

“Yearning for the Winter Solstice”

I have a number of news apps on my phone. I must remember to stop checking them for as I wrote in my article in the Jewish Voice, *“I’m tired of listening to (and reading) bad news.”* It’s getting me down. In one app I read about the beheading of a young volleyball player by the Taliban, the death of Rabbi Earl Grollman (who wrote prolifically about death), and the hope by retired Pope Benedict XVI that he soon meet his recently departed pal, a German bishop, in the afterlife.

Except for the young volleyball player, a girl who belonged to a small sect of Afghans the Taliban has always despised, the other news items weren’t that terrible in that the rabbi was 96 and the pope is 94. The point, however, is that looking through the many news items of the moment (and any moment has the same stuff), there are rarely anything that we can call “uplifting.”

Well, the other day (and you’ll be reading this in the December *Orbit* while I wrote it in October) we had the “naming” ceremony of our almost-two-year old granddaughter, Ari Eden, Elana and Howie’s daughter. Covid-19 prevented the ceremony to take place earlier...oh, that’s right, the pandemic is still in the news, too. What I realized is that while we rejoiced in the Brit milah ceremonies for our three grandsons and namings of our other two granddaughters, there was more joy in my heart and, I believe, in the hearts of my family members and friends who were present for Ari simply because of the circumstances.

It made me realize that we absolutely, positively must grab hold of every joyful moment – **create** joyful moments, for that matter – so perhaps they will mitigate that which can bring you down. Sadly there’s nothing you or I can do about the Afganistan tragedy, the death of the rabbi or the feelings of the pope...and please note that I am using them only as examples. There are far too many other examples that may cause far greater distress...but as the very old song says, *“You have to accentuate the positive!”*, a phrase I’ve mentioned before.

With an “early” Chanukah, let us use the occasion of our Festival of Lights to find light whenever we can. It might take more effort than usual, but it’s sure worth it especially with the darker days before us. Just think, in about a month the winter solstice will lighten those days slowly but surely, day by day. May the news get better; may our hearts lighten up!