



**Bat Mizvah:**  
**Amelia Rose Wimmer**

Amelia Rose Wimmer, daughter of Chad and Ricki Wimmer, will celebrate her Bat Mitzvah on April 25, 2015, at Congregation B'nai Emunah which corresponds to the Hebrew date of 7 Iyar 5775. Amelia is a seventh grade student at Jenks Middle School who loves to ride her horse, Mason. For her mitzvah project, she is volunteering at American Therapeutic Riding Center, assisting kids with special needs in riding for pleasure and therapy. As part of her project, she is sponsoring a student rider. Amelia is the granddaughter of Renee Dreyfus, Irwin & Ada Dreyfus and Carol & Larry Wimmer. She will be joined by friends and family from across the United States. Preparations for her Bat Mitzvah have been led by Morah Helen Winoker. Please join the Wimmer family for Havdalah services at 7 p.m. and the celebration to follow at the Synagogue.

## Because You Suffer

by **RABBI CHARLES P. SHERMAN**

**S**OMETIMES I TRY to explain to my seminary class why others think that Jews are still so “hung up” or fixated on the Holocaust. But Rabbi Harold Schulweis—of Blessed Memory—a brilliant thinker and writer, said it better than I can.

“When Cain killed Abel, the Bible recorded it as the first murder in history. But the rabbis commented, ‘No, more than a single murder is involved.’ Cain’s murder opened the jaws of genocide. For when Cain killed Abel, it wasn’t Abel alone that died. It was Abel’s posterity, his potential progeny—those unborn, un-lived, unrealized, unmourned talents prematurely buried with Abel—poets, dancers, philosophers, artists, scientists. Our sages declared, ‘Who murders a single person, murders an entire world.’ To the lifeless skulls we glimpse on the media, add the slaughtered promise of future generations.”

Then Schulweis went on to speak about what we can learn from the Shoah and apply to our own time. “We live in an era of multiple genocides. But no two holocausts are the same. There are differences in their history, demography, geography, theology. Many victims of mass murder are often different in their skin pigmentation, their liturgy, their language, their catechism.”

“Well, if their holocausts are so different than mine, and the victims so different from my own, what have I to do with Darfur, Sudan, Chad and the Congo, and their sorrow? Let me alone. Let me alone to mind my own tragedies. Let me cry my own tears. Let me lick my own wounds and not those of strangers. Is my people’s suffering not sufficient unto the day?”

“Against this insular narrow narcissism, the Jewish conscience of ethical monotheism confronts me with a penetrating question: ‘Is your blood redder than theirs? Is your pain deeper, your grief wider? Is your compassion so small, your heart so narrow, that it cannot include the agony of other people, and the need to respond to their torture and their torment?’”

“When my ancestors gave civilization the Ten Commandments, did they mean to prohibit the murder or theft or false

witness only against Jews? Only against crimes committed against Judah or Israel or Jerusalem?”

“Never. Such provincialism would shatter the oneness of God into fragmented tribal deities. *Shema Yisrael*—the God of monotheism cannot be segregated in Heaven.”

“The God of Genesis, which inspired the daughter religions of Christianity and Islam, created the whole universe, an entire humanity. It is written, ‘Thou shalt not murder’—without qualification. Every human being, male and female, every human being created in God’s image is to be protected, defended and cared for—

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the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the vulnerable, the submerged communities, for you know the heart of the oppressed.”

“To avert my eyes from the torment of others, to stuff my ear from their shrieks, is to deny the kinship of human suffering and my own humanity.”

Rabbi Schulweis concluded with an exhortation which I hope each of us can take to heart. “Am I created to be only a bystander, a passive voyeur gazing at the dying of human dignity? What defines the meaning of my existence?”

“The philosopher defined existence by declaring, ‘I think, therefore I am.’ The existentialist wrote, ‘I feel, therefore I am.’ The poet recited, ‘I imagine, therefore I am.’”

“But our tradition declared, ‘Because you suffer, therefore I am.’ For if you suffer and I pretend deafness, muteness or paralysis, I am reduced to a yawn, a breath, vanity of vanities, a cipher floating in the wind.”

I hope many in our community will attend the Interfaith Yom HaShoah Commemoration on April 16, 7 p.m. at Congregation B’nai Emunah, and let us all remember that our tradition teaches—“because you suffer, therefore I am.” ■



## Character Education At Mizel

by **LILLIAN HELLMAN**, DIRECTOR MIZEL JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL

**A**VI MINTZ, ASSOCIATE Professor of Educational Studies at the University of Tulsa and a Mizel parent, recently conducted a seminar for our staff on “character education.” We all agreed that most parents want their children to live a good life and studies show that when you improve a child’s character you improve their lives. He emphasized the importance of creating a good culture in a school and ranked them according to the following:

- Schools that just posted values/slogans on the wall ranked lowest for character development.
- Schools that posted slogans, had discussions and assemblies ranked next.
- Schools that created a cultural ethos, touching all aspects of a child’s life, with intentional talk about character, ranked the highest.

The teachers all felt that Mizel reaches this highest level with its intentional focus on virtues and Jewish values through the study of Torah, Jewish holidays, and the emphasis on applying them to everyday life.

He discussed the growing body of research around the importance of

“performance virtues,” like self-control and self-regulation, which help create emotionally stable adults; perseverance, optimism and gratitude; intellectual humility and curiosity; and civic and community-mindedness.

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In the early 1960s at Stanford University, Professor Walter Mischel conducted an experiment, which came to be known as “The Marshmallow Test.” Young children were given the choice between one reward (a marshmallow) that they could eat immediately, and a larger reward (two marshmallows) for which they would have to wait alone for up to 20 minutes. Years later, Mischel followed up with these preschoolers and found that the children who had waited for the second marshmallow generally did better in life.

“We know now that the underlying skill of self-regulation is more highly

correlated with success in adult life, than social class, IQ and entry-level literacy and math skills,” says Dr. Deborah Leong, executive director of Tools of the Mind. “Children who demonstrate better emotional control (who can think first and act later or be intentional), are liked better by teachers and peers and, in turn, enjoy school more than emotionally negative peers. A child’s self-control can spell the difference between an independent grownup and an aimless adult.”

This structure is part of the daily rhythm in Mizel classrooms and provides

the basis for a safe and nurturing environment. When accompanied by strong character education, our students come closer to becoming a *mensch*, the beautiful Yiddish word which embodies our educational goal. We hope our students will become people of integrity; people who care about others and our world; and people who strive to better themselves and the world around them. We highlight compassion and respect and teach through the caring relationships that we develop with our students which allows them to feel cared for and thus enables them to learn to care for others. ■