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Reel	Box	Folder
65	21	1337

Can Judaism Survive the End of Family?, 1988.

## CAN JUDAISM SURVIVE THE END OF THE FAMILY?

I want to try out some ideas on you this morning. I'm not sure they're right. I don't claim to be a historian of the family, but they are worth thinking about. Certainly, they put much of the conventional wisdom about family in a different perspective.

In our straight society--you and I are all part of that straight society--there's a great deal of hand-wringing and breast-beating about the fate of the family. There is a general feeling <sup>That</sup> the family is disintegrating and that, without its benign influences, the capacity of the society to train up the next generation successfully will be lost.

It is in the family that we learn to love and to be loved, to be empathetic and to care. Families impart values. The institution of marriage, it is assumed, is basic to the social order, if not to individual happiness.

Recently there has been a great deal of doomspeaking in the popular press about the family. There is the mounting divorce rate, the indifference of many to their marriage vows, the generation gap. I don't know what the rate of divorce is today--I keep seeing different statistics--but, clearly, between 1 in 2 and 1 in 3 marriages end up in divorce--many too many.

The reasons for the disintegration of family are many. One is the impact of the liberation of youth. It's not a new phenomenon. ~~It had its beginning several hundred years ago.~~ <sup>AT (> only) in</sup> recent times <sup>that</sup> we began keeping our young in school beyond the 6th or 8th grade so they were with their peer group for longer periods of time than they ~~were with their families had been before.~~ They were out of their homes more than they were in them. The ability of the adult society and of the family to mold adolescent values decreased markedly. The values of their generational group rather than of their families are those which they now internalize. Doing their own thing became the motto of an increasingly individualistic generation.

Then there was the liberation of women. Not so long ago a woman was looked upon as the lynch pin of the tent that holds the family together. She was there, cooking, sewing, loving, looking well to the ways of her household, doing what mothers traditionally are assumed to do. Then in our generation mothers went to work or back to school and the home became a place devoid of adults and, therefore, in a sense no home at all. Many children spent their time in day care centers or became latch key children. We feel that there was something right in the institution of the home, and its values seemed to be confirmed by our religious tradition.

Much of the debate about the family that is being carried on today is being carried out in a nostalgic haze. In the good old days, presumably, the extended family--mother, father, children, grandchildren, maybe a maiden aunt and an uncle who had been brought over from the old world and who was living in the home until he got himself established--was a warm, self-confident place where the father's authority was dominant. Most of us we felt very close to our parents. We entered marriage as a sacred obligation "till death do us part." We came to feel that there was something right in the institution of the home, and its values seemed to be confirmed by our religious tradition.

Now, I will always be in favor of the home as a secure and rooted place, a place where there are a number of cross-generational ties and a variety of experiences, a place where the child is trained up in the way that he should go. But when we look at the family historically it appears that most of our thoughts about it are drawn not from the facts of history but from one special and unique moment in time.

The family unit for most of history, at least most of European history, was not a place of intimacy <sup>or</sup> warmth ~~of communication or of any particular sensitivity in human relationships~~. It was an efficient place. The family was not designed to be a sensitizing unit. It was a survival unit. It was an economic unit. There was little interest or demand for the family as a place where one found friendship or any of the other deep and lasting emotional relationships which we associate with family life.

In the older Jewish families there were two separate worlds-- the world of women and the world of men. These two worlds met ~~as~~ rarely ~~as possible~~--probably only ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> the marriage bed. At the age of 3 or 4 a boy was taken from his home and put to heder. Heder was a single sex institution. Only boys went. He spent there 6 days a week, 12 hours a day. On the 7th day, the Sabbath, he went with his father to synagogue, a male institution.

The young man met his wife at the marriage altar and almost immediately went back to the man's world, perhaps enrolling in a yeshivah, a single sex school away from his home where he was taught that all talk with women was trivial and vain and led to sin. Such talk was to be avoided not simply because it might entice you sexually but because the women's world was the world of the trivial.

Men talked about Torah, serious things. Woman talk was idle. More often than not, at a meal the men sat down and the women and girls served.

