

# OHR L'NAORRR

## Newsletter of the National Association of Retired Reform Rabbis

### Past or Present?



I was recently asked to present a lecture on the subject "How to Read and Understand the Hebrew Lettering on a Jewish Tombstone." After joking that it would be a "deadly meeting," I began some research. Having been involved with funerals and tombstone dedications for over fifty-five years, I thought it would be a breeze. After all, set ma

the audience was the Jewish Special Interest Group of the Genealogical Society of St. Louis.

Then I began to think of the significance of this lecture to my own life.

Since my retirement, it seems that I am asked to officiate at many more funerals than weddings. Add to this that for some years after my retirement, my wonderful successor, Jim Bennett, invited me to offer the sermon at the Yom Kippur Yizkor service.

This led to my children to jokingly call me "The Death Rabbi." When I was young I thought that all people over sixty were probably focused on their imminent death. I was looking forward to a long life until I reached that stage.

But I haven't reached that stage yet! In fact, as the years fly by and I've lost so many relatives and good friends, I cherish each day more and more. I'm more alive than ever. I believe NAORRR was created precisely as a place where our rabbinic lives are cherished and enriched

Yes, we are a bunch of older rabbis, closer to the time of our death than our birth. But we still cherish our rabbinic friends, our sense of chavruta, and our need to refresh ourselves through study and companionship. When we come together, we remember our deceased colleagues. But we spend most of our time in lectures, workshops, and socializing over food—living in the present, and looking towards the future. We aren't involved in that many b'nai mitzvah luncheons or wedding receptions anymore (baruch Hashem!). But when we come together for meals at our conventions, the discussions are lively, the memories vivid, life's challenges openly embraced. We renew ourselves and each other. I'll therefore lecture about the Hebrew on tombstones, not to be morose, but to continue to teach, to enable others to come closer to our heritage, and to give thanks each day for my continuing joy in teaching.

NAORRR helps us to continue the journey of meaningful rabbinic lives.

I hope to see you in Boca to continue our journey together.

Jeff Stiffman  
President NAORRR

### A Dog's Life



We recently got a new puppy, Max. We've had several dogs, but after our last dog died seven years ago, we've been without one. We finally decided the time had come for us to get a new pet.

But it had been over twenty years since we'd had to train a puppy, and it's been a challenge. And yet, it is well worth it. He's cute, he's fun, he's cuddly, he brings us joy.

But why are we writing an article for a retired rabbis group newsletter about a dog?

Because, as we integrate Max into our lives, we've re-learned some important lessons about life.

Max could care less about our troubled political system. He's not interested in global conflicts. He's totally unaware of social debates on immigration, abortion, pollution, gerrymandering, or the census. He leads a dog's life, sleeping (a lot), without a care in the world. He gets fed as much as he likes. He gets tummy rubs and lots of love. Would that our lives would be so carefree, so untraumatized by pictures on TV, so un-anxious about the future of our country and the world.

But what is Max thinking? Of course, it's impossible to know for sure, but when he's outside, he does show a heightened interest in nature. He walks around and sniffs all the flowers and grass, taking each new experience with a sense of wonder. When a slight wind blows, he puts his head up into the breeze, fur and ears flowing gently, closes his eyes, and relishes the moment. Would that we could recapture those

moments when we, too, were awed by nature, by the beauty, the freshness, the splendor of it all. How often do we, in our normally hectic lives, stop to smell the roses? Why can't we live in a simpler world, where it's not dangerous to be naïve again?

Having a young dog also teaches about responsibility – once again. We have to make sure Max has water and food. We have to make sure he goes outside to do his business. We have to make sure he's bathed and groomed, that he gets checked by a vet. It's almost as big a responsibility as raising children. Even a dog is a living thing, requiring our close attention.

Our own children are grown. They have their own children, and because of distance, we're not too involved in raising them. But we are raising Max, and that takes patience and compassion, traits a person does not come by easily. They have to be learned and practiced.

We're working on it.

Best wishes to all. We hope to see you at our next Convention! All the information you need to know is in this issue of Ohr L'NAORRR.

