

A REPORT ON FRAN'S 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AT THE NEWTON CENTER MINYAN THROUGH MY EYES

Bob noted that I haven't written any "memoirs" in a while. The reason was because I was busy learning my Haftorah as part of the celebration of Fran's 80th birthday at the Newton Center Minyan which took place today, December 12. It was the same Haftorah that I chanted for my Bar Mitzvah 75 years before. I still had the booklet containing the Haftorah portion, Zechariah 2:14-4:7, and the blessings to be read before and after. The booklet, which had been sitting in the top drawer of the desk which was my mother's, had big letters in Hebrew "Hamaftir: Shabbat Yom Rishon Shel Chanukah" on the inside cover. It had lost the outside cover some years ago. On the next page was "Copyright 1935 by Zevi Scharfstein." On the inside back cover was a listing of all the "Hamaftirs" etc. that Z. Scharfstein, 2647 Kenmore Place Brooklyn, published, with prices from 10 cents to \$1.50. I don't believe I spent more than 25 cents.

A few months ago, Fran came up with the idea of sponsoring a special Kiddush at the Minyan, our shul. The Minyan leadership was agreeable, and Fran was given the honor of designating all the participants in the Torah service: the "leyners," the recipients of the aliyas, those who opened and closed the arc, and those who lifted and dressed the Torahs. (There were three Torahs today.) Fran asked me to do the Haftorah, and David was to give the D'var Torah, the Drash.

While Fran was busy making phone calls and taking care of all the details, I was trying to learn to chant the blessings and the Haftorah. I remembered nothing. Zip. Zero. Gornisht. Today, if you want information, any kind of information, you go to your computer and Google. I Googled Haftorah and up came "Haftorah Audio." Rabbi Mark Zimmerman had recorded all the Haftorah chants and the blessings before and after, and I was able to download them for \$18. A bargain. My friend Alan Lobovits, who is very knowledgable, also recorded a tape cassette for me, the Haftorah and the blessings, at no charge.

I should note that another member of the Minyan, Dalia Rudofsky, had previously been assigned the Haftorah, but graciously relinquished it. When I started to undertake the task, not being able to carry a tune, and not being able to learn the trope, I was overwhelmed. I listened to Rabbi Zimmerman, and I listened to Alan, two different versions. I become confused as well as overwhelmed. I practiced every day. I xeroxed copies of everything. I circled the words I mispronounced, I marked the places where my voice should go up, and where it should go down; when I should link words, and when I should pause. I realized I wasn't getting it. I called Dalia and asked if we could split it. She was agreeable. She could actually sight read. It was a one third-two thirds split. I took the first third. And I also had to do the blessings before and after. It wasn't easy.

Fran had lined up a stellar cast of female "leyners" for Parshas Miketz: Nahma Naditch, Glee Snyder, Rachel Guberman, Deborah Fogel and Linda Kasten. Two men joined the distinguished group: Alan Lobovits and Peter Squires. I was impressed. Miketz is about Joseph who had interpreted a fellow prisoner's dream, then interpreted Pharaoh's dream,

was appointed viceroy, administered the seven years of plenty and famine, and reconnected with his brothers etc. At David's Bar Mitzvah, seven of us did one aliya, and it took us months to learn two or three lines. Yasher Koach folks.

And what about the Drash? I called David a few weeks before, and asked how it was coming. He said he was thinking about it. Don't worry. Friday evening, December 11, David flew in from Pittsburgh, arriving at 10 pm. I picked him up at the airport and asked him if he had written the Drash. He said, don't worry. When we arrived home, we had latkes and lit the Chanukah candles, and the David sat down at my computer. I went to bed. When I got up at 7 am, David was still at the computer. He pulled an all-nighter, but the Drash was done. It was great. Both his introductory remarks and his written words. I haven't spoken to David about this, but I am sure if you want a copy, he will send you one.

It was a remarkable day. The Minyan was aware of what Fran had been through, and how grateful she was to have reached this moment (shecheyonu, etc). I got a kick out of the fact that most of them could not believe that my Bar Mitzvah was 75 years ago. If Fran would have had a Bat Mitzvah, it would have been 67 years ago. David's Bar Mitzvah was here 21 years ago, and many of the Minyan members were present. Fran and I were pleased that Alex and Bernice came, and that Peter and Linda took an active role. The Kiddush was augmented with jelly donuts (sufganiot.) I don't remember having jelly donuts at Chanukah when I was a kid. It is an Israeli thing, and there wasn't an Israel in 1940.

12-12-15