

חנוכה: NEWS



Chanukah—The Festival of Lights

During the month of Kislev, we celebrate Chanukah—an eight day Jewish holiday which begins the 25th of Kislev. Chanukah, which means "dedication", is the remembrance of the Maccabees' victory over King Antiochus Epiphanes. The king turned the Temple into a pagan shrine and made the observance of Jewish laws and customs illegal. Judah Maccabee, the "hammer", led a revolt that led to the cleansing and rededication of the Temple, thus re-establishing Israel to its rightful place among the nations.

The Talmud tells of the miracle that took place when a single, pure jar of lamp oil needed to light the Temple menorah was found, enough for one day and night. Miraculously, the menorah burned for eight days.

One well-known Jewish commentator has said that it took great faith to light the candle on the first day, knowing that there would not be enough oil. That same faith led the Maccabees to revolt against impossible odds. They prevailed "not by might, nor by power, but through My Spirit--says the Lord". Tishrei 5771

We commemorate Chanukah by lighting the *hanukiyah*, the nine-branched menorah. It is customary to display the light of the Menorah in a place where it can be seen, such as in the window or outdoors. Rabbis have instructed that the candles that are lit for the purpose of the festival are not to be used as a source of light. The eight candles are lit with the *Shammash*, the tallest candle, which is kept apart from the others.

After lighting the menorah, most people sing a Jewish liturgical melody--"Ma'oz tzur" (translated "Rock of Ages") and other Chanukah songs. Many people have parties, invite friends over to light candles, eat, exchange gifts and play dreidel. Children are often given Chanukah gelt to enhance their enjoyment of the holiday.

The dreidel, or Yiddish for spinning top, has four sides, each with a Hebrew letter, nun, gimel, hey, shin. The letters represent the words of the Hebrew phrase *Nes Gadol Hayah Sham*--"A great miracle happened there".

Customary Chanukah foods include fried foods in keeping with the symbolism of the oil that was used to light the Temple menorah. These include latkes, made of potato, cheese and vegetables--an Ashkenazic tradition. An Israeli favorite is fried jelly doughnuts called *sufganiyot*. In some communities, dairy foods are also associated with Chanukah. (This goes back to the story of Judith who fed cheese and wine to an evil ruler before she beheaded him, saving her fellow Jews.) (continued on page 6)

WHAT'S INSIDE :

A Word From The Chair

* from Linda Lieber
pg. 2

ARTICLE

* not by might, not by
power pg. 4

SISTERS in the HOOD

* featuring Meryll Eaton
pg. 9

LAUGH A LITTLE!

pg. 5

RECIPE CORNER

* 11 Latke Twists pg. 5

GOOD READS

* A Marie Singer review
pg. 10

CHANUKAH CROSSWORD

pg. 8

JOIN US!

* be a member pg. 3



מלכה: *Neu?*

Do you have something you wish to share with Achot?

We would love to include notable things happening in your communities or congregations, or ideas that you have regarding successful sisterhood activities.

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WORD FROM THE CHAIR

by Linda Lieber

You could not have asked for more perfect fall weather than what we had at the Achot retreat in October at the Turf Valley Resort in Maryland. It was truly beautiful with the trees just starting to turn. I love the fall. Speaking of beautiful, I must say that every time I worship with just women, I am truly struck by the beauty that seems to emanate from that time together. It is truly amazing and such was the time together with the women at the retreat.

We gathered together for Erev Shabbat dinner with a worship service before we started to eat. After dinner, our speaker Juli Burkhart from Beth Emunah in California, gave us a teaser of what was to come. After that, we had a get-together in Susan Lerner's room. As everyone seemed tired, so it was an early night.

On Shabbat, we breakfasted together and then we met for a Shabbat service which was led by Malkah - as usual she did an excellent job. Of course, she had help from the wonderful music team that consisted of Marni Epsosito, Melanie Sollenberger, Judy Cohen, Cindy Stearman, and Sharon Waggoner. This was all enhanced by our wonderful sound and powerpoint technician, Sue Frederick.