Susie and Julian Cook  
Co-Executive Vice Presidents

## Looking Toward the January Convention



From my earliest days in the rabbinate there have never been more inspiring occasions than the periodic gatherings of colleagues I attended. All of them were times of deep learning and spirituality. All of them were times of intense collegial sharing. And the biggest part? Never did I fail to experience this same recurring thought: at last I am with

people who "get it!" That same sense of chavvayah continued through all the gatherings I eagerly attended throughout the years of my rabbinate. It continues especially now at our annual NAORRR conventions. Maybe I should say I experience it even more now than in the former years, because now I find myself saying, at last I am with people who more than "get it." Here there is an atmosphere of true wisdom, the consequence of what all of us, colleagues, spouses, and

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CONVENTION

Enclosed (if you are receiving this by mail) or attached (if you receive yours by email) is the all-important Registration Form for our 2020 Convention in Boca Raton, January 2-6. There are a number of things you need to carefully note.

#### TRANSPORTATION

The Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport (FLL) and the Palm Beach Airport (PBI) are approximately the same distance to Boca Raton. Transportation via A1A Limo Service or Taxi will cost about \$75 from either. Ann Lois Ballon will again serve as matchmaker for those wishing to carpool either by cab or Uber. Contact her at: [hbtiff@aol.com](mailto:hbtiff@aol.com) with your **name, cell phone #, date & flight # and time of arrival, date & flight # and time of departure.**

partners, have been touched by and have experienced through our many years of involvement in the rabbinate.

Soon we shall gather once again, this time in Boca Raton for what will be the thirty-seventh (!) NAORRR convention. But that number doesn't mean, "been there, done that."

While structurally some of our gathering will follow patterns we have experienced in the past, the content will be all new.

The convention will be a time of fulfilling experiences, whether from Dr. Gary Zola, our scholar-in-residence, or from our colleagues who will present workshops; or from the Shabbat and daily prayer experiences; or from the divrei torah that we shall be blessed to hear; or from the words of the leaders of our movement who will give us insight about the future of Reform Judaism and the rabbinate; or from the entertainment; or from the excitement we will all feel when those among us mark the passing of fifty years in the rabbinate; or from the plethora of other experiences that will take place at the convention. We will be surrounded by friends and colleagues, some we've known for years and some whom we will be meeting for the first time, folks we deeply care about and who care deeply about us. The richness of our chavruta is truly the hallmark of a NAORRR

As chair of the Program Committee, I invite you to join us in Boca Raton in January. The convention will, I know, provide you with fulfilling experiences. And most of all we will rejoice in it, all of us, together.

Howard Kosovske  
First VP NAORRR

#### NAORRR Listserv

Did you know that NAORRR has its own dedicated listserv? NAORRRnet, kind of like RAVKAV, only specifically for NAORRR members. It's a place to post questions, opinions, observations, etc. It's a great way to dialogue with other NAORRR members about topics of specific interest to our age cohort. Sadly, not many seem to know about it and few take advantage. All you have to do to sign up is go to <http://ccarnet.org/naorrrnet> and follow instructions "sign up for Naorrrnet." (Always make sure you remember 3 r's...that trips up people all the time!) We hope you'll use it.

If you are driving:

From the Ft. Lauderdale Airport take I-95 North.

From the Palm Beach Airport take I-95 South.

In either case, Exit 44/Palmetto Park Road, then west to Military Trail, right on to Military Trail, and right on Town Center Circle.

#### **MONEY**

Please make sure you tally all the lines correctly and total each item. We cannot process your registration unless you send the correct amount.

To attend the 2020 Convention you must be current in your 2019 dues. We've marked the forms received by mail to tell you whether or not you've paid, but if you receive your form electronically, you can contact Susie or Julian Cook if you aren't sure. Note that everyone's dues are \$50 once again, and Surviving Spouses pay no dues.

If this is your first NAORRR Convention, you (and your spouse) receive a free one-year membership to NAORRR. (We're hoping you'll be a dues-paying member next year!)

Also, if you are member who has convinced someone else to attend for the first time, you will receive a \$50 discount on your Registration Fee! (Have your new recruit tell us about you.)

