

## Rabbi Reflections "Love Overflowing"

By Rabbi Deborah Zecher



The final song in the Broadway show "The Wiz" is called "Home" and it says simply: "When I think of home, I think of a place where there's love overflowing."

Despite reports to the contrary, rabbis do not live in their synagogues but I know that most of us think of our sacred communities as a kind of home and we hope that the members of our congregations as well as visitors feel that way, too.

And at their best, we imagine our synagogues as places where everyone feels welcome and affirmed and where there's "love overflowing."

That image came to mind last month when Hevreh celebrated its thirteenth anniversary in our building on State Road. It's hard to believe that thirteen years have passed since that wonderful day in June 1999

when we marched through the streets of Great Barrington, Torah scrolls in hand.

Surrounded by many of you, representing every Jewish community in the Berkshires, we dedicated our new space and celebrated the construction of a new synagogue in South Berkshire County.

We love this place that celebrates both the history of the Jewish people and the glory of the Berkshires in its design. We revel in our sanctuary both in its quiet awe-filled majesty and the boisterous exuberance of children and adults engaged in play, study, and song.

We are grateful for this home, and conceived of this fall's celebration as a Binyan

Mitzvah, a kind of "building's bar mitzvah." It was a beautiful celebration, made even more meaningful for me since I also commemorated my twentieth year as a rabbi at Hevreh.

Learning, living, loving Judaism, the Jewish people and humanity – these are among our highest aspirations for all our synagogue communities.

Hevreh is the 'new kid on the block' of Berkshire synagogues; how much the more so for the cherished and venerable other congregations of our Berkshire Jewish community.

In 2014, Hevreh will celebrate its fortieth year as a congregation in Berkshire County but our other congregations – Temple Anshe Amunim, Congregation Kneset Israel, Congregation Ahavath Sholom, and Congregation Beth Israel – have long passed or will soon pass the century mark. Each of our beloved congregations has been a beacon of light and truth and the nobility of Jewish teaching for so many years, each one deserving of celebration and appreciation.

We live in a rapidly-changing world where we imagine Jewish life as reaching beyond the walls of our synagogue buildings but let us not forget the beauty of our sacred spaces, home to so many for so many years.

Reaching outward to embrace the needs and desires of our wonderful Jewish community, let us also celebrate these five sacred homes where indeed, we have created wondrous "places where there's love overflowing" – love of our people, our history and heritage, reverence for humanity, and love and caring and regard for each one of God's children.

Rabbi Deborah Zecher serves Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington.

## Traveling with Jewish Taste® Olives: The Fruit of the Torah and Israel

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



"And the dove came unto him at evening; and in her mouth was an olive leaf, freshly plucked; so Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth." (Genesis 8:11)

The olive tree and its products make many appearances in Jewish history and tradition. One of the best parts of travel in Israel is walking where our ancestors trod in the days of the Bible, seeing the actual sites of the well-known stories (although not the flood), many of which mention this fruit.

The first time we took our kids to Israel, we had a wonderful tour guide who also happened to have a master's degree in history. Yossi was a font of knowledge. As we drove through the Upper Galilee, he pointed out a

grove of ancient olive trees and told us that those were quite possibly the ones from which the olive oil came for the rededication of the Temple – the Hanukkah story. The kids were amazed.

In fact, olive trees can live for thousands of years, and they are among the oldest known cultivated trees in the world, having sprung up in wild form twenty million years ago, as fossilized remains attest.

The trees on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives are reputed to be over two-thousand years old. And, olives have been found in Egyptian tombs from 2000 BCE, keeping the pharaohs well fed in the afterlife.

Phoenician traders carried cultivated fruit trees from Israel and Syria throughout the Mediterranean, to Africa and Southern Europe. From there, the olive spread to the early Greeks and Romans, who then brought the olive with them on their conquests.

The Torah names the olive as one of the seven species in the Torah, and it is so revered that we even see the plant in a blessing: "Your wife will be like a fruitful vine deep within your house; your children like olive trees round about your table." (Psalm 128, Verse 3)

Given that Israel has the right conditions to encourage growth and health – perfect climate, two clear seasons, and water – it was natural for Jews living in the land to cultivate olives for oil, although they did not process the fruit as a food until the Second Temple period.

Olive products were a major part of the early economy in the Land of Israel, and the oil has been indispensable throughout history for lighting and cooking, as a curative, and as a nutritional supplement.

