.*

## A Special Gift

Many Thanks to **Barbara Morgan** for purchasing a copy of "Covenant of the Generations" for the CHI Library. *Todah Rabah*



## Jackson House



We had great volunteers for Jackson House for the month of September. Betty Forshberg, Betty Kleinman, Ruth Sedler, Diana Surfus and I had a fun time together making lunches for over a hundred people. While we were working, Michael Waxler delivered a truck load of food that our congregants so generously donated this year during the High Holy Days.

Thank you to all!

Sharon Waxler

# Retirement in Florida

*Our thanks to Ed Berkun for submitting this article.*

A few years ago, my wife and I moved into a retirement development on Florida's southeast coast. We are living in the "Delray/Boca/Boynton Golf, Spa, Bath and Tennis Club on Lake Fake-a-Hachee."

There are 3,000 lakes in Florida ; only three are real. Our biggest retirement concern was time management. What were we going to do all day? No longer. Let me assure you, passing the time is not a problem. Our days are eaten up by simple, daily activities. Just getting out of our car takes 15 minutes. Trying to find where we parked takes 20 minutes. It takes a half-hour in the check-out line in Wal-Mart, and one hour to return the item the next day.

Let me take you through a typical day: We get up at 5:00 a.m., have a quick breakfast, and join the early morning Walk-and-Fart Club. There are about 30 of us, and rain or shine, we walk around the streets, all talking at once. Every development has some late risers who stay in bed until 6:00 a.m. After a nimble walk, avoiding irate drivers out to make us road kill, we go back home, shower, and change for the next activity. My wife goes directly to the pool for her underwater Pilates class, followed by gasping for breath and CPR. I put on my 'Ask me about my Grandchildren T-shirt, my plaid mid-calf shorts, my white socks and sandals and go to the clubhouse lobby for a nice nap.

Before we know it, it's time for lunch. We go to Costco to partake of the many tasty samples dispensed by ladies in white hair nets. All free! After a filling lunch, if we don't have any doctor appointments, we might go to the flea market to see if any new white belts have come in, or to buy a Rolex watch for \$2.00. We're usually back home by 2:00 pm to get ready for dinner.

People start lining up for the early bird about 3:00 p.m., but we get there by 3:45 because we're late eaters. The dinners are very popular because of the large portions they serve. We can take home enough food for the next day's lunch and dinner, including extra bread, crackers, packets of mustard, relish, ketchup and Splenda, along with mints.

At 5:30 p.m. we're home, ready to watch the 6 o'clock news. By 6:30 p.m. we're fast asleep. Then

we get up and make five or six trips to the bathroom during the night, and it's time to get up and start a new day all over again. Doctor-related activities eat up most of our retirement time. I enjoy reading old magazines in sub-zero temperatures in the waiting room, so I don't mind. Calling for test results also helps the days fly by. It takes at least a half-hour just getting through the doctor's phone menu. Then there's the hold time until we're connected to the right party. Sometimes they forget we're holding, and the whole office goes off to lunch.

Should we find we still have time on our hands, volunteering provides a rewarding opportunity to help the less fortunate. Florida has the largest concentration of seniors under five feet and they need our help. I myself am a volunteer for 'The Vertically Challenged Over 80.' I coach their basketball team, The Arthritic Avengers. The hoop is only 4-1/2 feet from the floor. You should see the look of confidence on their faces when they make a slam dunk.

Food shopping is a problem for short seniors, or 'bottom feeders' as we call them, because they can't reach the items on the upper shelves. There are many foods they've never tasted. After shopping, most seniors can't remember where they parked their cars, and wander the parking lot for hours while their food defrosts.

Lastly, it's important to choose a development with an impressive name. Italian names are very popular in Florida . They convey world travelers, uppity sophistication and wealth. Where would you rather live: Murray 's Condos or the Lakes of Venice? There's no difference -- they're both owned by Murray, who happens to be a cheap bastard.

I hope this material has been of help to you future retirees. If I can be of any further assistance, please look me up when you're in Florida . I live in the Leaning Condos of Pisa in Boynton Beach.

***Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what the heck happened.***



This is a picture of my 90 year old mother skydiving during a celebration of my dad's "89 wonderful years of life" weekend in Arizona. Twenty-six family members gathered from Montana, Colorado, Arizona, Arkansas and Texas. 17 out of 20 adults joined my mom and jumped from a "perfectly good plane."

