

# Bar Mitzvah --- The Age Of "Twinning" And A Gift Of Sharing

His grandmother did not attend his bar mitzvah. The 13-year-old was not called to the Torah, nor even attended the synagogue. Yet his Jewish milestone was shared intensely by scores of this young man's peers, none of whom had ever met him.

Evgeny Kremen lives in Moscow, a refusenik since age four, when his father Mikhail, mother Galina and brother Alexander were also first denied emigration to Israel. According to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, young Jews are heavily discouraged from attending the synagogue, and their parents may lose their jobs if they bring their children there. Thus, Evgeny's bar mitzvah celebration was private. His grandmother had emigrated to Israel over a decade ago, always since pining away for her family, especially since her husband died in 1978. Perhaps the pain of separation was too great, for she died less than a month after Evgeny turned 13.

Evgeny's father felt the loss deeply. "It's very difficult to sit waiting for years on end in such a state of suspension," he wrote a friend. "We don't know when it will end. Meanwhile, we're stuck here, wasting our best years, our health, our energy, our ability, while those near and dear to us leave this life, relatives whom we shall never meet or embrace again."

Yet the Kremen family is not alone. In the U.S., Canada, Europe and Israel, many bar and bat mitzvah celebrants "twinned" their occasions with his. Some included his name in their invitations, other spoke about his plight, yet others left an empty seat near theirs for him. In recognition of this linkage, an American visitor brought Evgeny a tallis, easily obtainable here but a prized possession in the USSR.



Many bar/bat mitzvah "twins" attempt to communicate with their Russian counterparts. The KGB intercepts much of the mail, but some efforts achieve exhilarating success. Eric Hender of Farmingdale, Long Island, received three letters from Yakov Brodtkin of Saratov. In the first, Yakov describes his family, hobbies and area. "Have you Hebrew holidays? And Hebrew Saturday?" he asks. The next missive was short: "Happy Hebrew New Year!" with the equivalent in Hebrew, it largely read. The third letter was ecstatic: "I receive permission on departure in Israel!!! I and my family go to Israel!!! I very glad!!!"

Details on bar/bat mitzvah twinning, with names of Russian counterparts, are available from the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, 210 West 91st Street, New York, N.Y. 10024, (212) 799-8900.

Some of the finest thoroughbred racing and breeding stock will be sold November 21 and 22 in the elegant Triple Crown Ballroom on the third floor of the Union Plaza Hotel, when that resort hosts the first Plaza Preferred (Thoroughbred) Sale.

The event, which actually begins Sunday evening (November 20) with a welcoming cocktail party, will also include a number of social events and seminars during the gathering of consignors and buyers from throughout the United States. The sales are scheduled for 7:30 P.M.

Marty Klein, owner of Marty Klein's Restaurant on Convention Center Drive, announces with regret that the restaurant has been temporarily closed due to damage caused by a recent fire. Formerly the New Copa Lounge, a local landmark on the Strip for many years, the restaurant had recently undergone extensive redecorating. It had been under the new ownership for only a few months when the blaze occurred. Luckily the damage, mostly smoke and water, was confined to the kitchen and storage areas. "We hope to reopen within a few weeks," said Mr. Klein, "and carry on the same tradition of quality Italian dining in an intimate atmosphere." Cause of the fire is under investigation.

The S.T.A.R. Auxiliary of the Helen J. Stewart School (Service to Aid the Retarded) is having a luncheon November 8th, Tuesday, at the Imperial Palace, Royal Hall C, 3rd Floor. Donation \$6.50. Call 878-5871, 876-0538, 737-8492 or 873-1658.

"Song of Radauti" takes a look at the religious commitment, the communal solidarity and the richly intricate lives of the elderly Jews living in Radauti, Romania. This black and white film, airing Monday, November 14, at 10:30 p.m. on Channel 10, presents a lifestyle and culture that may soon be extinct in this region of northern Bukovina.

On a 1974 Fulbright Fellowship, producer Laurence Salzmann visited Romania to record Jewish folklore. In Radauti, one of the region's liveliest peasant communities, he found a small group of aging Jews doggedly and poignantly clinging to their ancient beliefs and traditions as their numbers grow smaller each year.

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Unable to celebrate his bar mitzvah openly, Evgeny Kremen, a refusenik since age four, dons a tallis presented to him by a foreign visitor at his Moscow home on behalf of all the free world young men and women who have linked their 13th birthdays with him, in a photo obtained by the South Florida Conference on Soviet Jewry and Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. Names of bar and bat mitzvah "twins" in the USSR, with details on how to share this Jewish milestone, are available from the SSSJ at 210 West 91st Street, New York, N.Y. 10024.



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