#### **NEW THIS YEAR .... PAYPAL!**

For the first time, you will now be able to pay for your Convention Registration and Meals by credit card via PayPal. Yea! After tallying your amount due on the Registration Form, and sending it in, go to our website, [www.naorrr.org](http://www.naorrr.org), and click the PAYPAL button, which will give you their payment form to fill out and send in. Simple. (Problems? Call Susie or Julian)

#### **DEADLINES**

There are several deadlines to be aware of.

- Convention Registration Forms are due to the Cooks by December 9, 2019. The Registration Fee after December 9<sup>th</sup> goes up to \$115 per person.
- Hotel reservations are due by December 17<sup>th</sup> in order to qualify for our special room rate of \$179. After that, you may have to pay a higher rate, if indeed rooms are available at all.
- You may reserve your room up to three days before and three days after the official dates of the convention and receive the same special rate.
- You may cancel your room up to three days before your reservation. If you need to cancel your room, please contact the Cooks first before the hotel, in case they have people in need of that room.
- Fees for meals are only refundable until December 23, as we must guarantee those with the hotel.

#### **LEARNING**

We have lots of it!

Our Scholar-in-Residence this year will be Dr. Gary Zola, Director of the American Jewish Archives. See elsewhere in this issue for details about him. We also have some very exciting workshops this year. So please don't forget to mark your choices – for both members. Full descriptions are listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

**Also**, for the first time, we are offering a course, accredited by the CCAR, to help fulfill your Continuing Rabbinic Education obligations. Again, the full description is in a special article in this issue.

#### **ACCESSIBLE ROOMS**

We want to do whatever we can to make your stay comfortable. Our hotel has two types of handicap-accessible rooms. Whether or not you've registered with the hotel yet, but plan on attending, please be in touch with the Cooks about your needs and they will assist you in obtaining the right room. Please don't ask the hotel for an accessible room if you don't really need one. Leave them for those who really do.

#### **VOLUNTEERS**

We always need volunteers to help with the myriad things that make the Convention run smoothly. Volunteers help make NAORRR welcoming and warm, and introduces members to some they don't already know. Can you give an hour or two to make this Convention really special? You will note a special box on the Registration Form where you can indicate your availability to assist us. We'll get back to you with specific assignments.

Julian and Susie Cook may be reached at: [cooknaorrr@gmail.com](mailto:cooknaorrr@gmail.com)

Thursday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>

6:30 pm - Convention Begins - Welcome Dinner & Mini Plenary

Welcoming new CCAR CEO Hara Person

Friday, January 3<sup>rd</sup>

8:30 am - Shacharit

9:30 am - **Scholar Session I with Dr. Gary Zola: *Great Voices, Civil Rights, and Jews in the American South***  
 Have you ever wondered how some of the leading American rabbis handled pivotal world events from the pulpit? What did American rabbis tell their congregants about the rise of Adolph Hitler, the outbreak of World War II, the struggle for Civil Rights, and so forth? Dr. Zola will introduce us to some of Judaism's most remarkable rabbinical leaders. An opportunity to listen to voices that you may know by reputation but have never heard.

10:45 am - **Workshops I**

1-1 – **Rifat Sonsino: *Great Leaders Generate Great Legends*** History's leaders have earned reputations through the numerous accomplishments attributed to them. But are these attributions correct? We will test this notion through the study of historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Moses, King Solomon, Jesus, and Shimon Bar Kohba.

1-2 – **Roberta Schwartz: *Primo Levi's Most Famous Poem*** Participate in unpacking Primo Levi's poem, Shema, originally titled Psalm (Salmo in Italian) and changed for the American reader. In contrast to Levi's somber prose style, his poetry reflects emotions unbound.

1-3 – **Richard Agler: *The Tragedy Test: Conversations on God and worship*** Tragedy tests us as nothing else does. We will discuss topic from Richard Agler's *The Tragedy Test: Making Sense of Life-Changing Loss*. Come and hear a dynamic presentation that may well impact your rabbinate.

