Jewish Teaching on Abortion
by Rabbi Daniel Alder

Usually, in the July/August edition of this newsletter, I would speak about light matters and summer reading lists. However, the governor of Alabama recently signed a bill that criminalizes nearly all abortions, threatening providers with a felony conviction and up to 99 years in prison. It is one of numerous efforts across the United States to restrict access to abortion and challenge the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade that legalized abortion nationwide.

Six states have recently passed legislation that limits abortions to approximately six weeks after the end of a woman’s last period, before many know they are pregnant. Although the laws have not yet taken effect and several have been blocked on constitutional grounds, if enacted they would prohibit most abortions once a doctor can hear rhythmic electrical impulses in the developing fetus.

Called “fetal heartbeat” bills, they generally refer to the fetus as an “unborn human individual.” It is a strategic choice, trying to establish fetal personhood, but it also reveals assumptions about human life beginning at conception that are based on particular Christian teachings.

Traditional Jewish practice is based on careful reading of biblical and rabbinic teachings. The process yields “halakhah,” generally translated as “Jewish law” but deriving from the Hebrew root for walking a path. Even though most Jews do not feel bound by halakhah, the value it attaches to ongoing study and reasoned argument fundamentally shapes Jewish thought.

The majority of Jewish texts assert that a fetus does not attain the status of personhood until birth. Although the Hebrew Bible does not mention abortion, it does talk about miscarriage in Exodus 21:22-25. It imagines the case of men fighting, injuring a pregnant woman in the process. If she miscarries but suffers no additional injury the penalty is a fine. Since the death of a person would be murder or manslaughter, and carry a different penalty, most rabbinic sources deduce from these verses that a fetus has a different status.

An early, authoritative rabbinic work, the Mishnah, discusses the question of a woman in distress during labor. If her life is at risk, the fetus must be destroyed to save her. Once its head starts to emerge from the birth canal, however, it becomes a human life, or “neshamah.” At that point, according to Jewish law, one must try to save both mother and child. It prohibits setting aside one life for the sake of another.

Over the centuries, rabbis have addressed cases related to potentially deformed fetuses, pregnancy as the result of rape or adultery, and other heart-wrenching decisions that women and families have faced. In contemporary Jewish debate there are stringent opinions adopting the attitude that abortion is homicide—thus permissible only to save the mother’s life. And there are other lenient interpretations broadly expanding justifications based on women’s well-being.

According to the 2017 Pew survey, 83% of American Jews believe that abortions should be legal in all or most cases. All the non-orthodox movements have statements supporting reproductive rights, and even ultra-orthodox leaders have resisted anti-abortion measures that do not allow religious exceptions. This broad support reveals the Jewish commitment to the separation of religion and state in the United States, and a reluctance to legislate moral questions for everyone when there is much room for debate.

Seeking Ushers for the High Holidays!

Ushering during the High Holidays (and during Shabbat services) is a great contribution to the Synagogue and a great way to get to know our community better! Please volunteer for this important task at upcoming 5780 High Holy Day services by contacting our Ushers Committee co-Chairs Richard Breier (Richard.Breier@BreierGroup.com) or Sam Breier (Samuel.Breier@BreierGroup.com) and let them know at which service/s you would like to usher.
By the Book

This year we have been featuring members answering “By the Book” questions in order to get to know one another better and to encourage further reading. Member Jon Wertheim is the latest to answer in our series.

What books are on your nightstand?
Too many. I need a picnic table for a nightstand to accommodate reading material. Most are related to the book I’m writing at the moment* but I do have a collection of Anthony Lane movie reviews from the 90s that I picked out of a dumpster last week.

“One of the great ironies/pities of writing a book: there are these stabs of guilt that come with reading. “I shouldn’t be spending time losing myself in someone else’s work; I should be losing myself in my own!”

What was the last truly great book you read?
Say Nothing. Patrick Radden Keefe. Fantastic reporting and writing. History that reads like a gripping murder mystery. Really, a non-fiction triumph. I knew very little about the The Troub lers in Ireland, the book’s subject, and it didn’t slow me down much.

What’s your favorite Jewish book of all time?
Anything by Philip Roth. I know, I know. My wife—who reads more than I do, I should point out—is a devoted reader of the Israeli literary wise men. David Grossman, A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, Orly Castel-Bloom, etc. I read Horse Walks into a Bar recently by David Grossman. “Liked, not loved,” would be three-word review.

