



# Tree of Life Shooter to face the Death Penalty

**D**espite the urging of many of the congregants, federal prosecutors will seek the death penalty for alleged Tree of Life Synagogue Shooter, Robert D. Bowers (46). Facing 63 federal charges, prosecutors cited Bowers' motivations for attacking the synagogue



Synagogue shooting suspect, Robert D. Bowers

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during Shabbat services and noted his lack of remorse in the face of his actions for their decision. According to prosecutors, Bowers entered the Tree of life Synagogue on Shabbat morning, with the sole intention of killing innocent people – simply because they were Jewish. Prosecutors contend Bowers, “targeted men and women participating in Jewish religious worship at the Tree of Life Synagogue, located in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood



*Judy Clarke has defended several high profile murder defendants including, Eric Rudolph, Ted Kaczynski and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.*

of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is home to one of the largest and oldest urban Jewish populations in the United States, in order to maximize the devastation, amplify the harm of his crimes, and instill fear within the local, national and international Jewish communities.”

The announcement came barely a month after Attorney General William P. Barr ordered the resumption of federal executions in July. There has not been a federal execution in the U.S. since 2003. In light of the Barr announcement five death row inmates are scheduled to be executed. Daniel Lewis Lee is scheduled to die on December 9, 2019; Lezmond Mitchell, December 11; Wesley Ira Purkey, December 13; Alfred Bourgeois, January 13, 2020; Dustin Lee Honken, January 15, 2020. Sentenced to death but not yet scheduled for execution are Dylann S. Roof, the white supremacist who slaughtered nine African –American worshipers in South Carolina’s Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, and convicted Boston Marathon bomber, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who along with his older brother, Tamerlan Tsarnaev, planted a pressure cooker bomb near the finish line of the marathon,

killing three and injuring 280 others.

According to a recent CBS report, Tree of Life Synagogue congregants have opposing views on the application of the death penalty, should Bowers be convicted. According to the report, Joe Charny and Barry Werber were both present on that horrible day; they both witnessed their friends and fellow congregants callously murdered; yet they have different views on how it should be handled. Charny believes “His (Bowers) survival is an affront.” Werber, however, had a more nuanced take on the topic, He said, “If it was carried out immediately I’m all for it. But it will hang on, and hang on and hang on.” He (Werber) believes as the case drags on through the appeals process it would be like scraping the scab off of a sore, exposing the wound and reliving the pain again and again. For Werber, “I would much prefer he be put away in a deep dark hole and we forget about him.” Charny countered, “Allowing the shooter to live out his days in a cell is unacceptable. I don’t think it’s okay; I think there’s a price for this.”

However, not all Tree of Life congregants felt the same. Miri Rabinowitz, whose husband, Jerry was killed in the attack, wrote to Attorney General Barr imploring him not to seek the death penalty. In her eyes, it just makes no sense to me.” Another rabbi, who lost congregants in the attack, also wrote to Barr opposing the death penalty, calling it, “a cruel form of justice.”

Bowers allegedly walked into the Tree of Life Synagogue wielding an AK-15 automatic assault rifle and just started shooting people, all the while spewing anti-Semitic slurs at his intended victims. Bowers is being represented by

## **Congregation Ahavas Sholom**

**President – Eric Freedman  
Rabbi Simon Rosenbach  
Cantor – Fred Grabiner  
Webmaster – Jeff Haveson  
Scroll Editor – Bezalel Tim Lee**



defense attorney Judy Clarke. Clarke is an American criminal defense attorney who has represented several high-profile defendants including, Eric Rudolph, Ted Kaczynski, aka the Unabomber, and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. She has negotiated numerous plea agreements that have ultimately spared her clients the death penalty. Bowers ~~has~~ pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

*Marvin Podnos, brother of our, friend and member Allan Podnos, passed away on August 25, 2019, 24 Av, 5779. Shivah will be at the home of Allan and Joan Podnos, 18 Davey Drive, West Orange, Wednesday and Thursday (August 28 and 29) from 2-4 pm and also from 6-8 pm. There will be Ma'ariv services at 7:45 p.m. We say to the family, Hamakom y'nechem etchem b'toch sh'ar avelei tzion virushalayim.*



**Fred and Linda Grabiner have a 10 x 12 sukkah they're looking to dispose of; interested parties should contact Rabbi Rosenbach at 908-591-4037**

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# SIMON

# SAYS

## Thought Provoking Insights from Rabbi Simon Rosenbach



*Rabbi Simon Rosenbach*

**R**are is the world black and white. Today, the news broke that the Inspector General of the Justice Department (an Obama appointee) harshly criticized the former director of the FBI, James Comey, for leaking his memos recounting his meetings with President Trump.