1-4 – **Moti Rotem: *The Very Latest From Israel from an Israeli Colleague*** היינו כחולמים A discussion about Israel, present

1-5 – **Herb Bronstein: *Reform Yom Kippur Worship: the Missing Center***

1-6 – **David Zucker: *Fact, Fiction, and Women Rabbis*** We'll look at the real world of women rabbis, how they are depicted in fiction and how they have come to be represented in greater number in recent days.

2:30 pm - **Scholar Session II with Dr. Gary Zola: *Famous and Not so Famous Rabbinical Controversies*** Through captivating documents, we will study an array of difficult professional struggles faced by American Reform rabbis. You'll find these texts are interesting, maddening, and reassuring as we discover that even our famous predecessors encountered aggravation and attacks from their opponents

6:30 pm – Erev Shabbat Dinner

8:15 pm – Erev Shabbat Service

**Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup>**

9:30 am - Shabbat Morning Tephilla

11:30 am – Workshops II

2-1 – **Irvin Ehrlich: *A Visit from Jacob Rader Marcus*** The first-ever viewing of a 1968 interview with Dr. Marcus conducted by Stanley Chyet.

2-2 – **Diane Steinbrink: *Anne Frank on Her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday*** A discussion of the original Diary of 1952, the newer edition published in 1995, and other representations of Ann Frank's work. Diane will talk about the talent and personality of this teen and the legacy she has left us.

2-3 – **Phil Cohen: *The Jewish Music of Leonard Cohen*** Leonard (Eliezer) Cohen (no relation to the presenter, alas) composed many songs of a religious nature. In this workshop we will mine as many as time allows, using our text-reading skills to unpack the unique religious vision of this cantor's son.

**2-4 – Seth Bernstein: *A Workshop on Bereavement for the Bereaved*** In this supportive workshop, a panel of rabbis and spouses will share aspects of their grief in the years following the loss of their spouse as they adapted to their new reality.

**2-5 – Bonnie Yales-Gibson: *Creating Your Own Art Painting of Jewish Holidays and Festivals***. A round robin painting exercise.

**2-6 – Stephen Wylen: *Jewish Titles for Jesus: Whom did Jesus's earliest Jewish followers think he was?*** We will discuss the many titles given to Jesus, why they were applied to him, and why all but one of them do not fit the real historical Jesus the Jew.

**1:45 Dr. Elizabeth Etkin Kramer *Jewish Genetics: What you need to know*** We are pleased that Dr. Elizabeth Etkin-Kramer will join us Shabbat afternoon to speak about the genetic risks to Ashkenazi Jews, women in particular, from mutations of the Breast Cancer gene (BRCA).

**8:00 pm – Havdalah, Entertainment by Fred Pomerantz and Sim Shalom, and Ice Cream**

### Sunday, January 5<sup>th</sup>

**8:45 – Shacharit**

**9:45 – Plenary Session**

**11:00 am – Scholar Session III with Dr. Gary Zola *Are There Boundaries in Reform Judaism?*** Is there anything I have to do in order to call myself a Reform Jew? This session will deal with the impact of the social challenges that are said to be complicating contemporary Reform Jewish life and, perhaps, threatening Reform's very existence.

**2:15 pm – Lew Barth Ethics Class: *Teshuva and Forgiveness: Connections and Conflict***  
**or, Bonnie Yales *Israel's Time to Blossom*** Fashion a Landscape of Israeli Flowers and Trees

**3:45 Rabbi Josh Weinberg *Preparing for the World Zionist Congress***

**7:00 pm – Closing Banquet and Installation of Officers**

### Peter Knobel ז"ל

How do you pay tribute to a man whose very existence was a tribute to life itself? Every now and then, if we are fortunate, we encounter another human being who becomes a light in our lives. Such a person was Peter Knobel. To be fortunate enough to know Peter was to know a man whose kind heart, wisdom, scholarship, sharp intellect, wit, and sense of humor, were all only excelled by his boundless love for his beloved wife Elaine, his sons Jeremy and Seth, all of his family, his rabbinic classmates and friends, his congregation Beth Emet, and the congregations he served as interim rabbi.