Olive oil could even be used as a form of currency in trade. In the Second Book of Kings (Chapter 4, Verses 1-7), the prophet Ovadiah's widow goes to the prophet Elisha to inform him that her sons will be taken due to her inability to pay her debts, and to ask for advice.

When asked what she has in the house, the woman tells Elisha that all she has is a vessel of olive oil. He then instructs the woman to gather as many vessels as she can from her neighbors, to fill every one with the oil from her house, and then to sell the oil.

The oil keeps flowing until all the vessels are filled, allowing her to save her sons from slavery and to make a living. Another miracle involving oil?

Olive oil was also essential for sacred purposes. It was used for anointing kings and high priests, as we see in several sources. In the Torah itself we read, "And he [Moses] poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to consecrate him." (Leviticus 8:12).



An olive grove in the Galilee



Both the emblems of the State of Israel and the Israel Defense Forces feature olive branches

In the Prophets we read that "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." (Samuel I, 16:13) Also in Prophets, "There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent, and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" (1 Kings 1:39)

Olive oil was the fuel for the golden lamps in both the Tabernacle in the desert and the Temple in Jerusalem, and it was part of various offerings, either by itself (Exodus 29:38-40) or mixed with flour into cakes (Leviticus 7:11-12).

And finally: the tree's bitter leaves contain a substance that is anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-protozoal, and anti-fungal. They were once used as a treatment for malaria.

In Isaiah (1:6) we read that olive oil was used for medicinal purposes. "From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they are not pressed out, or bound up, or softened with oil." (1:6 RSV)

While living in Jerusalem, I read Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Last Temptation of Christ* (I know, this is a Jewish newspaper, but bear with me for a moment).

One scene stands out in my memory to this day. Jesus plucks from a tree an olive the size of an apple and takes a bite from it. The author's imagery was so powerful that I could practically see Jesus sitting in the shade of the tree, the sun filtered through its silvery gray-green leaves.

JEWISH TASTE, continued on page 19

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**JEWISH TASTE**, *continued from page 2*

It made such an impression that I picked an olive (more the size of an, uh, olive) from one of the trees growing on King George Street. I took a bite. This was a big mistake. Unprocessed olives are hard and very bitter, nothing like what we buy in the supermarket.

However, today you can order buckets of olives on the internet and cure your own. My kids do it every fall, using various flavorings, including garlic and hot peppers. This year's shipment has just arrived in Chicago and is undergoing the weeks-long process as I write this column.

The olive branch has been a universal symbol of peace for thousands of years. In fact, the national emblem of the modern State of Israel consists of olive branches surrounding a menorah.

And, the symbol of the Israel Defense Forces is a sword wrapped by an olive branch, symbolizing the nation's quest for peace as it recognizes the need to be prepared to fight in self-defense.

*Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She recently launched the blog "Food for Thought," on her website at carolgoodmankaufman.com. She invites visits and comments.*

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**Olive Tapenade**

This wonderfully pungent spread makes a great hors d'oeuvre that will get gobbled up by your guests – if you don't eat it all before they arrive. The recipe is very simple, as long as you remember to buy pitted olives. (Even if you do, check them thoroughly so you don't break a tooth.)

**Ingredients:**

3 cloves garlic, peeled  
1 cup pitted Kalamata olives  
2 tablespoons capers  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
Freshly ground pepper to taste

**Directions:**

- Place the garlic cloves into a blender or food processor; pulse to mince.
- Add the olives, capers, parsley, lemon juice, and olive oil.
- Blend until everything is finely chopped, but not smooth. Leave some texture.
- Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Refrigerate overnight to let flavors meld.
- Serve on French bread or points alone or with a mild goat cheese or fresh mozzarella.

**Registration Open for Women's Mission**

The National Women's Philanthropy (NWP) of the Jewish Federations of North America has announced that registration is open for its third "Heart to Heart Mission" to Israel, February 2 to 8, 2013.

The mission is a unique and soul-searing journey designed to foster enduring bonds among the women of the federation movement, here, in Israel, and all over the world. Based in Tel Aviv, day trips will extend the experience within driving distance all over Israel including Jerusalem. Participants will have the opportunity to undertake meaningful site visits and witness first-hand the work that the Federation system is doing in Israel.

