Building our Sukkot, Rebuilding Ourselves

Sukkot

By Deborah Skolnick Einhorn, Ph.D.
Hebrew College Associate Dean for Academic Development and Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

As a shul-goer and parent (and as a grocery shopper), I spend a lot of the fall wondering why the hagim come so fast and furious. They are relentless, with days off of school and work, seemingly limitless preparation and/or travel, and practically daily trips to the store.

The quickest, most whiplash-inducing turnaround, of course, comes between Yom Kippur and Sukkot, with only four days intervening. More dramatic even than the lack of time between is the intense physical and emotional shift demanded of us. Depleted from a 25 hour fast, we are urged to
immediately — after a quick refueling — begin building our sukkah. So basically, “don’t eat for a day, then build a new house.” In the dark. This ideal, of going directly from one mitzvah to the next, only adds to the frenetic fall feeling.

But as a true believer in the wisdom of Jewish tradition, I wanted to interrogate the proximity and pace of these hagim before just complaining about it again this year. So, what if we generously assume for this exercise that the fall hagim are actually strategically positioned on the calendar? What if their sequence and pace is a message in and of itself?

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Finding Mussar through Hebrew College Open Circle

By Rick Thau

A few years back, I was looking up a friend from college who had become a rabbi and whose name had come up in a conversation. His bio said that he had been studying this thing called “Mussar” daily for several years.

I had done a lot of Jewish learning, but had never heard of Mussar. I looked it up, but left it at that.

A week or two later, my wife and I were in the Berkshires and entered a store with considerable Judaica. There, right in front of the checkout counter, were several stacks of Every Day, Holy Day, one of the key works by Alan Morinis, the founder of the Mussar Institute and one of the leaders of the Mussar resurgence.

Coincidence? Message? Who knows. What I do know is that I bought the book and quickly became intrigued. I read it nightly — sometimes with my wife — and bought other books by Morinis. Then I asked Terri Swartz Russell, Temple Emanuel’s director of Adult and Family Education, to see if she could find a course for our shul.

Terri brought in Rabbi David Jaffe, one of the foremost Mussar teachers in North America and, with eight other learners, I began learning Mussar through Hebrew College Open Circle Jewish Learning. We have now met every other week for the past two years. In between sessions, we meet for one-on-one sessions with a chevruta, or study partner, from the class.

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OCTOBER

Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab’18 for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Occurs monthly. Supported by the Hebrew College Innovation Lab.

October 26 | 10 am -12 pm
Hebrew College
Learn more

NOVEMBER

Blossoming: The 2019 Hebrew College Jewish Education Conference

November 11-12
Hebrew College
Learn more

A New Hasidism: Study, Reflection, Celebration

Celebrate the publication of Hebrew College Rector Rabbi Art Green’s and Dr. Ariel Mayse’s new work on the history, development, and contemporary practice of Neo-Hasidism.

November 3 | 2 - 8 pm
Hebrew College
Learn more and RSVP

HEBREW AT THE CENTER

Digital Pedagogy for Literacy: The Hebrew Class of the Future

Webinar and independent study for Hebrew teachers, offered jointly by Hebrew College & Hebrew at the Center

October 28 | Online
Register

DECEMBER

70th Birthday Tribute to Rabbi Allan Lehmann

December 5 | 7 pm
Hebrew College
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Hebrew College Faculty Fall Speaking Engagements

Hebrew College faculty members speak and teach at synagogues, conferences, and institutions throughout Greater Boston, North America, and beyond this fall.

View the speaking schedule

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to share the news of the passing of Dr. Seymorf Schiff, Prz’48. Dr. Schiff went to Yeshiva University and New York University Dental School and worked as a dentist in the Boston area until moving to New Jersey in 2011. He is survived by his wife Judy ‘56, Prz’53, who worked as a librarian at Hebrew College in the Brookline building, as well as a daughter and three sons. The Hebrew College community extends heartfelt condolences to the Schiff family. May they be comforted among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Please email us if you would like us to share the loss of a loved one with the Hebrew College community. To make a gift to Hebrew College in memory or in honor of a beloved member of the Hebrew College extended community, please visit our website.

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