4 modern perspectives on Patriotism

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Patriotism meant a community coming together at a time when our nation was not at war, but close enough to one from the past that our parents still remembered and we were reminded not to forget. Every home flew a flag.

I grew up in a small town in central New Jersey, where the 4th of July was a community event. My brother and I would awaken at 6 a.m., leaving our parents to sleep, and head to the bridge in the center of town for the kick-off of the 4th of July Fishing Derby. We would spread out in search of our luckiest fishing holes. By 9 a.m., awards handed out, tired and grimy, just as the heat and humidity of the day began to settle in, we’d head home to gobble down our second breakfast. Together with our parents, we’d walk to Main Street, claim our spot on the curb, and watch the 4th of July parade. We all rose and placed our hands over our hearts as the flag passed by. We clapped for the Rescue Squad and Fire Department, caught candy thrown from homemade floats, and waved to our friends who were lucky enough to be a part of the parade. Following behind the last of the parade, as if being led by the Pied Piper, the entire town congregated at Borough Park to feast on free hotdogs and beer. Everyone turned out! Once full on food and the latest gossip, we would head back to our house to ride out the afternoon heat in the air-conditioning.

As the sun began to set and the fireflies emerged en masse, we would ignite firecrackers with glowing cattails, and burn our fingers on metal sparklers, before gathering once again throughout the town to watch the most amazing fireworks. Those celebrations were magical. We knew whose grandfathers and fathers marched with the VFW in the parade. We all ate hamburgers and potato salad for dinner. Every home flew a flag. We felt patriotic.

This edition of Tulsa Jewish Review takes two approaches to patriotism. First, we submit a thought-provoking excerpt from “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture” by Brandeis humanities professor, Dr. Jonathan Sarna. Dr. Sarna looks at the natural evolution of acceptance of the American Jew as patriotic comrades in our society. His work makes the claim that based on our history, we, as a religious community, have always possessed a truly patriotic spirit and a willingness to exemplify it. Speaking directly to this, we feature the personal reflections on patriotism by three of our community members, David Bernstein, John Clayman, and Melissa Schnur. As you will see, patriotism is somehow both a personal and collective ideal. Not easily defined, perhaps you will see some of your thoughts in their words.

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Karen Blum
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On Saturday, June 9, over 100 people gathered at the Sharna and Irvin Frank Aquatics Center to celebrate Camp Shalom’s 40th year and the seasonal opening of the pool at the Charles Schusterman JCC. Accompanied by the island sounds of Something Steel, the crowd dined on the never-disappointing culinary delights prepared by Alin Torianyk and her dedicated group of volunteers.

Martha Kelley, Director of Camp Shalom, was pleased to announce that in the 40th year of Camp Shalom, there are over 320 children registered for the variety of camps offered this summer. Amy Underwood, Director of Health & Wellness, was pleased by the turnout. “It’s great to see so many people enjoying our beautiful facility.”
My wife and I are blessed to have one child who has just graduated and one who still attends Mizel Jewish Community Day School. We are so pleased with the education they have received and encourage you to check out the school for yourself. Mizel is much more than just a school. It is a committed family of engaged community members and teachers who go above and beyond to support and challenge the students. Mizel is committed to creating world-class citizens!

In 1975, Rabbi Arthur Kahn, Joe Borg, Charles Goodall and Louis Kahn’s vision of combining excellence in education with a connection to our Jewish heritage, was the impetus for the creation of Heritage Academy, which we all now know as Mizel Jewish Community Day School. Dr. Sandi Tilkin and her staff, parents, and community volunteers continue to make the founding families legacy a reality through rich educational opportunities for the students. Whether it’s working with students through active learning, advanced media, or kinesthetic lessons, students are able to excel in ways that meet their learning style. Throughout the year, a variety of field trips further reinforce classroom lessons.

In addition to their secular studies, religious/Israeli studies provide students with a strong foundation in Torah, an unconditional connection to Israel, and a relationship with something greater than themselves. The Sherwin Miller Museum serves as their Beit Knesset (house of prayer) every week for school services. During services, students have an opportunity to pray in pews donated from the former synagogue in Muskogee, a tangible testament to the continuity of the Jewish people. You are welcome to join us for Kabbalat Shabbat on Fridays where Rabbi Fitzerman, Rabbi Sherman, Jennifer Lorch, Edna Lapidot, Rabbi Weg, Cantor Kari Siegel-Eglash, Joe Eglash and I all take turns leading with the kids.

Jeff Darby and the Mizel board of trustees work day-in and day-out to support the legacy of learning at Mizel, while lay leadership continues to raise the bar of volunteer efforts.

Thanks to the Irv and Sharna Frank Foundation who granted six new iPads and to Lori Frank who donated a Smart Board, our school has the very best technology available to support classroom learning. Larry and Steve Mizel and family, the Herman Kaiser and Zink Foundations work behind the scenes so students can benefit in the most heartfelt way from their experiences at school.