After lunch together, we assembled for our first session with Juli.

(continued on page 6)

BECOME A MEMBER!



As a sisterhood, we have the goal to connect with one another in becoming all that the L-rd G-d of Israel has for us.

We are here to help enhance our love of G-d, Torah and Israel. We are dedicated in the bond of the testimony of the love of G-d as witnessed in Messiah Yeshua, who when asked what the greatest commandment was, answered, "Love the L-rd your G-d and your neighbor as yourself." It is in this spirit that we will create stronger bonds with one another and reach out our hands in tzedakah to others.

*Please join us in this dynamic venture! Visit: www.umjc.net/achot. You can either become a member online by clicking on the menu item "Become a Member", or by filling out our form below and sending it into the UMJC office. *✍**

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Name: _____

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WELCOME!

Achot warmly welcomes our newest members. Do you have talents that you wish to share? We need contributors to our newsletter on a regular basis. Do you have any notable events you would like to announce? Is there something exciting happening in your sisterhood that you wish to share? Have you read a book worth reading? Send your ideas, comments, and writing malkahmiriam@gmail.com today!

*Current Achot Board Members are:
Linda Lieber, Merryl Eaton, Abby Korotney,
Sherry Moore, Susan Lerner, and Malkah Forbes. *✍**

*It is time to renew your membership. Please go online or send in your renewal amount based on your membership level. Thanks for your continuing support! *✍**

Article: not by might, not by power... by Malkah Forbes



“Not by might, nor by power, but through My spirit” – Zechariah 4:6, read on Shabbat Chanukah

There is no doubt that we, as women, have the ability to carry much and rest little. Whether we have families, or care for those around us, we are constantly in motion. Sometimes before we even realize where the day has gone, it is over. But how do we maintain the balance of giving light and being sure our cruise of oil doesn't run out? As the darkness of the winter season comes upon us, it can be difficult to motivate ourselves, let alone feel cheery. However, as bearers of the light of Mashiah, it is possible to dance like the flames of the candles and radiate light, as well as endure the challenges of our days beyond what we think is possible.

the real miracle

While the victory of the Maccabees' battle against the armies of Antiochus was miraculous, this is not the true miracle that is celebrated during Chanukah. The real miracle is the found cruise of *shemen taharah* – ritually pure oil – that lasted not one but eight days. The *halachah* is very specific regarding the oil that is to be used in the *menorah*. It cannot be just any olive oil; rather, it must be olive oil that has been purified and sealed by the High Priest. The fact that it burned for eight days was not just a miracle but also a blessing – for it would have taken eight days to press new oil and have it ready, leaving the *menorah* unlit.

why to stay lit

In many ways, we are wrestling with the world, with ourselves, and our responsibilities. Sometimes, it feels as if it is a battle we are winning, and sometimes not. But if we draw upon the miracle of this season, it can be empowering. Where is that cruise of oil stashed in our life that will keep burning longer than we expect? What is our “fuel” that is going to give us the strength to endure, to shine, and be a witness of the Eternal? The olive oil did not burn for eight days because of anything that the Children of Israel did – it burned not by might, not by power, but by Hashem's spirit alone.

So if we are like *menorot*, why must we stay lit? And what are the consequences if we don't? The Parable of the Ten Virgins helps illuminate the “why”:

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'

--Matthew 25:1-13

While this passage has eschatological themes running through it, it is also a contemporary admonition for us in our daily walk. If we aren't prepared by having enough oil, or spirit, there is no possible way that we can meet the joys or the oys that come our way. If we fail to plan, then we are planning to fail – we will be dashing madly around trying to keep ourselves lit and instead find that we are *burning out*.

where to find your oil

As we remember that Yeshua is for us our *Kohen HaGadol*, we know from where we can find the fuel to inspire us and help keep our lamps lit. His example and words bring us closer to the spirit of Hashem and ignite our souls. Choose your oil well this season - go to the source, get the cruise with the real seal, and shine on. *S*

