

Kenissa Konnections August 2021

Message from Rabbi Sid

When “Work” Becomes Unhealthy

The decision made by Simone Biles, America’s premier gymnast, not to compete at the Tokyo Olympics in most of the events that she trained for, set off a firestorm of commentary. We are a country that lionizes our athletes.

The better the athlete is, the greater the pressure exerted on them to compete and to win. Again, and again, and again. So, it was not surprising that initial reaction to Biles’ decision was shock and disappointment. Pundits predicted that Biles would win, not just one, but several gold medals. More than one commentator noted how Kerry Strug won an Olympic gold medal at the 1996 games in Atlanta, completing her final jump on a broken ankle!

To her great credit, Biles explained to the press that she has been battling with some mental health issues and a specific condition—the twisties—which rob gymnasts of their ability to control their aerial rotations. Given the heights and difficulties of the jumps at this level of the sport, Biles would risk serious injury if she competed. Within a matter of days, commentary on Biles’ decision went from critical to laudatory.



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Kenissa Network Meet-Up Tuesday, August 17th at 1pm (Eastern)

Remember the excitement of meeting peers also creating new models of Jewish life and community when you attended a National *Kenissa* gathering?
Join the Meet-Up with Rabbi Sid. Each participant will provide an update of their organization and their plans for the future. Meet colleagues from across the country doing cool things like you.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88498966716?pwd=Zm8xamNySzBtczNDZlZURFJ5K2xEZz09>

Meeting ID: 884 9896 6716
Passcode: 012381

Build and Raise

Building relationships to help raise
more money



I have a longstanding personal tradition before I begin to say the *shmoneh esreh* prayer on the first night of Rosh Hashana:

I say, “thank you”.

I thank God for three wonderful children. I thank God for my health. I thank God for everything that happened in the previous year.

We spend a great deal of the High Holiday season asking. We pray for our families, for sustenance, health, money, happiness, heal the sick, livelihood and much, much, more. When God sits in judgment and makes decisions about the coming year for each individual, it is the right time to ask for whatever we need and want.

Unfortunately, I know that each year I spend more time asking for things than I do in offering gratitude. Each year I try my best to be thankful for what I have, but I know it’s not enough. Hence my personal ritual. I start off the new year with a heartfelt thank you.



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Ephraim Gopin is the founder of [1832 Communications](#), an agency which helps nonprofits build relationships and raise more money by connecting their fundraising and [marketing strategies](#). You can subscribe to [Ephraim’s free daily enewsletter](#) which includes relevant content for any NPO role you fill.

Braver Leadership

Lead wiser,
Lead braver



The ADL’s annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents shows that 2019 and 2020 were the highest and third-highest years for cases of harassment, vandalism, and assault against US Jews since the audit’s inception in 1979.

To be a leader of a Jewish organization in 2021 means that you need to think about how [anti-Semitism](#) might impact your community...even if it’s not part of your formal mission statement.



It’s been said that the best defense is a good offense. The ADL’s [Pyramid of Hate](#) shows that when acts of Jew-hatred lower

on the pyramid are allowed to continue unchecked, and anti-Semitism becomes normalized, the conditions are created for escalation to increasingly violent levels. The ADL instructs: “When we challenge those biased attitudes and behaviors in ourselves, others and institutions, we can interrupt the escalation of bias and make it more difficult for discrimination and hate to flourish.”

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Arinne Braverman is a Kenissa Network member, Jewish Organizing Initiative alumna, and currently serves as the Executive Director of [Returning the Sparks](#) and President of From Strength to Strength.

Jewish Megatrends and Responses

Editor’s Note: Every Kenissa Network member was asked to respond to Rabbi Sid’s lead essay in [Jewish Megatrends](#) on the future of the Jewish community. We’ll be featuring one of those essays in each issue.

Nothing that is Not Sacred

Dr. Lori Wynters

I so value and appreciate Rabbi Sid’s articulation in *Jewish Megatrends* of key propositions that lie at the heart of a renaissance of American Jewish life. While I fall into the Baby Boomer category, born 1963, I would say that I had a good mix of both covenantal Judaism and tribal Judaism. The Pesach and Sukkot teachings—“to care for the stranger”, *zecher l’tziat mitzrayim*, to remember that the very reason that we were taken out of the narrows of Egypt was so that we could “give back”, was the basis of the Judaism I was raised with in our home in Washington Heights in New York City in the 1970’s-1980’s. It was an unspoken principle in our home...this cellular knowing that our liberations are tied up with each other. As a kid I marched with my mom at Racial Equity in Education marches, actions by the teacher’s union and marches for Soviet Jewry. We both sang songs of liberation and freedom in Hebrew and civil rights spirituals. My mom smuggled *mezuzot*, *haggadot*, *siddurim* and *chanukiot* on her trip with other Socialist-leaning English teachers on their City University of New York trip to the Soviet Union in the late 1970’s. This was the Jewishly grounded, social justice ethos with which I was raised.



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How We Built This

Editor’s Note: Every Kenissa Network member was asked to explain how they launched their new enterprise, a feature we call “How We Built This”. We’ll feature one organization in each issue.

Alliance Community Reboot (ACRe): Southern New Jersey William Levin



In 1882 a group of 43 Jewish families emigrated from Russia to escape persecution and, aided by the Baron de Hirsch fund, formed [The Alliance Colony](#) in South NJ, the first Jewish agricultural community in North America. The colonists farmed successfully for several decades. Generations later, only a handful of Jewish landowners remained.

Alliance Community Reboot (ACRe) seeks to rebuild Jewish farm-based community in Southern New Jersey, on the site of the original Alliance settlement. ACRe is building an active farm with strong Jewish and agricultural education components, rooted in the values of sustainability, food justice and Jewish education.



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