Truly a gem, the Mizel Jewish Community Day School makes a difference in the lives of our students, their families, and our community. May the community be blessed with students that are leaders and who follow their passions in life!

» Mizel’s Mission: Mizel Jewish Community Day School instills children with the spiritual compass of Torah and a lifelong love of learning. They provide all students with an outstanding education in both general and Judaic studies. Mizel JCDS maintains a supportive yet challenging atmosphere that fosters a lifelong commitment to learning, to Israel and to the imperative of Tikkun Olam, repairing and caring for the world.

» Colleges That Mizel Graduates Have Attended Include: Brown University, Columbia University, Swarthmore College, Yale, Emory, Tufts University, Tulane University, University of Tulsa, University of Kansas, and University of Oklahoma. Many of these students were also National Merit Scholars and Phi Beta Kappa.
How’s Your Vision?

by RABBI CHARLES P. SHERMAN,
TEMPLE ISRAEL

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room’s only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in military service, where they had been on vacations.

Every afternoon, when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see by the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside. The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. He could see it all in his mind’s eye, as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days, weeks, and months passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their sponge baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window; he apparently had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed.

It faced a blank wall. The man called the nurse to ask what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse looked confused. “But your roommate was blind. Didn’t you know?”

He could see it all in his mind’s eye.

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So what is the message of this story? The story reminds us that vision is not limited to that which we can see with our eyes; rather, it is enhanced by our imagination and creativity, by what is in our hearts, by what we can envision.

I hope that we will use these summer months to both rest our eyes and increase our vision. If we do, I’m confident that we will see that we are blessed to be living in a beautiful world.
Dressed to the nines, members of the Tulsa Chapter of B’nai B’rith Youth Organization finished the year in style and celebration.

The first weekend in June the Tulsa Chapters of B’nai B’rith Youth Organization (BBYO) wrapped up a year of religious, social, and community service programming. Exceptionally designed and developed by BBYO teen leadership, the 40 members of the chapters participated in a variety of events and activities that included installation of their new Board, Friday night services, social activism projects with Family Children Services and Head Start, a formal dinner/dance, and finally Life Ceremony. Life Ceremony gives each graduating senior the opportunity to speak to the impact of BBYO on their lives. A powerful and moving testament to the importance of this organization, Life allows each graduate to reflect on their BBYO experience and the lessons that they will carry forward. This year’s Life Ceremony included reflections from Aly Cash, Abby Dow, Glade Inhofe and Britney Wambold.

The Feenberg Rubin AZA boys and Nona Bloch Solomon BBG girls chapters continue do what they’ve been doing exceptionally well for the past 70-plus years; inspiring our Tulsa teens to live Jewishly while making a difference in their community and the world.

Although the chapters take a break for the summer, many of its members will participate in summer programming, including Chapter Leadership Training Conferences, International Kallah, the Impact social service program in Boston, and overseas programs in Bulgaria and Israel. As a matter of note, Tulsa’s chapters boasts one of the highest participation in summer programming rates per capita in the United States, with 19 kids participating this year.

As Tulsans, we are truly lucky to have an active BBYO. Guided by its volunteer adult advisors, BBYO continues to have a significant impact on our kids, allowing them to have the opportunity to grow into dynamic, engaged Jewish leaders.
Jewish Federation of Tulsa Breaks Ground on Community Garden

On Tuesday, June 12 the Jewish Federation of Tulsa held a ground breaking ceremony marking the culmination of over a year’s worth of planning. On hand to commemorate the occasion were Mrs. Victoria Bartlett, First Lady of Tulsa, Drew Diamond, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Tulsa; Eileen Bradshaw, Executive Director of the Community Food Bank; partners; individual sponsors; volunteers; and members of the press.

Drew stressed the mission of our garden in terms of unity, service and impact. Drew believes, “bringing community together for the purpose of service has a positive impact on both those coming together and those in need.”

Mrs. Bartlett spoke directly to the importance of establishing our community garden when she noted the need to improve the diets of all Tulsans, especially those who don’t have access to fresh produce. Her conviction stems from her upbringing in a small Kansas town, where she told me, “we had an acre-size garden, and my mother canned and pickled the vegetables we grew. I remember the day when my mother announced we would no longer eat white bread; she began making homemade wheat bread with seeds and nuts. My mother taught [my family] what food was supposed to taste like. [And now] we have a generation that needs to learn what fresh fruits and vegetables taste like and where their food comes from.”

Eileen Bradshaw spoke also to the relevancy of our garden, and how the partnership between the Jewish Federation of Tulsa and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma can bring community together to solve an immediate problem in a very real and tangible way. Tom Taylor of Emergency Infant Services echoed this sentiment relating it to the importance of nutrition in our youngest citizens.