What’s your favorite thing to read? And what do you avoid reading?
Sadly perhaps, I read mostly non-fiction, mainly essays, social psychology and history books. It’s high-risk, high-reward but I like memoirs (especially media memoirs). I tend to avoid sci-fi.

What would be the most surprising to find on your shelf?
Books about Kabuki and theater. I’m working on a related story but I also am fascinated by Japanese culture. I did a 60 Minutes piece recently on the author John Green, so I have more Y.A. on my shelves than one reasonably might expect from someone in their late-40s.

Are you a rereader? What kinds of books do you find yourself returning to time and time again?
I am not a book rereader. I go back to essays by David Foster Wallace, Jan Morris, A.A. Gill. When I read I make markings in the margins so when I go back I reread particularly meaningful/funny/illuminating passages. But there are too many unread books out there, for me to go through anything twice.

What’s the last book that made you laugh?
I had the good fortune to get an advance copy of Taffy Brodesser-Akner’s Fleishman is in Trouble. It skewed a bit blue, but I laughed out loud.

What’s the last book that made you cry?
The Faults in Our Stars by John Green (I read it with my kids. “I’m not crying. You’re crying.”)

What’s the last book that made you furious?
Hillbilly Elegy. As someone from Southern Indiana, I picked this up with particular interest. I found it to be manipulative, a gross oversimplification, and a book that has not aged well in the Trump Era.

What kind of reader were you as a child?
Erratic. I would have to be led to water, but once there I would drink uninhibitedly. “You read something: anything!” That was the lament from my father, an English professor, when I was watching sports. I would respond, rebelliously I thought, by reading a sports book. But of course, The Natural or Ball Four or David Halberstam’s excellent Breaks of the Game is about sports, the way French cooking is about butter.

Who is your favorite fictional hero or heroine?
Rabbit Angstrom. Ignatius Reilly. Though I’m sure which is which.

You’re hosting a literary dinner party. Which three writers are invited?
Marina Hyde; A.A. Gill; John McPhee.

If you could meet any writer, dead or alive, who would it be? What would you want to know?
What would you want to know? Nora Ephron, and a very specific question—how did she make the turn from journalism/essays to screenwriting so gracefully?

Whom would you choose to write your life story?
My wife. She’s a great judge of character, has great insights and she knows me better than anyone ever could. And she writes with grace, whether or not she admits it.

Jon Wertheim is a sports journalist and author. He is currently a correspondent for 60 Minutes as well as the executive editor of Sports Illustrated. His next book, about the summer of 1984, will be published next year.

Shabbat Club

Summer Off and Save the Date!
Shabbat Club will next meet on Saturday, September 7, at our usual time of 1:00 pm. Our Shaliach (Israe lli emissary), Ophir Tal, will explain the upcoming Israeli election taking place on September 17 and he will lead a discussion on this unusual event in Israeli politics—a second election after the first one held this past April.
Shabbat Club will not be meeting during the months of July and August, but please contact Deborah Newman if you have a suggestion for a topic or discussion leader for the fall or winter meetings. Have a great summer!

Life Goes On

Life Goes On is a group for those of us who have lost a spouse or life partner and want to experience the beauty, joy, and opportunity that New York life offers surrounding by supportive friends who understand and share in the loss.
We lucked out with the weather and had a perfect afternoon for a wonderful tour of the Rambles in Central Park with our amazing guide, Steve Cohen. It was followed by dinner together at the excellent Arte Café near the park! A lovely afternoon and evening in very good company.
As usual, we will not have any pre-organized events during July and August; but do be on the lookout for a quick email invitation for a picnic dinner and a movie outdoors in one of New York City’s wonderful parks.
Seeking suggestions for fall activities and members who wish to run them! If you have an idea for an outing and/or would like to lead one, please email Aggie or Roberta!
If you or someone you know would like to be a part of Life Goes On, please come to our meetings—we would be happy to see you! If you have any questions, please call Agnes Marton at 917.519.4427 or e-mail her at Jagnaemarton@gmail.com or call Roberta in the Synagogue office at 212.674.5750, email rkahm@brotherhood synagogue.org.