It was a beautiful weekend and I do believe we honored my father in a way that truly reflected what kind of life he lived and taught his children to live, and that is to love your family and enjoy life's wonderful ride

*Sharon Waxler*

## Deli Man

If you get a chance to watch TV and belong to Amazon Prime, I urge you to watch a movie called "Deli Man". It is the story of the creation and transition of the Jewish Deli from its origins until today. It truly is a labor of love for all who choose that lifestyle. Who knew it was so much work?

On another note - follow this link to see what others think of our traditional foods...

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqYGGqTCUs&list=UUay\\_OLhWtf9iklq8zg\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqYGGqTCUs&list=UUay_OLhWtf9iklq8zg_)

## Jewish Humor

1. My mother is a typical Jewish mother. Once she was on jury duty. They sent her home. She insisted SHE was guilty
2. Any time a person goes into a delicatessen and orders pastrami on white bread, somewhere a Jew dies.
3. It was mealtime during a flight on El Al. "Would you like dinner?" the flight attendant asked Moshe, seated in front. "What are my choices?" Moshe asked. "Yes or no," she replied.
4. An elderly Jewish man is knocked down by a car and is brought to the local hospital. A pretty nurse tucks him into bed and says, "Mr. Gevarter, are you comfortable?" Gevarter replies, "I make a living..."
5. A rabbi was opening his mail one morning. Taking a single sheet of paper from an envelope, he found written on it only one word: "shmuck." At the next Friday night service, the Rabbi announced, "I have known many people who have written letters and forgot to sign their names, but this week I received a letter from someone who signed his name...and forgot to write a letter."
6. Three Jewish women get together for lunch. As they are being seated in the restaurant, one takes a deep breath and gives a long, slow "oy." The second takes a deep breath as well and lets out a long, slow "oy." The third takes a deep breath and says impatiently, "Girls, I thought we agreed that we weren't going to talk about our children."
7. And one final favorite: A waiter comes over to a table full of Jewish women and asks, "Is anything alright?"

*Thanks to Mary Klompus (and with her sincerest apologies).*

## Weekly Parshiot

### October

#### Chol Hamoed Sukkot

**October 3, 2015**

The reading lists the annual Callings of Holiness -- the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Nissan; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Nissan; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the 2nd day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the 50th day; a “remembrance of shofar blowing” on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival -- during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the “Four Kinds” -- beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the “8th day” of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).



#### B'reishit

**October 10, 2015**

G-d creates the world in six days. On the first day He makes darkness and light. On the second day He forms the heavens, dividing the “upper waters” from the “lower waters.” On the third day He sets the boundaries of land and sea and calls forth trees and greenery from the earth. On the fourth day He fixes the position of the sun, moon and stars as timekeepers and illuminators of the earth. Fish, birds and reptiles are created on the fifth day; land-animals, and then the human being, on the sixth. G-d ceases work on the seventh day, and sanctifies it as a day of rest.

G-d forms the human body from the dust of the earth and blows into his nostrils a “living soul.” Originally Man is a single person, but deciding that “it is not good that man be alone,” G-d takes a “side” from the man, forms it into a woman, and marries them to each other.

#### Noach

**October 17, 2015**

G-d instructs Noah -- the only righteous man in a world consumed by violence and corruption -- to build a large wooden teivah (“ark”), coated within and without with pitch. A great deluge, says G-d, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noah and his family, and two members (male and female) of each animal species.

Rain falls for 40 days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 days more before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on Mount Ararat, and from its window Noah dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, “to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth.” When the ground dries completely--exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood--G-d commands Noah to exit the teivah and repopulate the earth.

#### Lech L'cha

**October 24, 2015**

G-d speaks to Abram, commanding him to “Go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you.” There, G-d says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the Land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of a One G-d.

#### Vayeira

**October 31, 2015**

G-d reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew’s circumcision at age 99; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three -- who are angels disguised as men -- announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs but bears a son whom they name Isaac. G-d tests Abraham’s devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac’s place.

# The Problem With Jewish Pope Envy

By Judith Eisner

Pope Francis is the pope a lot of American Jews wish they had if they had a pope.