RECIPE

CORNER



New Twists on Latkes – 11 variations

by P. Smith

Savory to sweet toppings take these latkes to new heights!! Use your favorite latke recipe, or the one at the bottom of this page, and choose one of these delightful toppings:

- 1) Cucumber slices, buttermilk dressing and fresh dill sprigs
- 2) Cherry tomatoes (halved and broiled), pesto, shaved parmesan
- 3) Smoked salmon, lemon slice, watercress and sea salt
- 4) Beet Wedge, horseradish, snipped fresh parsley
- 5) Bleu Cheese (crumbled), walnut pieces, fried sage leaves
- 6) Goat Cheese (chevre), pear slices and chunks, honey
- 7) Yogurt and cardamom-spiced poached apple wedges
- 8) Hard-cooked egg wedge, mustard-mayo and chives
- 9) Wilted spinach, roasted garlic, and sweet peppers
- 10) Mango puree, blueberries, and fresh mint leaves
and a bonus one....
- 11) Maple syrup flavored mascarpone cheese

Basic Latke Recipe

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| 4 potatoes (yellow are best) | ½ onion |
| 2 eggs | ½ tsp. salt |
| 3 tbsp. matzah meal or flour | safflower oil |

Peel and finely shred 4 medium potatoes (1 ½ lb.) and ½ onion in bowl. Combine potatoes with 2 slightly beaten eggs, ½ tsp. salt, 3 tbsp. matzo meal (or flour). Heat safflower oil in a skillet over medium heat. Making small pancakes with your hands (squeeze out any liquid into a separate bowl), gently place them in the skillet and cook for about 2 minutes, turning once. Remove from skillet and place on paper towels. Keep warm and serve with toppings. *B'tayavon!*

LAUGH A LITTLE!

It's good for you...

Checks Please

One year, Rivkah decreed that she was no longer going to remind her children of their thank-you note duties. As a result, their Bubbie never received acknowledgments of the generous checks she had given for their birthdays.

The next year things were different, however. "The children came over in person to thank me," the Bubbie told a friend triumphantly.

"How wonderful!" the friend exclaimed. "What do you think caused the change in behavior?"

"Oh, that's easy," the Grandmother replied. "I haven't signed the checks yet."

Excuses, Excuses

Toby came into the office an hour late for the third time in one week and found his boss Mr. Epstein waiting for him.

"What's the story this time, Toby?" Mr. Epstein asked sarcastically. "Let's hear a good excuse for a change."

Toby sighed, "Everything went wrong this morning. My wife decided to drive me to the harbor. She got ready in ten minutes, but then the ferry didn't turn up. Rather than let you down, I swam across the river, ran over the mountain, borrowed a bicycle and cycled the 20 miles through the field to this office."

"You'll have to do better than that, Toby," said Mr. Epstein, disappointed. "No woman can be ready in ten minutes." *~*



Chanukah --

The Festival of Lights

(continued from page 1)

In some traditions, people who have had arguments are brought together for a meal of reconciliation. Some families add a special extra course to make Chanukah meals more festive.

Chanukah is symbolized by tzedakah--the righteous act of charity. Children are given tzedakah boxes and taught the importance of generosity and traditions intrinsic to Jewish culture.

As women, we can reach out to the poor and the needy with deeds of loving kindness (gemilut hasadim). It is a mitzvah to give tzedakah to Jewish organizations that serve the homeless, the poor or the needy and support those that need food and warmth during the cold winter months.

In Jewish folklore, women are "keepers of light". There was the light of the candles which Sarah lit at the beginning of Shabbat. By some miracle, the light continued for another week illuminating the tent of Abraham and Isaac. When Sarah died, the holy task of lighting the Shabbat candles fell to Rebecca, the wife of Isaac. Because Rebecca was a holy woman, worthy in the sight of Hashem, G-d caused the light to burn throughout the entire week as it had for Sarah.