Together, mission-goers will shop for ingredients and participate in gourmet cooking demonstrations; meet new im-

migrants at Yvel's Andrea Bronfman School of Jewelry Making and participate in jewelry making workshops; tour an Israel Defense Forces base and participate in basic training; meet with artists in their studios; be invited into the homes of Israeli philanthropists; volunteer with Israeli women in hands-on service projects; and converse with Israeli women experts in security, high-tech, business, the arts, and politics.

Last year some one-hundred and fifty women formed lasting friendships through participation in "Heart to Heart."

For registration or further information, contact Alison Margulies Garber, Associate Director, National Women's Philanthropy [alison.garber@jewishfederations.org](mailto:alison.garber@jewishfederations.org).

**Federations Offer Joint Trip to Israel**

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, is offering a community trip to Israel to celebrate Israel's 65th birthday.

Scheduled to take place from April 15 to 24, the trip will include two days of touring in Tel Aviv; four days of exploring Jerusalem, including Shabbat; visits to Jaffa, Masada, the Dead Sea, the Ein Gedi region, the Golan Heights, the Afula/Gilboa region as well as Tsfat; and much more.

The trip will include visits to neighborhoods where Jews and Arabs reside, as well as a briefing on and observation of Jerusalem's security issues. A detailed itinerary can be found at [www.jfwmtravel.org](http://www.jfwmtravel.org) which outlines the arrangements for meals, group activities, and optional activities with links to points of interest for those seeking more information about the sites to be visited.

The trip is suitable for both first-time and returning visitors.

Pricing (land only, double occupancy) includes two options: \$2,500 per person for luxury four star accommodations; or, \$3,000 per person for luxury five star accommodations in each local.

Participants need to arrange their own travel to and from Israel. The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires is available to assist in this effort if there are persons interested in traveling as a group. The majority of meals are included in the price.

Subsidies are available, on a first-come, first served basis from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF) and the Jewish Endowment Foundation of Western Massachusetts (JEF). HGF grants to individuals are administered on a reimbursement basis. Individuals can apply for up to \$1,000 if they have not received HGF Israel subsidy funds in the last three years. The JEF will make available \$1,000 subsidies for first timers and \$500 for return visitors.

To date 110 western Massachusetts residents have signed up to participate. A brochure providing additional information is inserted in this paper.

A deposit of \$500 is required to reserve a spot. The remainder of the payment is due in March.

For further information, please contact Arlene D. Schiff, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires at (413) 442-4360, ext. 12 or [arlene.schiff@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:arlene.schiff@jewishberkshires.org)

**Margolis Family Fund Established**

Arlene D. Schiff, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, on behalf of Joel Margolis, Rachel Margolis, and Albert Stern recently announced the establishment of "The Margolis Family Fund for BRCA Gene Mutation Detection to Prevent Breast & Ovarian Cancers."

The fund is intended to function as a local resource for information, support, and financial assistance for families of all faiths in the Berkshire Community whose members may be appropriate for genetic testing, as well as individuals who may be preparing for or recovering from preventative medical intervention.

"BRCA1" and "BRCA2" are genetic mutations carried by both males and females that are the two major identified causes of inherited breast cancer.

Carrying these genes greatly heightens one's risk of breast and ovarian cancer. Knowledge of having one or more mutation, in advance of illness, has empowered

many women to bravely undergo the emotionally and physically difficult process of testing and preventative surgery that will allow them to remain healthy. Through the fund, the donors hope to share this sense of empowerment by providing information and support to Berkshire families.

The Federation will serve as a contact point for the Fund in addition to boosting awareness through educational programs and publicity through its publications.

It is currently making available to the community the educational booklet, *Your Jewish Genes: Hereditary Breast Cancer and Ovarian Cancer* published by Sharsheret, an organization that supports Jewish women and their families at every stage of breast and ovarian cancer.

For a copy of *Your Jewish Genes* or more information about The Margolis Family Fund, please contact Arlene D. Schiff at (413) 442-4360, ext. 12, or [arlene.schiff@jewishberkshires.org](mailto:arlene.schiff@jewishberkshires.org).

**Jewish Federation programs help women find employment and support themselves. ORT South Africa, which is supported by Jewish Federations, has established a Women's Empowerment Division to respond to the country's increasing divorce rate, the challenging economic times, and the large number of women on welfare. In its first six months of operation, the division has trained more than 200 vulnerable Jewish women in computer skills, financial and budgeting expertise, and motivation and goal-setting.**

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