In writing about his father's death on his Facebook page, Jeremy stated, "This is probably one of the hardest days of my life that I am sharing a post about the death of my father, my best friend, my hero, and the greatest man to ever live. He has touched so many lives. I am the

person I am today because of him. The world knows him as a great Rabbi. But to me he was just Pop..."

Jeremy's words, "To me he was just Pop," manifest so beautifully the unique soul of Peter Knobel. For though to me and our rabbinic colleagues, he was truly a rabbi's rabbi, whose greatness as a rabbi was beyond measure and whose deeds, inspiration, and impact on us, our movement, the Jewish and non-Jewish world, made a profound difference, he was also just our good friend Peter, who helped bring brightness and joy to our lives.

Rabbi Peter Knobel showed each of us who were touched by his life what it means truly to be a child of God. Zichrono livracha. May the light of his life ever endure as the blessing he was to so many.

Alvin Sugarman

### Bios



Gary Phillip Zola is the Executive Director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Cincinnati.



Rabbi Josh Weinberg serves as the Vice President of the URJ for Israel and Reform Zionism and the Executive Director of ARZA.



Rabbi Hara Person is the Chief Executive of the CCAR. Previously, she was the CCAR's Chief Strategy Officer strategy.



Elizabeth Etkin-Kramer, MD is a board certified gynecologist and founder of Yodeah.org., a non-profit organization dedicated to community education regarding hereditary cancer genetic mutations.

## The Class of 1970

## Cincinnati

First row bottom, left to right:  
 Anthony D. Holz;  
 Sanford T. Marcus;  
 Steven E. Foster;  
 Paul J. Menitoff;  
 Irvin S. Ehrlich;  
 Stuart M. Geller;  
 Stanley D. Meisels (deceased);  
 Herbert N. Brockman.  
 Second row middle, left to right: Michael P. LeBurkien; S. Max Roth; Neil E. Kominsky; Gerald M. Kane (deceased);  
 Stephan F. Barack; Jonathan V. Plaut



(deceased); Howard M. Folb (deceased); Michael A. Barenbaum (deceased); David A. Mersky; Louis J. Feldman (deceased). Third row top, left to right: Leslie Yale Gutterman; Roy A. Walter; Barton G. Lee; Harold S. Jaye; Charles D. Lippman (deceased); Kenneth I. Segel; Michael A. Signer (deceased); Michael N. Farhi (deceased); Uri D. Herscher; David J. Zucker.

## New York



Sheldon Zimmerman; Theodore H. Stainman; Bruce Goldwasser; Earl W. Vincour; Michael L. Morgan; Henry I. Sobel; Michael J. Cook; Mark L. Winer; Jeffrey L. Ballon (deceased).

### A Thought for the Day of Atonement

Atonement, kapparah, is a hard one. We've separated ourselves from the chickens waved over the heads of our families; so, too, the sacrifices, the goat for Azazel, and the like. Nonetheless, atonement is a critical Jewish concept. One notion of it emerges from the English origin of the word, at-one-ment. When I leave the bima at Ne'ilah, for a moment, I feel at-one with, well, the universe. All's right with the world and my place in it. It diminishes the moment I walk out the door and am slapped by the world as-it-is. But the annual dustup from Kol Nidre to Ne'ilah shows me the world's possibilities, along with that spiritual moment packed with the feeling that God is there with me, as God is with everyone.

pc

***Our Saturday evening Havdalah program*** will be highlighted this year by Fred Pomerantz and Sim Shalom, a Jewish jazz/New York cabaret group Fred formed, including some great jazz personalities: Michael Renzi, Tony Bennet's accompanist, Harry Allen, jazz star in the U.S., Paris, Tokyo, and European festivals, and Annette Sanders who opened for Sinatra, Sammy Davis, and performs in NY Jazz clubs. You won't want to miss this exciting and exuberant musical feast.

### OUR MEMBERS PUBLISH

Hot off the press! Simeon (Shim) Maslin recently announced the publication of his latest book, *GOD IS FOR GROWN-UPS: A Jewish Perspective*.

David Zucker has recently published a revised version of his acclaimed 1998 study, *American Rabbis: Facts and Fiction*, with new chapters and a new introduction.