Life Goes On
Tisha B’Av (the 9th day of the month of Av) marks the day when the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and also when the Romans burned down the Second Temple in 70 CE. To commemorate this sad day on the Jewish calendar, Tisha B’Av was designated a full fast day, although one is permitted to work.

On the evening of Tisha B’Av, Jews gather in the synagogue to hear the mournful chanting of the Biblical book of Lamentations (Eicha), an ancient dirge written by the prophet Jeremiah after the destruction of the First Temple. Congregants often sit on the floor of a darkened room like mourners. This year, Erev Tisha B’Av services will take place on Saturday, August 10 from 8:30 – 9:30 pm.

We will hold morning services for Tisha B’Av on Sunday, August 11 at 9:00 am and mincha/ma’ariv services (at which tallis and tefillin are worn) on Sunday evening at 7:30 pm followed by a light meal to break the fast.

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Welcome to Our New Trustees

Marla Gabay and her husband Daniel have been members of Brotherhood Synagogue since 2009. Marla grew up in a Reform congregation in Clearwater, Florida that was a second home since her naming. She was married by the same Rabbi that taught her Hebrew. She enjoys a matriarchal relationship to Judaism, having prepared for holidays with her grandmother, mother, sister, and now her children. Daniel is from New York City and attended Jewish day schools. Looking to balance their Sephardic/Askenazi and Conservador/Reform histories they found a home at Brotherhood and enrolled their first at child at the Nursery School joining this warm congregation. Sofia, a soon to be bat-mitzvah and Ben, who is in 3rd grade, are currently in the Hebrew school and have participated in the play. Sofia was most recently Kim McAfee in Bye Bye Birdie while Ben assisted with the sets as a stage hand. Marla was an enthusiastic usher while Daniel helped build the sets and sell refreshments. Their youngest child, Nina, is happily in the Red Room of the Nursery School.

Marla is on the Hebrew School Committee, is Co-President of the Nursery School Parents Association, and was the Co-Chair of the Nursery School’s 2019 Annual Benefit. It was a huge success and a fun party.

Marla and her family love the community at Brotherhood. From running booths at the Purim carnival to dancing with the Torah, from meeting old friends and greeting new, from early childhood classes to meaningful sermons, Brotherhood is truly a second home for this family.

Marla received her Bachelors degree in Sociology and English Literature from the University of Florida. Before having children, she started and later managed the NYS infant hearing screening program at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical Center for six years.

Daniel Neiden In a rich and varied thirty year career, Daniel Neiden has enjoyed bridging the gap between avant-garde and mainstream commercial theater, having worked side by side with the Tony-nominee, multiple Obie-winning Liz Swados for nearly ten years, as actor, creative consultant, and co-producer on more than a half dozen of her ventures. He has served as a consultant and fund-raiser for Nederlander Productions, bringing investors and creative input to several of James Nederlander’s various Broadway projects, including Sunset Boulevard. Daniel produced, directed, and co-wrote two sold out benefit performances at Symphony Space: Just Healthcare, honoring Michael Moore and featuring performances and readings by Pete Seeger, Tom Chapin, Michael Musto, and Carl Hancock Rux; and Silkwood Today with Meryl Streep, Mike Nichols and Ron Silver.

Neiden guest-lectured at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Theater Institute for more than ten years. His seminars proved so effective that he was chosen as the only non-institute past director to be invited to join the committee planning the direction of NTI. Currently, Daniel is composing new musicals with June Rachelson-Ospa, which include Imaginary Boy-A New American Musical, Stupid Wig, and Bollywood And Vine, and he is developing a new work based on letters of and about Raoul Wallenberg.

As a lay-cantor, Daniel has performed 800 weddings, funerals, and family simchas since 1985, directing all fees to various non-profit charities he supports, and he offers, fifteen years running, free High Holy Day services courtesy of St. John’s Lutheran Church on Christopher Street. He has served as a substitute cantor here at Brotherhood. Daniel is married to Irene and the father of two college students, Evan and Dora. He is originally from Lincoln, Nebraska.

Kenneth Salzman is an executive managing director and principal of Lee & Associates New York office. His professional experience is in commercial real estate tenant representation and contract negotiation.