A many thanks to those who have supported and continue to support the Jewish Federation of Tulsa’s Community Garden. It is with our partners’ and individual sponsors’ support we can make a difference in the fight against hunger. We are still collecting donations for our garden. Please contact Karen Blum at kblum@jewishtulsa.org or 918.495.1100 for information.
Our Local Campaign’s Global Impact on Greece

by Guido Setton, Director of Community Development, Jewish Federation of Tulsa

One of the many impacts of the Federation Annual Campaign can be found in the generous international help that North American Jews provide to their brothers and sisters around the world. A number of agencies take care of the needs of these Jewish communities, including the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

The specter of a Greek government default on its euro-dominated debt has been a key element in Europe’s sovereign debt crisis. The restructuring agreement that Greece finally reached with most of its private sector lenders in March of 2012, leaves the country, according to many economists, with an unsustainable load and few real prospects for growth.

Like all of Greece, the 3,000-member Jewish community in Athens is also in financial crisis. The community supports two synagogues, a highly-regarded day school for 150 children (70 percent of the school-age Jewish population), a welfare program that helps care for the elderly and the poor, an old age home, a multipurpose cultural center, and a Holocaust memorial. Nearly half of the community’s budget comes from rental payments, and the taxes on this basic income source have increased tremendously in recent years.

Community institutions have been struggling to stay afloat after skyrocketing unemployment and small business bankruptcies derailed hundreds of Jewish families. Cuts in pensions and health programs and rising taxes added to the problem, forcing many long-term donors to curtail their involvement in the community just to keep a roof over their families’ heads.

With its income down and its cash reserves fully spent, the community looked outward for help to meet its ongoing expenses which included out-of-work Jews seeking assistance for basic needs and school tuition payments. JDC’s support is enabling the community to extend a lifeline to these families in distress and helping to ensure a Jewish future for their children.

To date, the JDC, funded by our Federation’s Annual Campaign, has committed $330,000 for rent subsidies, food assistance, and school scholarships, in Athens, where the Jewish community has been most severely affected. The Joint Distribution Committee’s CEO Steven Schwager said it well, “It all goes back to our firm belief that all Jews are responsible for one another. Whether it be nurturing Jewish life or offering assistance to distressed communities during times of crisis.”

Without caring donors like you, partnership agencies like the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Joint Distribution Committee couldn’t do the important work they do. Your support of our Annual Campaign has an impact locally and globally. Thank you for your continued generosity.

Butterflies

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Home to two synagogues, a well-regarded day school, and social programs, the Jewish community finds itself in financial crisis along with the rest of Greece.
Tulsa Native Attending Jerusalem Gathering of Jewish Entrepreneurs

This week, Micah Fitzerman-Blue, a Hollywood screenwriter and son of Alice Blue and Rabbi Marc Fitzerman, is joining some 150 Jewish innovators at the 2012 ROI Global Summit in Jerusalem.

Fitzerman-Blue, a writer and producer for Fox TV Studios in LA is working on his first feature film, The Motel Life, due out this fall, starring Dakota Fanning, Emile Hirsch and Kris Kristopherson. But in his spare time, Fitzerman-Blue is devoted to the resurgent Jewish community in LA’s East Side, where he is a co-founder of the East Side Jews, an organization that holds monthly events that have helped transform the East Side from a Jewish institutional desert to a fledgling hub of activity, innovation and excitement around being Jewish.

Because of his work, Fitzerman-Blue was accepted this Spring to be a member of ROI Community and is currently attending its 2012 Summit in Jerusalem. ROI Community is an international network of more than 800 social entrepreneurs and Jewish innovators from over 40 countries on six continents who are creating innovative ways to connect to Jewish life.

“The feeling so far at this gathering of Jewish entrepreneurs is that we are not alone in the work we’re doing to spark new ways to address the challenges in our Jewish communities,” said Fitzerman-Blue from Jerusalem.

“ROI Community has provided me with incredible resources for organizing and promoting my work that I hope to bring back to East Side LA.”

ROI Community was established in 2005 and is supported by philanthropist Lynn Schusterman. “ROI is a proudly diverse community, bound by our love for the Jewish people and for Israel,” said Schusterman. “Individually and collectively, ROI members are creating new avenues of Jewish expression and experiences that are enabling more people to explore Jewish life in exciting, meaningful ways. At the heart of our investment in these young leaders and activists is our belief in their limitless potential to inspire their peers, transform communities and strengthen the Jewish future.”