These people lived in a completely sex-differentiated world. Father cried when one of his friends died. I'm not so sure that he cried when his wife died, because he could always get another wife. Her value was essentially procreation. The husband might have 3 or 4 wives, because child-bearing was a dangerous enterprise.

adult women. When she married, often at 12 or 13, she set to her work, having children.

When a girl was born she was cuddled by a wet nurse. She was not sent to school. Early she was put to work with the women, doing woman's chores. Older women were her companions. She was taught the domestic arts by a grandmother or maiden aunt. She was kept in a woman's world, doing woman's things. Mostly her contacts were with adult women. When she married, often at 12 or 13, she set to her work, having children.

Children were a threat to their mother. It was almost suicidal to have a lot of children. Birth control was frowned on, ~~so that~~ being pregnant was dangerous. Women did not rejoice when they became pregnant the way most do today.

This girl-mother <sup>SLE</sup> couldn't afford to love her children because she was going to lose 1 out of every 2 before the child reached the age of 1, and 3 out of 5 before they reached the age of 5. How much can one person hurt? Better to be conditioned not to love. They did not cuddle <sup>hyn</sup> their children. ~~Most likely, the mother went to work the day after she delivered.~~

It turns out that the good old days weren't so good after all. The family lacked privacy. In the extended family sex-differentiated roles were the order of the day. There was little chance for intimacy between adults, much less between adults and children. Men lived in a man's world, women in their own world. In the medieval family there was very little human warmth. The members of the family simply worked together and subsisted under the same roof. Loyalty was the key virtue. Displays of love and affection were limited.

The ~~small~~ traditional communities of Europe, whether we're speaking of the non-Jewish communities of farmers or peasants or the small shtetl communities of the Jews of Eastern Europe, were tiny places by modern standards. ~~Numbers were insignificant.~~ Households numbered in the tens, not the thousands.

Yet, the community was coherent and provided the feeling of coherence to family. The institution of marriage was zealously guarded, ~~and sustained in traditional communities.~~

~~extra hands. The strength of the family lay in numbers. There was no such thing as a pool of free labor. Today there are few families who require a great number of hands to survive. Free labor can be hired.~~

We know a good deal about the formal relationships which marriage established, a great deal about divorce and its procedures. But we know very little about the internal life of these families.

The family was in the pre-industrial age an economic necessity. Whether it was the peasant family operating a cottage industry or the shopkeeper's family providing customers with ~~his~~ <sup>THEIR</sup> wants, the family required a lot of extra hands. The strength of the family lay in numbers. There was no such thing as a pool of free labor. Today there are few families who require a great number of hands to survive. Free labor can be hired.

The Industrial Revolution, mass organization and urbanization brought about changes in the traditional family. Then the community was consistent and coherent with the family. Today the community is an alien force. We lock our doors against ~~the~~ our neighbors. Today competition forces us to be mobile, a fact which saps the roots of community. To succeed you may have to leave your roots and go wherever opportunity takes you.

*a crowded, modern urban center*

Then neighborliness was a basic requirement of survival. With the new order it's free enterprise. It's you against everyone else. More and more the family threw up walls against the outside world.

The nuclear family emerged, pared of uncles and aunts and elder children because of space needs and the irrelevance of ~~these~~ extra hands to the survival of the family. The city is crowded and a maiden aunt can have an apartment of her own. She is no longer needed as help around the house. ~~Children are sent off to make their fortunes as early as they can.~~ You can't keep extra people in a <sup>small</sup> limited space of a crowded, modern urban center when they are not useful. The old folks are placed in institutions like Montefiore and Menorah Park.

In recent times, husbands and wives began to talk with each other, and began to be interested in each other. The modern family remains what it has always been, an economic and survival unit. The modern family, for the first time, <sup>also</sup> has raised questions of emotion and feeling. Who before the 20th century would have asked: Can a person love who was not loved as a child?

In recent times, husbands and wives began to talk with each other, and began to be friends. They began to find that satisfaction of feeling that intimacy yields ~~out~~ in human relationships. The family took on a new aspect. It became the many-resourced institution that we think sentimentally about today, husband and wife bound together in ties of holy matrimony and affection, children bound to their parents by ties of love and duty.