Phil Cohen has published an eBook called *Lucky 13*. It's available on virtually any online store.

Phil Cohen's novel, *Nick Bones Underground* is now available for pre-order

Allan Maller has published *Judaism and Islam as Synergistic Monotheisms*

If you have any publication you'd like acknowledged please let us know. Write: [editornaorrr@gmail.com](mailto:editornaorrr@gmail.com)

## שנה טובה ומתוקה

### AN APPRECIATION FROM ANDREA KAPLAN

Our dear colleague, Paul Kaplan, passed away on April 23<sup>rd</sup> after a long battle with cancer. His widow, Andrea, has asked us to thank all the members of NAORRR for their compassion and "overwhelming outpouring of support from coast to coast." She and Paul really appreciated all the "long distance hugs." They helped ease slightly Paul's pain and loneliness, and were of great comfort to Andrea after his death. *Zichrono liv'racha.*

### Wallach Fund Application Ready

NAORRR is pleased to open the application process for a Wallach Fund stipend, which assists members who would like to attend our annual convention but who might not be financially able to afford it. The Wallach Endowment was generously established several years ago by Benno, z"l and Madeline Wallach to help meet needs such as cost of travel, hotel, and registration. Now is the time to apply for a Wallach grant. Don't be timid or embarrassed. All applications are strictly confidential. Either go to our website, [www.naorrr.org](http://www.naorrr.org) to find the application, or contact Julian Cook at [cooknaorrr@gmail.com](mailto:cooknaorrr@gmail.com) or at 303-753-1309 and he'll send you the form.

# OHR L'NAORRR

## NAORRR BOARD OF TRUSTEES - 2019

JEFFREY STIFFMAN - PRESIDENT  
 HOWARD KOSOVSKE - 1ST VICE PRESIDENT  
 (Programs)  
 SHELDON HARR - 2ND PRESIDENT (Membership)  
 JEAN REYNOLDS HADDON - SECRETARY  
 SUELLEN WINER - TREASURER  
 STEVEN FOSTER - IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT  
 SUSAN AND JULIAN COOK  
 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENTS  
 BETH AND FRANK WALDORF  
 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENTS EMERITI

### TERM EXPIRING 2020

STEVEN JACOBS  
 BENNET MILLER  
 BARTON SHALLAT  
 DONALD SPLANSKY

### TERM EXPIRING 2021

JACK LUXEMBERG  
 ROBERT ORKAND  
 JAMES PERMAN  
 KAREN FRANKLIN

### TERMS EXPIRING 2022

IRENE FRIEDMAN  
 MARTIN LAWSON  
 CHARLES LEVI  
 ANTHONY HOLTZ

Susan and Julian Cook -Executive Vice Presidents

2777 S. Elmira St., #17 - Denver, CO 80231

email:cooknaorrr@gmail.com

phone: (303)753-1309

mobile:

(303)981-8983 (Susan)

(303) 981-8974 (Julian)

Seth Bernstein-Data Manager

Bob Orkand-Web Master

Phil Cohen-Editor

website: www.naorrr.org

Newsletter of the

National Association of Retired Reform Rabbis

Published twice yearly (Spring & Fall)

Please submit all items for publication to

Phil Cohen, Editor

editornaorrr@gmail.com

1923 Fleming Road Unit A

Greensboro, NC 27410

716 481 7929

## Reaching Out to Colleagues and their Spouses

Michael Remson

For those who attend our conventions, NAORRR, like a synagogue, is a source of learning, of prayer, and of community. Many of our members are not able to attend the conventions, however, and they cannot learn or pray with us. That is why we try to include them in our community.

Several years ago when Sue and Ken Weiss, z"l., were our executive directors, Sue began a program of outreach particularly aimed at those who are older or widowed or cannot travel easily. That program has grown, so that now a team of more than fifteen rabbis and rabbis' spouses call about one hundred people and couples three times each year to keep in touch on behalf of NAORRR.

If you would like to join the outreach team we would welcome you with open arms. If you would like to call a few people three times each year, please contact Michael Remson at ravremson@sbcglobal.

Many thanks.