Ken lives in Union Square with his wife, Lisa, and their children, Fraya, Noah and Sarah, who were each educated and celebrated their b’nai mitzvah at Brotherhood. Fraya is active in Jewish life at Cornell University, where Continued on page 7
July 6-12

July 13-19

July 20-26

July 27-August 2

August 3-9

Brotherhood Continues Tradition of Providing Transportation for Cemetery Visits

The Social Action Committee helps arrange cemetery visits for those who need transportation to area cemeteries in Long Island, Queens, Westchester, and New Jersey before the High Holidays. If you are in need of transportation and would like to travel to the cemetery with a member of the congregation, please call Manda in the office (212.674.5750) by September 13.

DRIVERS NEEDED! If you are able to perform the mitzvah of driving others to a cemetery and haven’t done so previously, please call the office and let Manda know you would like to volunteer.

The program was specifically requested to be undertaken at the urging of our founding rabbi, Rabbi Irving J. Block, and we honor his memory in the fulfillment of this mitzvah.

** Please note that Rosh Hashana begins this year on Sunday, September 29

Memorial Book Listings

If you have not yet returned the sheet indicating your entry in the Memorial Book distributed at the Yizkor service on Yom Kippur, kindly send it to the office now.

If you had a listing last year, please verify its accuracy and let us know if you would like to make any changes to this year’s edition. Those who have not listed in our Memorial Book in the past are asked to complete the form that was sent to you. Please call the office if you have any questions.

The Brotherhood Synagogue

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Fax: (212) 505-6707
www.brotherhoodsynagogue.org

RABBI DANIEL ALDER, CANTOR ISAAC YAGER,
RABBI IRVING J. BLOCK® D.D.: Founding Rabbi
HERMAN DIAMOND: Cantor Emeritus
TRACIE BASCH: President
PHILLIP ROTHMAN: Executive and Education Director

Congregation founded in 1954
Historic Landmark Building erected in 1859
The family of Aaron Joseph Hill, z”l, will hold a gravestone unveiling ceremony on Thursday afternoon, August 22nd at the cemetery of Ein Iron near Karkur, Israel. All are welcome. Contact the family via email at pjh@paulhillarchitects.com to obtain further information.

President’s Post
by Tracie Basch

As I sit and write this month’s column, the rains are coming down—as they have been every day for a while now. Eventually, I hope, the sun will come out and we will have summer—even if we didn’t really have a spring.

While it might seem like things are slowing down at Brotherhood in the months of July and August, that is far from the truth. Programming may not be as robust, but the building is a beehive of activity. Routine maintenance work (I know, not very exciting) is happening all the time—paint is being touched up, repairs are being made, things are being cleaned. All in the short time between when our school years end and the Holidays begin.

There are a few things that do continue during the summer months. Our Tuesday minyan still meets, so if you are in the neighborhood at 5:40 on a Tuesday, please stop by to help make a minyan so that those in mourning or with a yahrzeit can say Kaddish. We are also returning to our practice of having a different member each week address the congregation on Friday night. There is a great lineup this summer, so please don’t be a stranger.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who came and helped us celebrate Sam’s Bar Mitzvah. It meant a lot to our family to be surrounded by our Brotherhood family for such a momentous day.

Enjoy the summer months.

—Tracie

A Note from Development:

Just as we are enjoying those lazy, hazy days of summer, here at Brotherhood we are already busy preparing for the upcoming High Holy Days. The season brings moving services, festive meals, and family gatherings, and a time when we remember those who are no longer with us at the family table.

Brotherhood Synagogue offers several Memorial Gift opportunities to remember a loved one, friend or colleague while providing critical funds to further the mission of the Synagogue.

For a donation of $1,200 ($1,500 for nonmembers) you may have a name permanently etched on our Memorial Garden Wall.

For a donation of $1,200 ($1,500 for a nonmember) you may have a loved one’s name, along with the name of the person who is making the dedication, inscribed on a page in our Permanent Book of Remembrance which resides in the Sanctuary.

Your page will be exhibited in the Sanctuary every year on the yahrzeit of the person named.

For a donation of $1,000, you may have a seat plaque inscribed and affixed to a Seat in the Sanctuary.

Also, in advance of the Holy Days, we will be replanting and beautifying our Biblical Garden, dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Irving J. Block, z”l, his wife Phyllis S. Block, z”l, and our co-founders. Donations of any amount are welcome to assist us in our effort to restore the Garden to its original glory.