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I learned patriotism from my father
by Melissa Schnur

My father was the grandchild of European immigrants who were fiercely proud to be American citizens. He spent his early years in the shadow of World War II. After the war, my father and his parents traveled the world for his father's job as a foundry consultant ... Aruba, Panama and India were the exotic locales where my father came of age. Whether it was his immigrant grandfather, being a young child during the intense nationalism during the war or his living abroad, my father was intensely proud to be an American.

He took a break after his first two years in college and enlisted in the Army where he served in Vietnam. For the rest of his life, he continued to imprint his love of country on me. Although he hated the "racket" I created while learning to play piano, he loved it when I learned to play patriotic songs. I can still hear him belting out "Oh beautiful for spacious skies ..." in his booming, off-key voice. My father felt it was our patriotic duty to vote in every election, and he prided himself on always being the first person at the polls, impatiently waiting on the election workers, as they voted first. I remember his pride when I registered to vote on the day I turned 18.

There was always a flag flying in front of my parent's home and after my father retired, he made a ritual of putting it up every morning and taking it down at night before sunset. One of the last gifts that I ever gave my father was a flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol on Flag Day. Tears were streaming down his face as he clutched the flag as he said, "This is the best present I've ever received." (Melissa is the Director of Community Development for the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art.)

A personal perspective on patriotism
by John Clayman

Identifying and describing a personal definition of "patriotism" is a challenging, if not a daunting, task. At its core, "patriotism" is the devotion a person has to his or her country. Yet, the concept of devotion is ultimately defined at the individual and subjective level.

Patriotism may be as simple as practicing the precepts of the Pledge of Allegiance in your daily life. I especially think of the words, "One Nation Under G-d." As a member of the Jewish community, one has to recognize the unique society that has been created by the Constitution and laws of this country. Religious freedom has a distinct and personal meaning to the Jewish people that has been persecuted throughout time. We are blessed by the ability to practice our religion and express our personal beliefs in a manner that our people have not enjoyed very often in our history. Part of the concept of patriotism is the recognition of the benefits and opportunities provided by this country. The values of this great nation have evolved over time and continue to do so. One will always hope that the values will remain for the betterment of all men and women.

Patriotism is expressed at many levels by one's service to our nation. The nature of the service varies from individual to individual. The ultimate demonstration of patriotism is by those men and women who have served or currently serve our country in the military. No other service to our country requires such sacrifice and commitment. The men and women of the military represent the heart and soul of defending the values that have made the United States a truly unique nation in the world's history. Regrettably, military service is no longer appreciated by the vast majority of our nation because it touches the daily lives of so few. »
As we approach another Independence Day, patriotism is my recognition and appreciation of the military sacrifices of my paternal Grandfather as a soldier in World War I, my Father as a B-17 pilot in World War II, and my oldest son as a Marine officer currently serving in Operation Enduring Freedom. My opportunity for citizenship in this amazing nation rests in great part on their sacrifices. I am blessed by their patriotism. (John is a lifelong Tulsan who is married to Leah Clayman, has three sons and practices law.)

The following material is excerpted from Jonathan Sarna’s essay “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture.” In this essay, Sarna, Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University, explores the various ways in which American Jews have attempted “to interweave their ‘Judaism’ with their ‘Americanism.’” While some of these efforts have been extraordinarily creative, not to say historically implausible, all of them reflect the belief that “Judaism and Americanism reinforce one another.” The Tulsa Jewish Review editor hopes that Sama’s piece will help readers to think about the ways in which Jewish Tulsans, both individually and collectively, have understood the connection between the practices and beliefs of Judaism and the civic and social commitments of Americanism.

Dr. Jacob Howland, McFarlin Professor of Philosophy, University of Tulsa

Charles Liebman, in his discussion of the “major ideas, symbols, and institutions arousing the deepest loyalties and passions of American Jews,” summed up the values underlying the “cult of synthesis” in American Jewish culture in two crisp sentences: There is nothing incompatible between being a good Jew and a good American, or between Jewish and American standards of behavior. In fact, for a Jew, the better an American one is, the better Jew one is.

The roots of this idea are easily traced all the way back to the Puritans, who, for their own reasons and within a definite supersessionist framework, linked their experiences with those of the Israelites of old, and over time helped to define America in terms drawn from the Hebrew Bible. The compatibility that they found between themselves and the Jews (“New England they are like the Jews/as like as like can be”) was largely typological in nature with the Jews representing the past, and their conversion the promise of the future. Still the nexus between America and Jew had been established.

American Jews began to draw on these themes for their own purposes in the nineteenth century. Mordecai Noah, the most important American Jewish leader of the first half of the nineteenth century, argued on several occasions, in speeches directed to Christians, that the American Indians were originally Jews – descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes. Quoting published research, he linked the Indians to numerous aspects of Jewish ritual and custom and adduced many purported similarities between Indian languages and Hebrew. The Jews, he concluded, were both “the first people in the old world” – the ancestors of Christianity – and the “rightful inheritors of the new.” This proved, to his mind, both the veracity of scriptures and the special status accorded America in the heavenly schema. Noah also linked the Puritans to the Jews. In a letter inviting Daniel Webster to a Jewish charity dinner, for example, he reminded the Massachusetts senator that “your Puritan ancestors lived, a hundred years ago, under the Mosaic laws and flourished under the same government to which David and Solomon added power, glory and splendor.”