Comey leaked these memos specifically to create a climate that would lead to the appointment of a special prosecutor.

In the New York Times, which I read on-line five days a week, the editors post comments about selected articles. In the print edition, a given article may draw five letters to the editor, but in the on-line edition, a given article may draw 2500 comments. At the time I write this column, there were 1138 comments posted about the inspector general's blistering criticism.

The commentators are divided into two camps. In one camp are the people who believe that Comey was a patriot, and leaked those memos so that the rest of us could discover how rotten the President was. In the other camp are the people who believe that Comey broke the law and was a scoundrel, because no cause is worth breaking the law.

In this week's Torah portion, Re'eh, the Torah takes the opposite approach. Moses tells the assemble Children of Israel that they have a black and white choice: blessing, or curse. If they follow God's commandments, they will be blessed, and if they don't follow God's commandments, they will be cursed. The choice is stark.

Maybe Moses made the choice so stark as a negotiating tool. If we want to sell a dress for \$30 in the market, you don't price the dress at \$30; you price the dress at \$60. Probably Moses knew that Israelites

***“Moses tells the assemble Children of Israel that they have a black and white choice: blessing, or curse.”***

wouldn't be able to follow all of the commandments all of the time, but Moses posed a black-and-white choice so he could eventually sell the dress at \$30. The price offered to the Israelites was the black-and-white price of \$60, but Moses would have been happy at the \$30 price: the Israelites would follow most of the commandments most of the time.

Sometimes, however, we need to act as though we live in a black and white world. Sometimes, we act

on principle, even though we know that our position isn't going to prevail, because it is the right thing to do. Maybe Moses spoke on principle, and he didn't care what the people thought. If Moses enunciated a principled pronouncement, maybe enough of the people would follow enough commandments enough of the time.

Moses' three-day speech to the Israelites assembled on the banks of the Jordan River, was his last-ditch effort. He knew that he would die soon, and he knew that they Israelites would be dispersed all over Canaan. He painted the world in black and white because he truly believed that if the Israelites saw the world in shades of gray, they would lose their identity and they would vanish into the arms of the surrounding peoples. If Moses pictured a world in shades of gray, the picture would have lived their lives in shades of pale white, and the future of the Israelite nation would be lost. Accordingly, Moses painted the world in black and white. And you know what? We are still here 2600 (or 3400) years later. ✡



## Help Us Remodel Our Kitchen

It's been estimated it will take \$60,000 to properly renovate our kitchen.

April Modlinger, who has always been a pillar at Congregation Ahavas Sholom, has generously pledged \$10,000 to making this happen.

We have recently received another pledge for \$2,200, bringing the total to \$12,200.

With your help Congregation Ahavas Sholom will soon have a kitchen we all deserve.

**Make your pledge today!**

# Kenneth Bialkin, Jewish Leader, philanthropist has died.

**F**ormer ADL leader, Kenneth Bialkin died this week. Bialkin, the former national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) passed away at the age of 89. An ardent Republican and strong supporter of Israel, Bialkin has worked with a multitude of Jewish organizations during his long and illustrious life, including chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, he served as chairman of the America-Israel Friendship League (AIFL), the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, the Republican Jewish Coalition, the Jerusalem Foundation, and the American Jewish Historical Society. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, described Bialkin as, "a true friend of the State of Israel." Consul General of Israel, Dani Dayan tweeted, "Deeply saddened by the passing of Kenneth Bialkin, an outstanding Jewish leader dedicated to the future of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. We are with Ann and his daughters in this sad moment." Dan Gillerman, a former Israeli ambassador at the United Nations, called Bialkin "the best friend Israel could ever wish for." The AIFL also released a statement, "The Board of Directors and Staff of the America-Israel Friendship League, mourns the loss of its longtime champion and past Chairman, Kenneth J. Bialkin.

Bialkin's support of right-wing candidates and politics was not without drama; in 2016, as a board member of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Bialkin infamously commented that, then candidate Trump's comments about groping girls did not disqualify him from being President.