In the two and a half years since Jorge Mario Bergoglio became the 266th head of the Catholic Church, he has captured hearts and stirred longing well beyond his global flock of more than a billion Catholics.

His unadorned humility, his obvious concern for the poor, his off-the-cuff rhetorical generosity, his willingness to deliver excruciatingly tough messages about the environment and the roots of poverty and our culture's reliance on unfettered capitalism — all have made him a focus of envy from liberal non-Catholics who not-so-secretly wish there were a leader like this in their world.

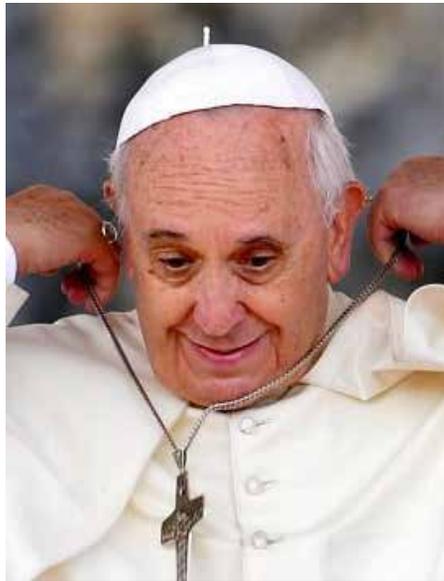
As Ramesh Ponnuru noted recently in *National Review*, Francis is viewed in the media as “the ‘progressive Pope’ who challenges the American Right on poverty and the environment as much as previous popes challenged the American Left on abortion and sexual issues.” That’s why, Ponnuru said, the latest Gallup poll showed Francis with a positive rating of 45% among conservative Americans, and 68% among liberals.

The approval goes beyond Jewish liberals, of course. A noted Muslim columnist, Haroon Moghul, wrote on CNN.com that his own faith leaders come up miles short when compared with the man in the Vatican. That is why, Moghul wrote, “I’d like to invite His Holiness Pope Francis to convert to Islam... We’d love to have him on our team.”

As certain East Coast cities go into a frenzy preparing for Francis’s visit — why, even the Philadelphia Eagles’ schedule was changed to accommodate his plans! — we suspect that many Jews forgive the fact that his Popemobile will crawl down the National Mall in Washington on the morning of Yom Kippur. The pontiff-on-yontef is

still our kind of guy.

That embrace is prompted by a degree of acknowledged self-interest. Even before he ascended to the pinnacle of Catholic power, Francis was a leader in interfaith dialogue in Argentina and in the reforms codified in what is known as Vatican II. After the 1994 AMIA bombing of a Jewish community center that killed 85 people in Buenos Aires, then-Bishop Bergoglio was the first public figure to sign a petition condemning the attack and calling for justice. He often travels with his co-author and favorite rabbi, Abraham Skorka, who will also join him on this, his first visit to the United States. (All this led us to take the unusual step of designating Francis as the 51st name on the *Forward’s* annual Forward 50 list of influential American Jews in



2013.)

As Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman noted recently, on Catholic-Jewish relations, Francis is viewed as a welcome corrective to the conservatism of his most recent predecessors. “When Francis reasserted the ‘common roots’ of Jews and Christians, and the reminder that ‘a true Christian cannot be anti-Semitic,’ Jews concluded that the gains of Vatican II might be here to stay,” Hoffman wrote.

The pope’s announcement that women who had abortions will be forgiven during a special year of mercy beginning in December is surely preferable to the condemnation of ex-communication that has existed until now. Still, as Jill Filipovic wrote in *The New York Times*, the millions of women around the world who terminate pregnancies are still considered sinners. “Inviting women to feel shame and guilt for their abortions isn’t a mercy; it’s cruelty,” she wrote.