Taken together, and stripped of their many layers of hyperbolic excess, Noah’s writings provide early examples of the political use of synthesis both to legitimate Jews’ place in America and to demonstrate their patriotism and sense of belonging. Noah seized upon and Judaized America’s founding myths, placing “Jews” – the “Lost Ten Tribe Indians,” and the Hebraic Puritans – at their center. Later, Jews would also lay claim to Christopher Columbus, insisting that he too was a Jew. Of all the many ethnic and religious groups that have demanded shares in America’s founding myths, Jews are apparently unique in attempting to insert themselves into so many. This bespeaks their eagerness for acceptance, to be sure, but also their deep-seated insecurity.

Protestant efforts during the nineteenth century to identify Americanism squarely with Christianity stoked this insecurity. “With varying degrees of articulation and in slightly varying details,” Robert Handy writes, “[ante-Bellum] Protestant leaders from many denominations operated on the assumption that American civilization would remain a Christian one, and that its Christian (which for them always meant Protestant) character would become even more pronounced.” Even Governor James H. Hammond of South Carolina, no paragon of Christian living, wrote to the Jewish community of his state in 1844 that he thought it “a settled matter” that he “lived in a Christian land.” Prof Bela Bates Edwards of Andover Theological Seminary (d. 1852) found similarly “convincing evidence to show that this real, though indirect, connection between the State and Christianity is every year acquiring additional strength.” Efforts like Noah’s to connect Judaism and the state sought to deflect, counteract and even subvert these Christianizing tendencies. By offering Jews a measure of reassurance concerning their place and contribution to American life, they helped to neutralize the insecurity that proponents of a “Christian America” naturally engendered.

With the establishment, in 1892, of the American Jewish Historical Society the small-scale effort at counter-history that Noah championed blossomed into a full-scale sacred history of American Jewry. Oscar Straus, the American politician and Jewish communal leader who presided over the American Jewish Historical Society in its early years, embodied this ideal of synthesis. His first book, The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America (1885), credited the ancient Hebrews with the first achievement of “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” and pointedly observed that this took place “1500 years and more before the Christian era”:

The better an American one is, the better Jew one is.
“The children of Israel on the banks of the Jordan, who had just emerged from centuries of bondage, not only recognized the guiding principles of civil and religious liberty that ‘all men are created equal,’ that God and the law are the only kings, but also established a free commonwealth, a pure democratic republic under a written constitution.”


As AIHSP president, he especially encouraged study of “the relation of the Jews with the discovery of this continent and their participation in the early settlement of the colonies.” He hoped, he privately admitted, that evidence that Jews had actively participated in the discovery of America would be an answer for all time to come to antisemitic tendencies in this country. If filiopietism and communal defense underlay much of what Straus and his colleagues produced, however, the history that resulted read like a sacred pageant. According to its ennobling script, Jews starred in all the central roles of American history: from the secret Jews in the Spanish Court who funded Christopher Columbus, through the Jewish “pilgrim fathers” who fought for religious freedom in New Amsterdam, on to the patriotic heroes who contributed financially to the success of the American Revolution, and from there to the “loyal and faithful citizens” who while participating fully in America’s growth and development, “shared willingly in all the trials our country has passed through … until the present time.” Each scene in this glorious pageant served the same central purposes. It offered an alternative “Jewish” reading of American history and strengthened the faithful in their belief that Americanism and Judaism walked happily hand-in-hand.

The cult of synthesis was by no means confined to history. It actually permeated all of the major movements and ideologies of American Judaism. All shared the firm belief that Americanism and Judaism reinforced one another. As early as Thanksgiving of 1852, the Sephardic hazan of Mikveh Israel, Sabato Morais, preached that “with the spangled banner of liberty in one hand, and the law of Horeb in the other, we will continue faithful citizens of this glorious republic, and constant adorers of the living God.” The noted Jewish educator, Henry Leipziger, speaking at New York’s [Reform] Temple Beth El on Thanksgiving, 1887, described the “Jewish form of government” as “republican,” and “free America Cincinnati’s Rabbi David Philipson, in an 1891 address on “Judaism and the Republican Form of Government,” spoke of how Brandeis “happily fused” within himself the dominant principles of civil and religious liberty that ‘all men are created equal,’ that God and the law are the only kings, but also established a free commonwealth, a pure democratic republic under a written constitution.”