Metaphorically speaking, Chanukah is a time of dedication, renewal and reflection. Just as we light the menorah for eight days, let us ask ourselves how we can allow the light of Hashem to shine through us to illuminate a dark world.

Yeshua is the true light of the world. Each one of us carries within our hearts the eternal flame of our Jewish Messiah through His Ruach (Spirit). May it grow strong and illuminate our lives through our thoughts and actions as we move from darkness to light.

Chag Sameach! ✍

WORD FROM THE CHAIR

continued from page 2

After dinner we had a time of fun and games. It adds so much to hear everyone having fun and enjoying each other. After the games we had another gathering in Susan's room and this was a little more robust than Friday night. Having time to just schmooze and be together is wonderful. It is always great to embrace both old and new relationships. (It would be wonderful if YOU could join us next year)

Sunday we met for our final time together. Juli's theme was a little different slant on her previous teachings. She gave us a perspective of being able to write our own life stories. It was truly eye opening for several women as the L-rd ministered healing for many deep wounds. It was a great way to look and see that we do have a choice in how we relate to the L-rd, ourselves and others. It was such a blessing to see and hear how some received insight into knowing that by choosing to release others from the sin that they have committed against our person that there is true freedom and the ability to start a new chapter in our lives. How amazing that the L-rd gives us that ability each and every second of the day. What liberation! It truly gives us insight into how and why in Him we have life and life more abundantly. May all of us experience this in a deeper way each day.

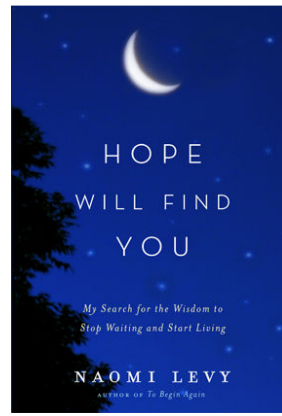
Let me conclude by wishing everyone a great Chanukah and 2011. Hope that you will be with us next year and in the years to come. The L-rd's richest blessing on you and your household.

✍



Shout!

Did you enjoy this month's newsletter? If so, forward this newsletter to 3 women you know. Get the word out about Achot!



read

In her books To Begin Again and Talking to God, Rabbi Naomi Levy's capacity to connect with individuals and their efforts to find meaning and spiritual nourishment has won her admirers within and outside the Jewish world. In this latest book, she describes her own crisis of faith and loss of direction when her 5-year-old daughter Noa is diagnosed with a rare degenerative disease. By sharing her journey and the wisdom she gained, she offers hope to all of us who are struggling to rediscover the promise of our lives.

Chanukah Crossword (puzzle on next page...)

Down

- 1. Hebrew word for intellect
2. This word means 'happened' in Hebrew
5. We place our chanukiyah in a
6. We use them for pleasure only
7. Hebrew Month before Chanukah
10. How many Kandelikas?
12. Yiddish word for 'top'
13. We give this during Chanukah
15. Number of days we celebrate Chanukah
16. I have a little dreidel, I made it out of
19. Necessary for a dreidel game
20. Not your lowfat Chanukah treat
21. Theme found throughout Chanukah
22. We say this prayer only on the first night
23. Hebrew for candles
26. Chanukah derives from this word
27. This word means 'great' in Hebrew
29. Not by might, not by power, but by ?
30. This word means 'miracle' in Hebrew
33. They desecrated the Temple with...
35. This rabbi said we should increase in candles
39. Traditional Chanukah song
41. Tasty Israeli treats
42. Yiddish for all