It is not for us to seek to alter another faith tradition — there are plenty of troubling and archaic teachings in our own — only to observe that we project onto charismatic leaders like Francis an idealized version of what we need. And here is where he poses the greatest challenge to American

*Continued on page 11*

## Birthdays & Anniversaries

### *Anniversaries*

Donovan & Sharon Ball Oct 5  
Stuart & Kay Fleischner Oct 28

### *Birthdays*

Karen Reagler Oct 03  
John Blumbeks Oct 04  
Betty Forshberg Oct 08  
Lenny Gartenberg Oct 09  
Brad Wolken Oct 12  
Terri Gartenberg Oct 13  
Donovan Ball Oct 15  
Steven Kirsch Oct 16  
Mick Stoyanov Oct 18

## Todah Rabah

To **Millie Baron** for all her wonderful cakes, cookies and challas

To **Mary Klompus** for all her caring leadership and dedication

To **Barbara Morgan** for all her work organizing our library

To **Sharon Waxler** for all of her work with Jackson House

To **Ross Sedler** for erecting the Sukkoh at CHI

## Refuah Shelemah

*The following people are in our thoughts and prayers:*

John Hearn  
Sally Nicolosi  
Barbara Diebel  
John and Leslie Jamieson  
Marci Smith

Please offer prayers that they all have a full and speedy recovery.

## Oneg Thanks

Thank you to the following for sponsoring an Oneg during the month of October:

Oct 2 Betty Kleinman and Sharon Waxler  
Oct 9 Diane Goltz and Susan Siegel and Madeline Bull  
Oct 16 Lori Hutchinson and Kim Baron  
Oct 23 Jodi Chalmers and Saralee Stark  
Oct 30 Carol Crow-Nanez and Karen Reagler

**Reminder:** Carol Crow Nanez will be calling on Mondays to remind Oneg hostesses. If you have switched with someone else please let Carol ([cashiniju@gmail.com](mailto:cashiniju@gmail.com)) know.

Thank you.



## October Yahrzeits

### Kaddish Recited October 2nd

**E. Alberta Williamson**

*Mother of Kathy Klein*

**Morris Zibrack**

*Uncle of Sharon Ball*

**Helen Poncher Newman**

*Grandmother of Brad Wolken*

**Carrie Karnofsky Davis**

*Mother of Joanne Reagler*

*Grandmother of David Reagler*

**Laura Fleischer**

*Mother of Mark and Stuart Fleischer*

**Seymour Kleinman**

*Father of Shelly Kleinman*

### Kaddish Recited October 9th

**Laura Fleischer**

*Mother of Mark and Stuart Fleischer*

**Seymour Kleinman**

*Father of Shelly Kleinman*

**Robert Fields**

*Great Uncle of Mark and Stuart Fleischer*

**Rosalind Goltz Hudson**

*Mother of Madline Bull*

*Sister of Diane Goltz and Susan Siegel*

*Grandmother of Cooper Jack Bull*

**Alice Wolken**

*Grandmother of Brad Wolken*

### Kaddish Recited October 16th

**Robert Fields**

*Great Uncle of Mark and Stuart Fleischer*

**Rosalind Goltz Hudson**

*Mother of Madline Bull*

*Sister of Diane Goltz and Susan Siegel*

**Alice Wolken**

*Grandmother of Brad Wolken*

### Kaddish Recited October 23rd

**Dale Tollefson**

*Father of Sharon Waxler*

**Bernard Levi**

*Father of Larry Levi*

**Rachel Zucker Reagler**

*Mother of David Reagler*

*Grandmother of David D. Reagler*

*Grandmother of Rachel Schulman*

## The Problem With Jewish Pope Envy

*Continued from page 9*

Jews. Not as a pope, per se: a God-like figure with enormous centralized power exists only in some strains of ultra-Orthodoxy. Most modern Jews reject an infallible authority figure — which is why rabbis have had to reinvent themselves as community organizers — and increasingly recoil from supporting established institutions that decide how to address the community's welfare and priorities.

But the core human yearning for authentic moral leadership remains as compelling as ever. At his best, Francis is unafraid to disrupt the foundations of accepted social inequities and the

frailty of human behavior with a message that is both damning and uplifting. One of the reasons Moghul said he wanted Francis on the Muslim team is that the pope's overt welcome of Syrian refugees, including hosting families in Vatican parishes, contrasted sharply with the refusal of some wealthy Arab nations to open their doors. The desire for this kind of moral leadership is universal.

Our eagerness to admire Pope Francis is tinged with a sad irony. Where, in the United States or Israel or elsewhere in the Jewish world, can we find political and spiritual leaders who are his equal but who speak our language, who present a Jewish vision that is challenging, compassionate and compelling? Where, indeed?

*Judith Eisner is Editor In Chief of The Forward*

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