Leo Jung, Samuel Belkin, Abba Hillel Silver, Jacob Rader Marcus, Nelson Glueck, Louis Finkelstein, Simon Greenberg and Robert Gordis all argued in various ways for the compatibility of Judaism and American democracy. Judah P. L. Hirsch similarly extolled the secular Jewish thinker, Horace Kallen, for finding in both Americanism and Hebraism “a singleness of purpose.” “His Jewishness,” he argued, paraphrasing Louis Brandeis, made Kallen “a more enlightened American and a more conscientious citizen of the world,” and his “Americanism,” made him “a nobler Jew.” Mordecai Kaplan’s phrasing, if more tentative, echoed the same familiar idea: “The American religion of democracy has room for Judaism, and Jewish religion has room for American democracy.”

As the examples of Kallen and Kaplan demonstrate, however, the cult of synthesis was not just whipped up for internal consumption. Jews also looked outward and attempted to transform America’s vision of itself. By undercutting the claims of “Christian America” and promoting pluralism as a national ideal, they attempted to forge a new America – one where they might finally be accepted as insiders.

The pre-eminent twentieth-century exemplar of American Jewish synthesis was the U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Zionist leader Louis Brandeis. In the American Jewish imagination he came to embody the pinnacle of the synthesis ideal. At the justice’s funeral, Felix Frankfurter spoke of how Brandeis “happily fused” within himself the dominant sources of western culture, Hebraism and Hellenism, and as if to prove the point he quoted passages applicable to Brandeis’s life from the Greek historian Thucydides, the Hebrew prophets Malachi and Isaiah, and the English Baptist John Bunyan, author of The Pilgrim’s Progress. Memorializing Brandeis in the American Jewish Year Book, the Zionist leader and jurist Louis E. Levinthal referred to synthesis over and over: “It was in his very being that these two – Americanism and Jewishness – were synthesized …” he exulted. “He was a synthesis of two worlds.” Brandeis became, for many, the apotheosis of synthesis – much as Moses Mendelsohn embodied the ideal of bildung for German Jews. This veneration of the justice’s memory reflected, to a considerable degree, the cult of synthesis personified. He became a model for the ages, proof that a great American did not have to be Christian.

★ ★ ★

**AS AMERICAN JEWS, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PATRIOTIC?**

**by David Bernstein**

As citizens of the country that leads the world in demonstrating how a free society behaves, we need to be patriotic enough to constantly inspire our leaders to encourage inclusion of all. We must insist that our leaders bring to the entire population, both citizen and non-citizen alike, a feeling of security that they represent our government through our collective beliefs. When we fail to make this demand, (continued on pg. 17) »
**JULY COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**Jewish Federation of Tulsa**

*A Honey of a Deal: This Rosh Hashanah Dip the Apples and Do a Mitzvah!* • Send your friends and family a gift of pure certified kosher honey and support programming at the Charles Schusterman JCC. $10 for each 8 oz. jar, gift card included. To place your order, contact Mindy Prescott at 918.935.3662 or mprescott@jewishtulsa.org. All orders must be received no later than August 1!

**Retired Men’s Club** • Wed., July 11 • Noon • A delicious lunch will be followed by our guest speaker, Mary Ligon who will talk about the creation of “Coffee Bunker.” Mary wanted a place where service members and their families could go to talk about what happened in war. “Coffee Bunker” is providing a place of connection, where they can meet, and talk with someone who’s been there and understands. Please RSVP to Falisha at 918.495.1100 or mprescott@jewishtulsa.org by noon on July 10. Cost for the luncheon is $6.

**JFT Dinner & Cinema Series Presents, The Yankles** • July 21 • 6:30 p.m. • We are taking you out to the ballgame with a meal fit for a ballpark and the film *The Yankles.* A man looking for a second chance at life crosses paths with a team with practically no chance at all in this comedy. Charlie Jones (Brian Wimmer) is a former major league baseball player whose alcoholism ended his career in center field and ruined his personal life after his wife left him and he ended up in prison following his third drunk driving conviction. As part of his parole, Jones has to serve nearly 200 hours of community service, and while he’s eager to coach an amateur team as part of his penalty, no one seems willing to take a chance on him. However, that’s before he meets Elliot (Michael Buster), an Orthodox Jew studying to be a rabbi who’s trying to salvage the hapless baseball team at his yeshiva school. Check out the trailer on YouTube. Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. Members: $12.50* Non-members $15. RSVP to mprescott@jewishtulsa.org or 918.495.1100 by July 18th if you want to be included in the dinner.

**Retired Men’s Club** • Wed., July 25 • Noon • A delicious lunch will be followed by our guest speaker, Dr. York, Curator, Sherwin Miller Museum. Karen will speak about the Museum’s current exhibit, *Take My Wife Please.* RSVP to Falisha at 918.495.1100 by noon on July 24. Cost for the luncheon is $6.