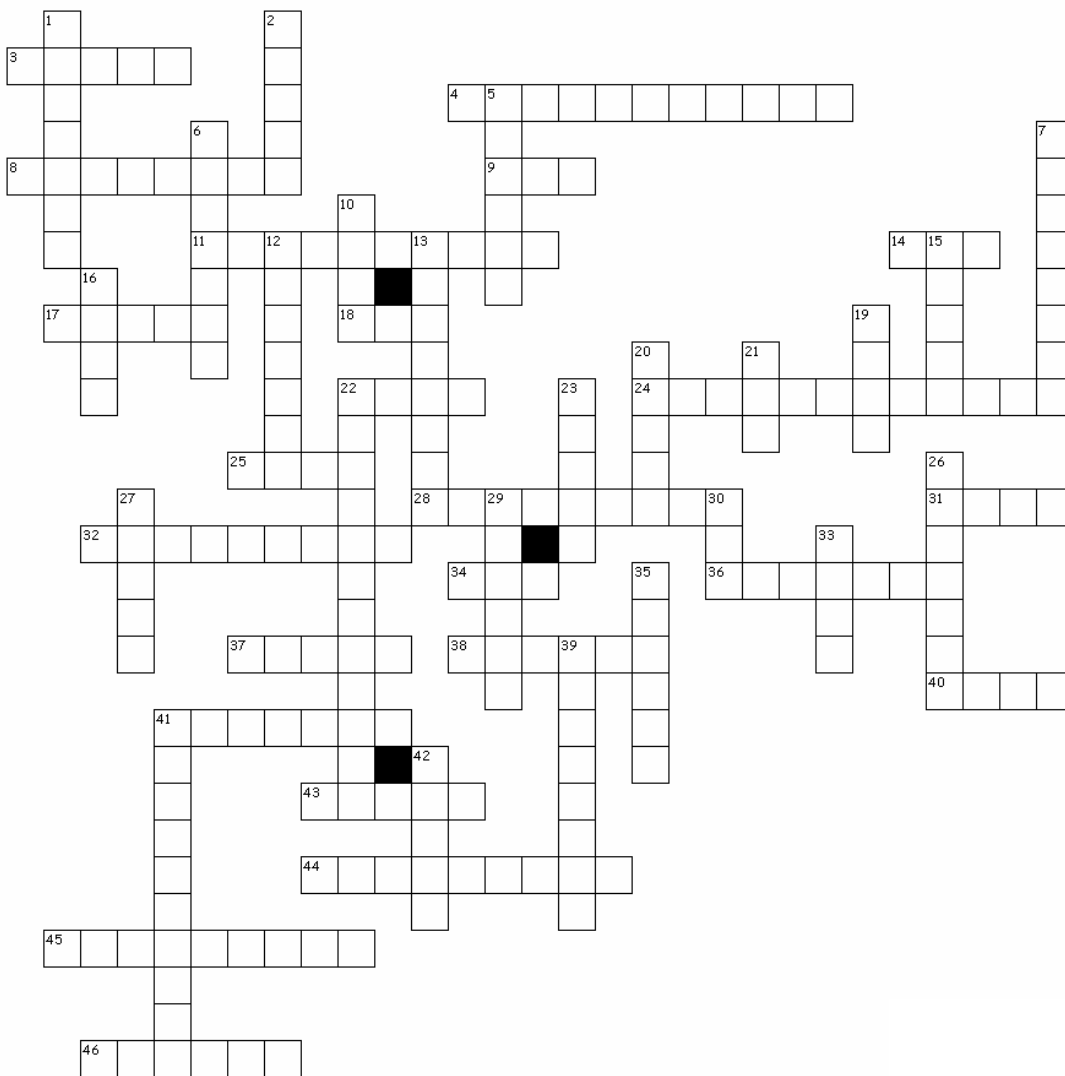
Across

- 3. Hebrew Month Chanukah goes into
4. Day of Kislev Chanukah begins
8. Candle used to light all others
9. You get nothing
11. Chanukah means....
14. In Israel, the dreidel has this letter
17. What type of oil was used in the Temple?
18. Oil found was only enough for ? days
22. This word means 'there' in Hebrew
24. The greatest threat to our people
25. Colors that dominate our season..silver and ?
28. Mattathias the
31. Yiddish for half
32. Our heroes
34. Yiddish for nothing
36. ????, sov, sov, sov
37. This culture focused on external beauty
38. You win it all
40. When you get a Hey, you take ??? out
41. This rabbi said we should decrease in candles
43. Mattathias' son was ?
44. Number of candles lit over 8 days
45. The Greek Shlmiel
46. Yiddish for put



Chanukah Crossword

Try your hand at a little crossword to give you a break from all the latkes....clues are on the previous page. Answers are to the right. Good luck...