But if such ideal families ever existed, they have had to adjust to a rapidly changing environment, changes which have pared down the family. ~~Children~~ Children are quite early sent to pre-school. The husband is out to work and now, as often as not, so is the wife. Many families believe they can no longer survive on a single income. Everyone is busy following their own careers, including the 4- or 5-year old child.

The familiar family is being subverted not only by external economic forces but by internal forces as well, particularly by the television set, ~~and the telephone~~ <sup>with laser</sup>. Not so long ago when children came home, <sup>when</sup> ~~and~~ closed the door the outside world was excluded. Whatever your family was like, that was the context of most of the child's life. Today the outside world intrudes forcefully. You can't close your door to TV or <sup>to</sup> the radio. In many American homes the tube is on from the time the child returns from school until he goes to bed. As a result, the family is no longer the crucible of a particular and special set of values.

At times this paring down of families makes it seem that there is nothing left, and so we have to ask the question, is the family irreplaceable? If it is, what will replace it? And the next question is: Can Judaism survive the end of the family?

Judaism existed and thrived for hundreds of years ~~without family support.~~ ~~It thrived~~ because of <sup>a pattern of family</sup> community. The traditional family was not a place of socialization, of feeling or of emotion. It was in fact the community itself which created Jewish interest and Jewish identity. Community established what we now call Jewish values. It was in the community that one established one's basic Jewish relationships. These values were supported but not established in the home.

When I began to think about this lecture I went to our Temple library which numbers some 30 thousand volumes. I researched carefully and did not find a single volume which presents a domestic history of the Jewish family or a collection of rabbinic texts which deals with reinforcing family life.

Of course, a great deal of information exists on the contemporary Jewish family. Sociologists and psychologists have studied the Jewish family thoroughly over the last 40 or 50 years, but most of this literature does not question the role of the family and tends to assume that present family structures were always present.

We have a good bit of historical legal material. We know the forms of family organization, but that's very different from knowing their content. We know how an engagement was decided upon. We know how a marriage was celebrated and what were the conjugal responsibilities stipulated by law for the husband and the wife. We know what were the responsibilities of parents for the training and education of their children. All these things we know because our legal codes of necessity dealt with them. But we can no more define the context of Jewish family life just from the post-Talmudic legal codes than we can define the inner life of the American family from American civil law.

One of the things we do know about the traditional Jewish family is that it was entered into by arrangement between families and that the basis of these arrangements was economic. A couple generally did not meet until the engagement or the actual wedding. There was no pretense at romance. It was assumed that since the young people came of similar socio-economic backgrounds they would be compatible. Once the marriage took place whichever partner left the family home dropped out of sight as far as his birth family was concerned. Very few letters survive from mother to daughter or father to married son unless some commercial interest is involved.

Families did not stay together for reasons of feeling. A man may have loved his wife, but if she was barren for 10 years he may very well have taken advantage of the legal principle which allowed him to divorce her. A <sup>SON</sup>~~child~~ was more important than a wife--the child would say Kaddish for his father. There is little evidence of mother love or father love or of intimacy between husband and wife. In other words, there is little evidence from the legal documents of affect or of feeling, the emotions which we consider essential to family life.

tradition.



The Jewish family was a new entity  
Compare it with the family of the 19th and  
20th centuries. The Jewish family was a  
It was a social change that  
worked. The Jewish family became a  
success. Families developed that were  
strong and concerned with passing on  
Jewish values.

The Jewish family was a new entity. Compare it with the family in 4th and 5th century Babylon, where the Talmud was compiled. <sup>TLA</sup> Society was oriental, polygamous. Women were kept apart. The upper classes kept their women in a harem and treated them, to a large degree, as sexual objects. The education of children did not involve what we think of as guidance today, patience and listening, endless hours of discussion with them about their problems. Well-off Jews raised their children with tutors and nannies. The natural parent provided correction and guidance rather than fatherly affection. Being a pal had nothing to do with parenting.

How were values established?

They were established through the community's culture. The community socialized. The community established Jewish identity. It was through the community that Judaism passed from generation to generation.

Jewish entrepreneurs. The most adventurous went to Amsterdam or Hamburg or London and left behind in the east their extended families. Their extended family could not go with them because of cost and because of government laws which limited the right of domicile to a restricted number of Jews.