**Congregation B’nai Emunah**

**Kids’ Shabbat** • Fri., July 13 • 6:15 p.m. Dinner • Join us for Kids’ Shabbat on Friday evening, July 13, with a sumptuous Shabbat dinner at 6:15 p.m., and Klay Kodesh service beginning at 7 p.m. Synagogue Friday evenings, designed to welcome the Sabbath, are perfect for people of all ages, seniors, young professionals, and families alike. Enjoy a delicious Shabbos meal prepared so you can relax and enjoy; then participate in a lively, spirited Shabbat service. Sharing with friends and family; the perfect way to begin Shabbat and the weekend.

**Tisha B’Av Service And Film** • Sat., July 28 • 9 p.m. • Tisha B’Av, observed this year on the evening – following Shabbat – of Saturday, July 28, and Sunday, July 29, commemorates the crises and cataclysms of Jewish history. In the traditional telling, the destructions of the Temples both took place on the 9th of Av, along with the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain. In a sober liturgy of storytelling, the fast day takes note of centuries of pogroms, persecutions and, with the advent of the 20th century, attempted genocide. The evening will begin with a short service of remembrance, including narratives from antiquity to modern times, followed by the film, “March of the Living,” at 9:30 p.m. This poignant film tells the story of the last generation of Holocaust survivors traveling to Poland, with thousands of teenagers from around the world. Please note, reservations are not required and there is no charge for the film or participation in the service.

**Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art**

**Exhibit – A Stitch in Jewish Time: Provocative Textiles** • Brodsky & Second Floor Exhibition Galleries • Now through August 28 • This exhibit explores how a variety of exceptional contemporary artists apply their skillful creativity to the ever-evolving understanding of Jewish values. The individual textiles address issues of memory and reflection, interpretations of history and ritual, and links between the past and present. In the realm of conceptual fine art, the approximately two dozen outstanding textiles in this show leave an indelible impression that expands our perception of contemporary art, and enhance our understanding of Jewish history, experience and values.

**Exhibit – “Take My Wife, Please” – Jewish Comedy in America** • Mezzanine Gallery • now through August 26 • Humor is a tradition in Jewish life. In honor of the role that Jewish comedy and comedians have played in the life of 20th century America, the Sherwin Miller Museum tells their stories in this original summer exhibition. “Take My Wife, Please,” Henry Youngman’s iconic catchphrase, is the title of the summer exhibit, representing the level of influence that shick has had on American life. Who could ever forget Groucho Marx and his eyebrows, the Three Stooges, or Mel Brooks? Come celebrate their contributions to our American life in this exhibit, and, bring your wife, please!

**A Stitch In Jewish Time Family Art Workshop** • Sun., July 15 • 1-2 p.m. • Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art • As part of the continuing series of programs for children and families that complement our exhibition series, please join us for this free, family-friendly art workshop for participants to create their own “Stitch in Jewish Time” bookmark. Please RSVP to 918.492.1818 to help us prepare materials, but walk-ins are always welcome!

**Temple Israel**

**Exciting Summer Education Series at Temple Israel!** • Temple’s Education Summer Series continues on Monday evenings in July. All sessions designated with * run from 7:30-9 p.m.

**Caregiver Lifelines Part 1** • Fri., July 6 • 7:30 p.m. • Sponseder by Temple Israel’s Sacred Aging committee, Caregiver Lifelines offers an opportunity during the Shabbat Oneg to visit with professionals who understand the issues and needs of our aging population and the caregivers. Information will be available on such issues as senior health insurance, illness, Dementia and Alzheimer’s, and Parkinson’s disease. Learn more about our own Miller Hospice and Tulsa Jewish Retirement and Health Care Center.

**An Evening with Maggie Anton** • Mon., July 8 • 7:30 p.m. • From the Middle Ages to today, the most respected commentaries on the Bible and Talmud are the interpretations of Rashi, a French rabbi. Less well known is his leadership in women’s rights. Rashi taught his three daughters the intricacies of the Talmud at a time when women were forbidden to study sacred texts. Jeheved, Miriam, and Rachel come alive in three deeply-researched novels by Maggie Anton. Ms. Anton will discuss her books via Skype, and there will be a question and answer period moderated by Temple Librarian Susan Woiotte.

**Election 2012 – Those Lazy Hazy Crazy Days of Summer: Hot Topics in Washington and on the Campaign Trail** • Mon., July 16 • 7:30 p.m. • Barbara Weinstein, Legislative Director of the Reform Movement’s Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C. since 2002, will discuss via Skype some of the major issues of concern to Jews in the forthcoming election. Questions/answer period to follow.