Down: 1.seichel 2.hayah 5.window 6.candles 7.cheshvan 10.ocho 12.dreidel 13.tzedakah 15.eight 16.clay 19.gelt 20.latke 21.oil 22..shehecheyanu 23.nerot 26.chinuch 27.gaddol 29.spirit 30.nes 33.pigs 35.Hillel 39.maoztzur 41.sofganiyot 42.gantz

Across: 3.tevet 4.twentyfifh 8.shammash 9.nun 11.dedication 14.pey 17.olive 18.one 22.sham 24.assimilation 25.blue 28.Hasmonean 31.halb 32.Maccabees 34.mit 36.sevion 37.Greek 38.gimmel 40.half 41.Shammai 43.Judah 44.fortyfour 45.Antiochus 46.shtell

Sisters in the Hood



Bible Wars End in Glorious Peace: The Story of Merryl Eaton

by June Levine (printed with permission of the "Messianic Times")

Merryl Eaton is a dynamo. An energetic woman with a ready laugh and sharp wit (and an admitted passion for "cute shoes"). Merryl is deeply, even fiercely committed to her husband, family and congregation. The wife of Rabbi Tony Eaton of Congregation Simchat Israel in New Haven, CT, Merryl remarks: "I just love being the rabbi's wife. I love everything about our congregation and who I am as part of it. I love being in the movement and lending my talents in my own areas of interest and expertise." Her intense commitment to the Messiah of Israel was not always the case. Merryl's equally fervent animosity and opposition "to G-d and His so-called Messiah" defined her position for over 14 years of her marriage.

Almost immediately after Merryl and Tony were married, Tony started considering the question of whether Yeshua was the promised Messiah. Merryl describes herself as "not happy" about this--an understatement to say the least. In her own words, Merryl says: "We did not have bible discussions or bible debates. We had bible wars!"

Growing up in a mostly Jewish neighborhood in Yonkers, NY, her parents were pillars of the local Orthodox shul. Merryl stated that "the only truly observant members were the rabbi and the president of the Men's Club". She admits to having no memory of ever believing in G-d.

Merryl and Tony, who were childhood sweethearts, were married under a *chuppah*, but religion did not play a big part in their lives until Tony began to explore the question of Yeshua as Israel's Messiah.

With two young children and no end to the conflict in sight, Merryl confided in her new friend Miriam about Tony's beliefs. There was something about Miriam that gave her the confidence to express her concerns. Miriam smiled, "Well, my husband is a Jewish pastor. Bring Tony to dinner and they can discuss it."

After dinner, Tony went into the living room to discuss the subject of Yeshua with his host, Sam Nadler. Sam and Miriam lived in Yonkers, where they had planted a congregation. Tony walked out of the room a changed man. He began attending the congregation. Merryl, at her wit's end, offered Tony an olive branch: if he would stop talking about Yeshua, she would agree to attend a women's bible study. Her intention was to prove Tony wrong.

Merryl remembers, "I thought I would be untouched; yet in spite of everything I began to understand that G-d was real and that Yeshua was the promised Messiah." Having fiercely opposed her husband's faith for so long, saying some terrible things about G-d and Yeshua, Merryl now felt immobilized. She feared the inevitable change a confession of faith would bring. She liked who she was. She did not want to change.

The situation became troubling and internally stressful. On top of everything, Tony wanted to go into the ministry. She decided that she too, would speak to Sam who by this time was living in Charlotte, North Carolina. She waited until he was at a conference in upstate New York to approach him. On the final day of the conference, Sam sat down beside her in the cafeteria.