About 1750, perhaps a little earlier, in Germany and England, towns developed. Capitalism had begun to appear. Jews began to think that there was a possibility of living someplace outside the ghetto and of being part of the larger world. The spirit of enterprise begins to beat in the breasts of Jewish entrepreneurs. The most adventurous went to Amsterdam or Hamburg or London and left behind in the east their extended families. Their extended family could not go with them because of cost and because of government laws which limited the right of domicile to a restricted number of Jews.

Beginning with urbanization and with capitalism, the <sup>MODERN</sup> ~~now nuclear~~ family began to move away from any real sense of community. The calendar ceased to be the Jewish calendar and became the secular one. There was more contact with the non-Jewish world. Families became a series of little islands in <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ great gentile sea.

It was not an easy time. On the one hand, <sup>we</sup> ~~we~~ wanted to be part of the larger world for ourselves and for our children. On the other hand, we wanted to pull ourselves, and particularly our children, out from <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ cold world in order to protect them and us from the pressures of anti-semitism.

Do you remember an advertisement which was popular a few years ago?

"The family that prays together stays together." The traditional Jewish family rarely prayed together.

In the old synagogues there was no such thing as family pews. There still aren't in the orthodox community. Worship was highly individual, not collective. Each man came to the synagogue and prayed at his own speed.

As the community began to wither, the family took on more and more of its functions. Because the human being can't live without intimacy and friendship, these values began to be found within the family. Although the ghetto was opened and Jews could leave, we faced an unwelcoming world. Jews were not really welcomed into the gentile world. So we had to depend for acceptance and friendship more on our families.

Husband and wife begin to talk to each other and to relate to each other as persons. They begin to explore the cross-generational relationships, first between parent and child, then between parent <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ ~~grandparent~~. A new world emerges.

<sup>ONE</sup> ~~Some~~ indication of this new world is the flowering of mother love. <sup>MEDICAL</sup> Science reduces the danger of childbearing and infant mortality so the mother doesn't have to face the danger of an early death. She can allow herself to love. She can begin to cuddle the children. <sup>As</sup> She begins to love ~~and~~ ~~she begins to feel~~ and she begins to allow herself a whole series of emotions which she had shut off before.

She could allow her emotions freer rein and as she allowed her mother's love to express itself, she found she could love as well as obey her husband, and she began to hope that her daughter might find a man she could love and marry.

About 150 years ago the marriage broker began to lose business as youngsters began to choose their own mates. How did they choose? Not by comparing family values, rather, by attraction. Whatever the term may have been, romance has intruded.

A whole set of emotions now begins to intrude upon the modern family. Love <sup>w/ love</sup> includes friendship and intimacy, mother love, and the love of an adult for another adult, husband and wife ~~and all those elements which we have seen in our homes and felt there.~~ Our children sit at the table with us and talk with us. It wasn't so long ago that children were to be seen and not heard!

Today our children are a central part of our world. Experiences <sup>now/hood</sup> make it possible for us to become sentient human beings.

The nuclear family created a concept of personhood which ultimately made it possible for the old sex-divided, sex-differentiated world to see men and women as people, as similar.

Today we live in a world which is happiness-oriented, which aims at self-fulfillment, where the motto is to do your own thing. ~~In a sense,~~ the world of personhood has emerged. All to the good, but is it good for the family and for Judaism?

speaking the language of their country, no longer the language of their people.

In the medieval world the community's values were ever present. Everyone grew to have a Jewish identity because that was the only identity one could have. The tight communities of the past no longer exist.

Families have their own calendar, birthdays, anniversaries etc. More and more their calendar comes to be of greater importance than the community's traditional religious calendar.

Jews became monolingual, speaking the language of their country, no longer the language of their people.

The nuclear family does not automatically transmit a religious heritage. Jewishness is just one of any number of identities which the Jewish home wishes its children to have.

The synagogue, too, has now become an outside institution and so are all Jewish institutions. People are, without realizing it, suspicious of all institutions, all structures outside the family itself--which is why almost every national organization of note has a commission on Jewish continuity.

I don't think we can make the case that Judaism depends upon the support of the warm, emotional family as we know it. Look at Israel where the kibbutzim serve as centers of secular Judaism, and the concept of family has been translated into something other, into something much more communal, something different from the notions of a nuclear family.