**Caregiver Lifelines Part 2** • Fri., July 20 • 7:30 p.m. • Caregiver Lifelines will continue with a panel discussion after services with an emphasis on the services offered for our elderly in Tulsa. Sponsored by Temple Israel’s Sacred Aging committee, this program is intended to enhance
our understanding by giving support to caregivers and the elderly. Concerns about mental and physical health will be covered.

*Inside The Temple Library • Mon., July 23 • 7:30 p.m. • Temple Librarian Susan Woitte will discuss how to find good books, the library’s online catalog, and available publications. We will have a discussion by Temple members on books they have checked out of the library and enjoyed.

*Women In Song: Women’s Contribution to Jewish Music featuring Cantor Kari and Joe Eglash • Mon., July 30 • 7:30 p.m. • Women have had a surprising and significant role in the history of Jewish music. From the Chazantes of the early 20th century, to the first officially ordained female cantor in 1975, to Debbie Friedman and beyond, we will look at how women have put their stamp on Jewish music, changing it forever.

Visit us online: jewishtulsa.org, tulsagogue.com, jewishmuseum.net, and templeturulsa.com, respectively.
we begin to fear those who represent us, become imprisoned and lose our freedom.

America was founded on democracy. What gives America the greatest strength is having every citizen, from all walks of life and cultures, informed on the issues that face our nation. These citizens then vote to ensure they are heard. Let us leave behind the apathy that has plagued our nation in recent decades and get back to the principles for which our founding fathers died; allowing all of our citizens representation in the laws that govern our country. If you don’t like the way our government is doing its job, it is your patriotic duty to tell them or vote them out of office.

As Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying: “They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” Don’t give into the fear and allow our government to take away any of our liberties. To refresh yourself on some of our basic liberties, check out the Bill of Rights, stay informed on what the government is doing, and exercise your freedom of speech to disagree with our government. It is not unpatriotic to provide constructive criticism on policies with which you disagree. It is the patriotic thing to do and your duty as a citizen. If anybody ever tells you your views are unpatriotic, remind them that exercising your freedom of speech is always patriotic!

(David Bernstein is the Community Relations/Social Services Director of the Jewish Federation of Tulsa.)

Jewish Enough?

by EDNA LAPIDOT, ISRAELI SHLICA

Yosi turned to me a few weeks ago and sighed in Hebrew... “It has been three consecutive days and we hadn’t had anyone over for dinner…” We find that our best way to connect to people, make friends and talk about Israel without inhibition is through our spontaneous-open-door policy, preferably around the dinner table. We enjoy hosting.

“I want to be a chef” said J.B., a recent guest, while I was warming up the cheese cake he made for dessert, “and I plan to own a restaurant”, he continued.

J.B. grew up in Tulsa, made Aliyah, served in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and returned to the U.S. to complete his studies in culinary school. If the warm, wild berry sauce that he poured over his cheese cake is any indication, I say he has a bright future.

J.B. was raised Jewish, though his mom never converted. He completed a Reform conversion before immigrating to Israel and also begun an Orthodox conversion with the IDF Rabbinate – a process which wasn't completed.

According to Orthodox Judaism, he is not considered Jewish.

“At this point, if I open my own kosher restaurant in Israel, I’ll never get a Certificate of Kashrut from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, unless I complete the Orthodox conversion. I won’t even be able to do as much as lighting the stove before Halachic-ly (in accordance with Jewish Orthodoxy) converting.”

J.B. is experiencing firsthand the unfortunate predicament which many Jews in Israel and beyond who belong to the liberal streams of Judaism face – the lack of separation between Religion (Church) and State and the total rule of the Rabbinate over Jewish law. The uproar over the conversion bill last year is only to mention the most recent crisis between world Jewry and Israel on the pluralism agenda. The problem that J.B. faces, to put it in simple terms – is that according to Orthodox Judaism, he is not considered Jewish. This of course, to the majority of American Jews and rael. Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, said, “that this decision has both practical and symbolic importance for it contributes significantly to the strengthening of the relationship between Diaspora Jews and Israel. The Jewish Agency”, he added, “sees this decision as a bridge and another step towards bringing unity to the Jewish people”.

Maybe J.B. will still need an Orthodox conversion in Israel to open his kosher restaurant, but it’ll happen at a time when the Reform and Conservative movements will be even stronger and more prominent in the delicate fabric of Israeli society. In any event, Yosi and I enjoyed having J.B. over for dinner and we wish him Behatzolah b’chol ma’ase yaday (much success in everything he does).

To read more about this legislative change in Israel go to haaretz.com.
WE’RE GOING TO OPEN UP WITH SOME Q&A...
THE A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, Q5 & Q7 TO BE EXACT. AND MORE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE CARS IN THE WORLD, AT THE NEW AUDI TULSA LOCATION AT 42ND AND MEMORIAL.
Jewish Federation of Tulsa Community Events at a Glance, July 2012

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