"Tell me about your spiritual life, Merryl," Sam encouraged. Merryl burst into tears and shared her deep confusion with Sam. She then returned home to face her decision. A lifelong insomniac, she found herself downstairs in the basement one morning at 4:00 a.m. She pulled out Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* off the shelf and began to read. Finally, she came to terms with what she knew was true and there in the basement, alone in the early morning, Merryl came to a belief in Messiah. (continued on page 10)

Good Reads...

A Book Review of Linda Grant's *The Clothes on Their Backs* by Marie Singer



This novel was short listed for The Man Booker Prize (the annual contemporary fiction award to writers from the British Commonwealth and Ireland). Linda Grant, the author, is a leading journalist and writer in England.

You judge a person partially by what they wear, right? What are you wearing today? What did or are you wearing in your college years? What do you imagine wearing if you had the money and the social life in which to show it off? Clothing style, often an expression of one's beliefs, determinations, and reactions to life is a minor but interesting theme in this story. This is a story about identity and belonging, and also how one's past can affect one's attitudes and way of life in the present.

Grant's writing is artful and moves along easily so that the reader is carried effortlessly into the story which deals with heavy themes; such as the reaction of victims to oppression, politics, and morality. What do you imagine your outlook and behavior would be if you as a Jew lived in a poor, cloistered religious community in a larger anti-semitic society, with more threats coming your way continually? How would you react to having escaped to a safer society, one of refuge, one with more options on making a living?

The characters in this novel show two different ways of carrying on out of the past into a new environment. Vivien Kovaks a young girl and a young woman of the 1960's in London is the only child of Jewish Hungarian refugees who arrived in 1938, glad and grateful to escape the growing threats to their lives just before the Nazi invasions of Europe. Vivien is raised by parents who live a frightened, mouse-like existence, forever on guard against perceived dangers and trying to remain invisible.

Vivien is also the niece of Sandor Kovacs (note the different spelling), a rent baron who has made his fortune from new Afro-Caribbean immigrants who are tenants in his acquired London rent-controlled properties. The flamboyantly dressed Sandor is single-mindedly practical about making a luxurious life for himself, even if he has to carry on illegal activities at the expense of others. Vivian comes to know her uncle and his personal story of suffering.

Vivian does not know who she is and this is the story of her quest to find herself. Along the way she gets involved with a young tenant in Sandor's apartment building. This young man is reacting through his dress and behavior to his own experience of deprivation.

Vivien is influenced by Eunice, the black girl friend of Sandor, Eunice, a woman who knows herself and who is a style expert, persuades Vivian to try on some of the beautiful dresses in her dress shop. This is an attempt by Vivian and also Eunice, for Vivian to reinvent herself.

Explosive outcomes for the characters in this story, against the background of the rise of the National Front (a right-wing political group), and racism in 1970's London are an entertaining well-told story by this author. This novel makes the reader think about hypocrisy, the outcomes of moral behavior, and how people are complicated—not all good or all bad. And the right clothes can affect our own views of ourselves and of others. ✍

Sisters in the Hood (continued from page 9)



Tony did go into the ministry full time and Merryl found she needed a job. Previously a stay-at-home mom, Merryl challenged G-d to find her the perfect job...and He did. She embarked on a path that would become a passion for her: advocating for marginalized and unrepresented members of the community.

Her work shaped the way she saw Yeshua and His ministry. "I don't see just a suffering servant, but someone who stood up and lived a life committed to social justice." Merryl has brought this same passion to the Messianic Jewish community nationally, encouraging congregations to adopt tzedakah (community service) projects as an integral part of congregational life.

Merryl is currently the Children's Education Chair of the UMJC. She also serves on the steering committee of Achat--the UMJC Sisterhood.

Besides her love of "cute shoes", Merryl will tell you that she is most passionate about her favorite position--being the Rabbi's wife. ✍