In his professional life Bialkin was a long-time senior partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate Meagher and Flom, a New York based law firm with an impressive roster of Fortune 500 clients. He was greatly responsible for bringing Wall Street money to Israeli based companies.



*Attorney, Kenneth Bialkin*

Bialkin is survived by his wife, Anne, daughters, Lisa and Johanna and two grandsons, Gideon and Samuel. ✨

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## Rosemary Breadsticks



We tend to talk a lot about comfort foods; you know those foods that seemingly massage our souls and sense of well-being just when we need it most. They're not fancy necessarily--there's no need; after all, there's no purpose in putting on airs when exploring this corner of the culinary world. When it comes to comfort foods, the simpler the better is the standard; and bread (or in this case bread sticks) is the ultimate comfort food.

### Ingredients

1/4 cup warm water  
¼ ounce of dry yeast (1 package)  
¾ cup whole wheat flour  
1-1/2 teaspoons rosemary, fresh  
1 teaspoon salt  
¾ cup cold water  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
Pinch of cornmeal  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
A pinch of salt  
A pinch of kosher salt, & sesame seeds

### Directions

Combine water, yeast and sugar in a large bowl; let stand for 5 minutes.

Pour the flour, whole wheat flour, rosemary, and salt in a food processor fitted with a dough blade and pulse for 5 seconds.

Stir water and oil into the yeast mixture.

Pour combined ingredients into the food processor

Mix yeast mixture and wet ingredients and process until the dough forms a ball. Add extra flour 1 tablespoon at a time, if required.

Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl; cover and let rise for 1-1/2 hrs.

Divide dough into half.

Roll each half into a 12- inch log

Cut each log into 1-inch pieces

Roll each piece into a log and fold in half.

Twist log and place on a lightly greased baking sheet.

Sprinkle with corn meal and let rise another 15 min.

Preheat oven to 300°.

Combine egg whites with a pinch of salt and brush over breadsticks.

Sprinkle with kosher salt and sesame seeds.

Bake for 30 minutes; then increase the temperature to

375° and bake an additional 5 minutes.

For variety, you can substitute poppy seeds for the sesame seeds. You can also experiment with different herbs to find the one that especially sings to your palate.



# Hillel International Receives Grant to further fight against sexual harassment and gender inequality

*The Safety Respect Equity Coalition awards Hillel International a capacity-building grant to support its organizational-wide efforts to offer fairness to women.*



WASHINGTON - In recognition of its commitment to address sexual harassment and gender inequity, Hillel International has been awarded a capacity-building grant from the Safety Respect Equity (SRE) Coalition. The grant aims to further Hillel's work in creating lasting systematic and cultural change for professionals, volunteer leaders and students. "Hillel International has demonstrated a deep commitment to the coalition's work over the past 18 months, including the implementation of comprehensive standards in sexual harassment prevention and response and gender equity and empowerment," said Kari Saratovsky, a project lead for the SRE Coalition. "We are pleased to support their continuing efforts and look forward to seeing Hillel use these funds to further develop and implement best practices across even more campuses."

The SRE Coalition, formed in 2018, brings together organizations, funders, individuals and experts across the Jewish non-profit sector in a commitment to make all Jewish workplaces and communal spaces safe, respectful and equitable. Since joining the coalition as an organizational leader, Hillel International has increased its collaboration with expert partners and local Hillel professionals and boards of directors to implement workplace standards in sexual harassment prevention and response.

Through the creation of Hillel's Safety Respect Equity Task Force, Hillel International has updated its sexual harassment policy and complaint process, as well as adopted a new Board of Directors Code of Ethics.



With these new policies and procedures in place, designated staff members and lay leaders are working closely with local Hillels to ensure implemented policies meet state and federal law, as well as the commitment's standards.

In collaboration with expert partners like Sacred Spaces, Hillel International staff members have been trained in appropriately managing sexual assault and harassment investigations, and are continuing to develop response protocols tailored for local Hillels and their unique organizational needs. To better prepare professionals in reporting incidents of sexual harassment, and to support local Hillels in developing their own guidelines, a robust resource library of essential policies, procedures and best practices has been made available on Hillel International's

employee intranet, as well as on [www.hillel.org/safety](http://www.hillel.org/safety). With the support of SRE's capacity-building grant, Hillel has announced a goal of reaching full organizational-wide participation in respectful workplace trainings. These trainings, which are aimed to give professionals a better understanding about the behaviors and words that generate workplace respect, will be led by certified Hillel professionals and offered online and in-person across the country beginning this summer.