The answer to the question with which we began, can Judaism survive the end of the family, seems to me to be a resounding yes. One can imagine ~~a Jewish~~ structure that provides <sup>for Jewish continuity</sup> ~~strength even~~ better than the nuclear family does. When the times require it, humans always tend to create useful new structures.

What I see all around is an inchoate reaching out for community. You see it in many ways. You see it in the search of the young for communes, the search of rootless Jews for havurot. You see it in their interest in all manner of strange, new cults, the ashram and ~~the~~ habad, ~~It's~~ seeking, finding community. They are finding a set of relationships which are intimate and closer than those now available to them through their nuclear families.

When the external situation changes, the culture must also.

All kinds of experiments are taking place in the era of the post-nuclear family. The most interesting of those studied is the Israeli kibbutz.

But The trouble with all such groups is that they are new and small. Very few people are involved and there is very little evidence of their <sup>LONG TERM</sup> success or failure.

Statistics are rather frightening. Since 1970 the American marriage rate has fallen 30 percent. The divorce rate has climbed 50 percent. It is estimated that 44 percent of all marriages formed in 1983 will end in divorce.

There is another side to the picture. Many of us are reaching out for a sense of community. How many every-other-Wednesday bridge clubs or stock and bonds groups have met for years? How many small groups have <sup>FA E E T</sup> met to read papers or simply to talk over <sup>GO L Y A B O W</sup> many <sup>C O N N O W</sup> concerns. <sup>S i o n J o b i</sup> These are ~~essentially superficial and do not really give us mastery of the network of relationships which would allow us to grow and to expand and to develop along the way.~~ We are turned in on ourselves. Many of us are looking for someone to cut the strings off our emotional corsets and let us simply be human.

The nuclear family reinforces a sharp sense of our individuality. It has given people a sharpened sense of how they are different, one from the other. It has allowed us to change our responses and our feelings towards the opposite sex. But it has not brought emotional stability into our lives. Rather, it has left us with a feeling of disquiet and uncertainty.

We live in a highly mobile world.

Except in areas like Utah where Mormons

~~protect~~ <sup>try to</sup> protect the extended families, or in

Williamsburg where Orthodox Jews do

the same thing, ~~the reduced~~ <sup>the</sup> nuclear

family <sup>is</sup> is in evidence in suburban life.

<sup>are</sup> There ~~is~~ today a large number of

single-parent families, born largely

of the increased divorce rate.

There are singles who remain in that state much longer than heretofore.

The family is threatened. Many

ask, why marry?

Let's return to our opening question: Can Judaism survive the demise of the family -- which is really the question, where will the next generation receive its Jewish values? And the answer, I believe, is from a variety of sources.

From

→ Traditional religious schools and family support systems which a congregation like this one represents.

From

→ New "generation places" like the havurot, where youth and interest combine to create an intensive Jewish life.

→ • <sup>from</sup> The old extended family, all vestiges of which have not yet disappeared.

→ • <sup>from</sup> ~~Most of all~~, the nuclear family should not be read off too easily. It is for now--and can always be--the integral family unit. As such it can impart values--that is, if it turns off the television set and recaptures for itself the value of ~~A home~~ home. ~~silence.~~

The nuclear family is in trouble today not so much because of changes in the environment as because of our heightened sense of individuality.

The non-traditional family will make a contribution to the survival of Judaism, ~~and so will the mobile, nuclear, pared-down family.~~ It will all depend on our basic and pervasive attitude towards life. Families are in trouble today not because of changes in their physical environment--mobility can be overstated--so much as changes in our attitudes towards others. We want what's best for us. We don't accept the duties of marriage, of parenthood, when they begin to impinge upon something we deem more important: ourselves. Yet, if we concentrate on living up to traditional Jewish values of community and loyalty, we can internalize them in our home and make of them warm and inspiring Jewish places.

Should we give up on the family?  
 Emphatically no. The family remains  
 the best civilizing agent we have.