If you are interested in honoring a loved one by any of the options above, please contact me at 212-674-5750 or at mstrozak@brotherhoodsynagogue.org.

Wishing all a happy and safe summer. See you in September!

—Marilyn Strozak
Director of Development

The Chesed* Committee

WANTS YOU TO KNOW

Public health experts encourage people to have “in case of emergency” information available to first responders and hospital personnel so they know who to contact for you in a crisis, and to provide important medical information. The Chesed Committee has created convenient wallet cards—as well as larger notices that you can post in your home—to supply this information. Stop by the Synagogue office to pick up one of each and be better prepared for an emergency.

*The Chesed Committee provides help and compassion to Brotherhood members in times of need. Reach us at chesed@brotherhoodsynagogue.org or through the synagogue office.
Fall 2019 Early Childhood Programs (ECP) at Brotherhood
Are Filling Up Fast! Register Your Child/ren Now!

Early Childhood Programs at Brotherhood Synagogue help our community’s youngest children grow and flourish in an atmosphere where Jewish values and traditions are integrated into all of our classes. Cognitive skills and social, emotional, and physical development are encouraged through music, movement, theater arts, storytelling, learning activities, play, and arts & crafts with a special focus on Shabbat & Jewish holidays.

We offer the following classes:

- **Baby** (3–12 mos)
- **Pre-Toddler** (12-18 mos)
- **Toddler** (18 mos-3 yrs)
- **Thursday Corner** (3-5)
- **Shabbat Corner** (3-5)

Class sizes are limited and filled on a first come, first served basis.

Please visit the Early Childhood Programs page on the Brotherhood website to register and contact Roberta (rkahn@brotherhoodsynagogue.org / 212.674.5750) if you have any questions.

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YAHZEI-ETS, continued from page 5

*Bella Shaffer, ^David Shapiro, Hilde Sigal, ^Minnie Signer, ^Mark L. Silverman, ^Noah Simring, ^Jerry Solomon, Seymour Spira, ^Julius J. Stein, ^Lena Tevelow, *Gertrude Unterweiser, *Gertrude Wächter, ^Robert J. Ward, ^Muriel Winicki, Paula Yassy*

August 10-16


August 17-23


August 24-30


August 31-September 6


NEW TRUSTEES, continued from page 4

S of some of the best learning experiences I had as a cantorial student were the opportunities that allowed me to put theory into practice and apply the education I received in my classroom into the real world. I’m grateful to be in a position to facilitate what I hope will be equally beneficial experiences and extend a warm welcome to JTS cantorial student Mira Davis:

Mira Davis is a current student in the H. L. Miller cantorial school at the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is also serving as the Cantorial intern at Congregation B’nai Amoona in St. Louis. Mira recently graduated from Columbia University where she majored in music, with a specialty in vocal performance. Mira was interested in music and theatre from an early age. She joined her first choir at her synagogue, Congregation Agudath Israel in Caldwell, NJ, when she was six years old. Mira was also in the choir at her high school and was a member of HaZamir: The International Jewish Teen Choir, as well as their chamber choir.

While at Columbia, she joined two Jewish choirs in New York: Zamir Chorale and Zamir Noded. She currently serves as conductor of the HaZamir preparatory choir on Long Island. She has sung solo at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and on the Metropolitan Opera stage.

Mira is very much looking forward to being a part of the Brotherhood Synagogue community.

Starting this fall, Mira will serve as Brotherhood’s cantorial intern where she will help lead synagogue services, teach both nursery school and b’nei mitzvah students, as well as assist with our congregational choir Harmoni-AH! This is especially fortuitous timing as Meredith and I are expecting a new choir member to arrive this November.

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By Cantor Isaac Yager
Dear Members:
Please tell your friends, family, and colleagues about Brotherhood’s open house on Wednesday, September 11!

Please join us!
at Brotherhood Synagogue’s upcoming Open House for Prospective Members

If you’ve been thinking about joining a downtown congregation, please come to an
Open House at Brotherhood Synagogue
to learn more!
Wednesday, September 11 • 6:00-7:00 pm

Our warm and welcoming synagogue offers schools for kids, classes for adults, engaging programming, and a socially progressive membership.

We can’t help but think you’ll love what you experience and that Brotherhood Synagogue might be exactly the synagogue you’ve been looking for!