"As a director, these trainings will help demonstrate a commitment to ensuring a respectful workplace for our team, while also empowering our professionals to know how to respond when issues do arise that need to be addressed," said Tilly Shames, executive director

at Michigan Hillel. "In the end, we all benefit, including our students, who will see us as a model of a workplace environment they would like for themselves when they are ready to enter the professional world."

Hillel's influence in this space also includes analyzing equity in organizational-wide pay and professional leadership. In partnership with Ellen Konar, an expert in data science and an adviser to the Women in the Workplace 2018 report, Hillel is undergoing a comprehensive regression study of compensation data across positions. The study, along with mandatory bias training for all hiring managers, is part of Hillel's ongoing efforts to revamp hiring practices and educate and ensure equal pay for professionals. ✨

# University exhibit highlights the depth and breadth of the Jewish People

An exhibit recently opened at Binghamton University's Glenn G. Bartle Library. The exhibit, "We are not a monolith: Diversity in the Jewish Population," is an exploration and celebration of diversity within the Jewish community. The exhibit features images of celebrities, athletes, musicians, artists, and other notable figures who are Jewish; yet stem from a multitude of backgrounds, races and ethnic makeups. The exhibit is the brainchild of Joshua Lindenbaum, a 19-year-old Ph.D. candidate at Binghamton University. Lindenbaum, who has experienced anti-Semitism first hand on several occasions, wanted to dispel the stereotypes and myths about Jews that many people accept without question. He lamented the realization that many, who looked at him, didn't actually see him at all; but, a caricature of whom or what he represented. He was further shaken by the attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue and the rise of anti-Semitic incidences over the last year. Lindenbaum's main goal for pursuing the exhibit was to show the diversity [among] the Jewish people and combat false narratives and stereotypes that

people have about Jews. Lindenbaum pointed out faulty views about any people can have disastrous consequences. He wanted to demonstrate one cannot pin down the Jewish people with a single narrative; that there are Jews of all different races, nationalities, ideologies."

He insisted "This is not just for Jewish people," in his mission statement Lindenbaum wrote, "I'm hoping that if a person can re-evaluate his or her false conceptions about the Jewish people, he or she then can also revisit their stereotypes of other people, thereby, perhaps, getting them to question false narratives and leading to more peace in the world." While not laboring under any illusion, Lindenbaum has high hopes for the exhibit saying, "An [exhibition] is not going to end anti-Semitism or racism; however, if I can get just one person to question an [ignorantly held] belief, then I have done my part in materializing Tikkun Olam, to heal the world."

We are not a Monolith: Diversity in the Jewish Population is scheduled to run until the Fall of 2020

## ‘Sacred Stories as Metaphor’: A Modern Retelling of Biblical Stories

*By Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg, Courtesy of the author*

My novel, *The Nine*, will be published on August 20, and as with my debut, *Eden*, I took inspiration from the Torah in writing it not in literal terms, but using our sacred stories as metaphor. I don't write in an ancient setting, but in a modern one. I am a believer that the themes in our ancient text continue to repeat themselves to this day, and in that I find some comfort, as well as resignation, toward what it means to be human. Judaism provides a beautiful structure for continued learning and study of text. I've participated in many classes at Temple Israel Boston, including Modern Midrash with Rabbi Elaine Zecher. Not only do the students around the table discuss the many stories in the Tanakh, we point out what's missing; often times the gaps and voids relate to the woman's point of view. One question that really reared its head for me was regarding the story of Hannah. She was barren and wanted a child terribly. When she went to the temple, she prayed with such fervor that the priest assumed she was drunk. She eventually bore a son and named him Samuel, meaning "I asked the Lord for him." When she was praying to God, however, she vowed that once her son was weaned she would turn him over to the priest at the temple.

I was consumed by what Hannah's emotions must have been during this period, having wanted a child so badly and only to hold him for such a short period of time. As she had promised God she turned her son over, to the very priest who rebuked her — to me it seemed like the ultimate sacrifice. Perhaps this story struck me so because I studied it at a time when I was also turning my



*Novelist Jeanne McWilliams Blasberg*

own son over to the world. He was fourteen, but still, in a modern context fourteen is just barely weaned! I was turning this son over not to a temple, but to an academy; not to a priest, but to a headmaster. The institution might've been different, but I was putting my trust in a person, a man, an authority figure, and I had to take a lot on faith.