## Kaddish

Friday

Sunday MAY 8, 1988

Those who passed away this week

DORIS L. KLAUSNER

## Hahrzeit

LEONARD M. BIALOSKY  
 RHEA C. KATES  
 LOTTIE W. GRAY  
 JULIE KRAVITZ  
 MEL ALTSHULER  
 BELLE KLEIN  
 EDWARD ARONS  
 JACOB KRONHEIM  
 EDWARD WALDMAN  
 EVA DWORKIN  
 WILLIAM J. BASS  
 CAROLINE KLAUS  
 JOSEPH M. GOLDWASSER  
 BEN T. COHEN  
 GILBERT GEORGE KAPLAN  
 RICKIE L. HABER  
 MANUEL WEINBERGER  
 SIDNEY S. ROBERTS  
 JENNIE BERG  
 LOUIS HORKHEIMER  
 ANNETTE SILVERMAN  
 MATTIS Y. GOLDMAN  
 DR. HAROLD STEIN FEIL  
 BARTHOLD M. HOLDSTEIN  
 ABRAHAM KROHN  
 DOROTHY FRANKEL  
 BENJAMIN HART  
 HYLDA STERN LEVIN  
 MORRIS H. STOLLER  
 DAVID H. GREENBERG  
 ANNABELLE FINE



Date May 8, 1988

Service no. III (UP)

GOP (SOLO)

Opening anthem Piket: Matovu

Bar'chu Trad.

Sh'ma Trad.

V'ahavta Braun

Mi chamocha Ephros

Tzur yisraell Trad.

Avot ? C. SMITH

K'dusha Sulzer

May the words Janowski (Choir amen) H. HENDERSON

~~TORAH SERVICE~~

Anthem/Solo Steinberg; Shalom rav N. CANFIELD

Aleinu Trad.

V'ne-emar Trad.

Amen ~~#1 -> TO CONG.~~

Hymn EIN KELOHEINU

Amen PAGE 12 OF CONG. MUSIC BOOK

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REMARKS \_\_\_\_\_  
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SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
<b>MAY 8</b> LAST DAY OF TRS COFFEE HOUR 9:30 am Branch <b>TWA SERVICE</b> 10:30 am Branch Rabbi Silver "The Family: Can It Survive?"	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> CONFIRMATION REHEARSAL 4:00 pm Main Temple TEMPLE BOARD MEETING 8:00 pm Branch	<b>11</b> <b>TWA ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON</b> Noon Oakwood Club "En Pointe with Dennis Nahat" CONFIRMATION REHEARSAL 4:00 pm Branch	<b>12</b> *TRS TEACHERS APPRECIATION DINNER 6:30 pm	<b>13</b> <b>SERVICE</b> 5:30 pm Main Temple <b>RALLY SABBATH</b> 7:00 pm Main Temple CELEBRATION OF ISRAEL'S FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY Cantata and United Nations Film Oneg	<b>14</b> BAT MITZVA Alison Folkman 11:00 am Main Temple
<b>15</b> Nancy Pickler Phyllis Levine Eddy Silverman	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> CONFIRMATION REHEARSAL 4:00 pm Main Temple SCHOOL BOARD MEETING 7:30 pm Branch	<b>18</b> TMC BOARD MEETING 8:00 pm Branch	<b>19</b> CONFIRMATION REHEARSAL — PARTY 4:00 pm Main Temple	<b>20</b> <b>SERVICE</b> 5:30 pm Main Temple	<b>21</b> BAT MITZVA Lara Wolf 11:00 am Main Temple 1938 CONFIRMATION CLASS REUNION 7:00 pm Branch Dinner-Dance
<b>22</b> <b>SHAVUOT SERVICE</b> <b>CONFIRMATION</b> 10:00 am Main Temple Address by Rabbi Silver	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>SERVICE</b> 5:30 pm Main Temple	<b>28</b> BAT MITZVA Jennifer Dolin 11:00 am Branch BAR MITZVA Alisa Reich 4:30 pm Main Temple
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> MEMORIAL DAY TEMPLE CLOSED	<b>31</b>	<b>JUNE 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> <b>SERVICE</b> 5:30 pm Main Temple <b>FIRST FRIDAY ANNUAL MEETING</b> 8:15 pm Branch	<b>4</b> BAT MITZVA Danielle Meshorer 11:00 am Branch TYA HO-DOWN 8:00 pm Blazin Bills *NOT AT TEMPLE