I also thought about Hannah in relation to all women, who are ultimately valued in terms of fertility, their ability to bear children, and eventually by how righteous their children turn out to be. I thought about Hannah as an early portrayal of a mother who had to say goodbye to her son after what is inevitably too short a period of time and is nevertheless judged by



her son's actions.

I took it one step further outside the Midrash class. I turned her into a contemporary fictional character who was a well-meaning, hardworking woman, from a modest background, who overcame infertility and gave birth

***We point out what's missing; often times the gaps and voids relate to the woman's point of view.***

to a son. She makes him her career. She has great plans, intending to launch him toward even greater endeavors. You might call her a helicopter mom, but she's not a bad person — as that connotation often invokes. She is just very determined that things will go a certain way. She is a believer in hard work, study, and earnestness and consequently being rewarded for those traits.

When her son arrives at the revered institution, he gets caught up in a whole new world. She is under the impression he's going to live out her Ivy League hopes and dreams, but he gets wrapped up in a secret society and a fast moving crowd. He uncovers a crime, and is more concerned with doing the right thing and solving

the mystery than fulfilling his mother's collegiate aspirations.

I really enjoyed writing this coming of age, campus novel, with a strong maternal point of view. It can be frustrating to read Hannah's character, but in the end many readers have compassion for her and understand she only wants what's best.

I want readers to learn Hannah's lesson without having to make the same mistakes she did. It is said one can summarize the Torah while standing on one foot with the simple phrase, "Love thy Neighbor." What Hannah learns at the end of *The Nine* is that all the parenting gospels that once lined her book-shelves could be summarized similarly — it all comes down to love.

Love your child, but also love yourself. Don't use a son or any child to fill your own emptiness. Parenting is over in a minute, just appreciate the miracle of their being. ✨

*After graduating from Smith College, Jeanne embarked on a career in finance. After stops on Wall Street, Macy's, and Harvard Business School, Jeanne finally became a writer. An only child, she grew up with imaginary friends, making her well-suited for a career in fiction. Jeanne's novels focus on mothers and children, specifically the drama that arises when societal pressure conflicts with maternal instinct.*

## Israeli Judo athlete wins the Gold



*Gold Medal winner, Sagi Muki*

✪ Israeli athlete, Sagi Muki, won the gold medal at the World Judo Championship finals in Tokyo Japan on Wednesday. Muki, who competed in the men's under-81 kilogram weight class, won the championship with a

victory over Belgian opponent, Matthias Casse. He made the finals after defeating Egyptian opponent Mohamed Abdelaziz in a hard fought semi-final match. The victory makes Muki the first male Israeli athlete to be named world champion – Yarden Jarbi became the first female athlete to win the gold when she won the World Judo Championship in Rio de Janeiro (women's under-63 kilogram weight class) in 2013.

The competition was not without its controversy; when Muki defeated Mohamed Abdelaziz in the semifinal matchup, the loser, choosing to forego any semblance of good sportsmanship, refused to shake Muki's hand. In an interview, after his victory, Muki said he felt privileged to have competed, and was happy to see the large number of fellow Israelis who had come to support him. ✨

# Kiddush Sponsorship Shabbat Services

**L**ast Week's Kiddush was sponsored by Shira Hallel, in honor of Lillian Bookman.

Sponsoring Kiddush is \$150.00, which barely covers the cost of the lunch. Our goal is to have every Kiddush sponsored. To sponsor a Kiddush email Rabbi Rosenbach or contact Allah Eicheldinger at [alla7815@yahoo.com](mailto:alla7815@yahoo.com). You can also help by shopping; which doesn't cost money, just a little time. We'll give you a list of items, you shop and we'll reimburse you. Whatever you can do will be appreciated, greatly.

**J**oin us at Ahavas Sholom this Saturday for Shabbat services. Strangers, visitors; friends - old & new - our doors are open to you. Looking for a new home? New members are always welcome at Congregation Ahavas Sholom. Shabbat services start at 9:00am. Our congregation is open and welcoming; feel free to pay us a visit, anytime.



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