



PRESS KIT

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Note: High-resolution images may be downloaded at <http://www.MayyimHayyim.org/Events-Classes/images-bios>

Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh and Paula Brody & Family Education Center
1838 Washington Street, Newton MA 02466
617-244-1836 / alizak@mayyimhayyim.org / www.mayyimhayyim.org

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Aliza Kline

Executive Director
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A SPIRITUAL RE-IMAGINING OF MOSES' BIRTH, JUST IN TIME FOR PASSOVER
Like "The Red Tent," co-writer Anita Diamant's theatrical production
brings a new twist to an ancient story

(Newton, Mass.) Bestselling author Anita Diamant, along with Janet Buchwald, a founder of the Boston Shakespeare Co., and Amichai Lau-Lavie, founder of Storahtelling, present "**Take Me to the River**," an original production benefiting Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh on **Sunday, March 21**. The performance takes place at **4 p.m. at Congregation Mishkan Tefila**, located at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway in Chestnut Hill, following a 3 p.m. reception.

A production in story and song, **Take Me to the River** imagines the events and the women surrounding Moses' rescue from the Nile, fusing them with modern mikveh miracles in Diamant's inimitable style. The event recognizes Jewish community leaders Amy and Jonathan Fleming, as well as Mayyim Hayyim's first class of volunteer Mikveh Guides, recipients of the 2010 Nachshon Award.

"Mayyim Hayyim has enhanced an often forgotten ritual and made it accessible for a broad diversity of Jewish people," says Aliza Kline, Mayyim Hayyim Executive Director. "By re-imagining a well-known episode of Torah, **Take Me to the River** honors those who have stepped up to help bring Mayyim Hayyim's vision to fruition."

Take Me to the River features a special musical performance by Persian Jewish singer Galeet Dardashti and her edgy all-female powerhouse ensemble Divahn, musical direction by acclaimed Jewish rocker Josh Nelson, and the theatrical stylings of Shira Kline, Tiffany Gordon, Sheree Galpert and David Wolfman.

Tickets are \$54 general admission and \$18 for students. Tickets are available online at www.MayyimHayyim.org or by phone at 617-244-1836, ext. 211.

Mayyim Hayyim is a unique, nationally regarded center for Jewish spirituality, learning and the arts, located in Newton, Mass. It opened in 2004, reclaiming the ancient tradition of ritual immersion and making it relevant to today's Jews as a source of spiritual renewal, celebration and healing.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Aliza Kline. Press information and images can be downloaded at www.MayyimHayyim.org/Events-Classes/Press-kit

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Like "The Red Tent," co-writer Anita Diamant's theatrical production
brings a new twist to an ancient story

WHAT: "**Take Me to the River**," an original production in story and song co-written by bestselling author **Anita Diamant** and featuring a special musical performance by Persian Jewish singer **Galet Dardashti**. The production imagines the events and the women surrounding Moses' rescue from the Nile.

WHO: Theatrical performance co-written by Diamant; **Janet Buchwald**, a founder of the Boston Shakespeare Co.; and **Amichai Lau-Lavie**, founder of Storahelling. Musical direction by acclaimed Jewish rocker **Josh Nelson**. Dardashti performs with her edgy all-female powerhouse ensemble, **Divahn**.

WHEN: Sunday, March 21
3:00 p.m. reception, **4:00 p.m. performance**

WHERE: **Congregation Mishkan Tefila**
300 Hammond Pond Parkway
Chestnut Hill, Mass.

HOW: **Tickets** are \$54 general admission and \$18 for students.
Available online at www.MayyimHayyim.org or by phone at 617-244-1836, ext. 211.

WHY: Event to benefit Mayyim Hayyim and honor Jewish community leaders Amy and Jonathan Fleming, as well as Mayyim Hayyim's first class of volunteer Mikveh Guides, recipients of the 2010 Nachshon Award.

ABOUT: Mayyim Hayyim is a unique, nationally regarded center for Jewish spirituality, learning and the arts, located in Newton, Mass. It opened in 2004, reclaiming the ancient tradition of ritual immersion and making it relevant to today's Jews as a source of spiritual renewal, celebration and healing.

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Performer and Honoree Bios

Performers:

Galeet Dardashti As the granddaughter of Yona Dardashti, the most renowned singer of Persian classical music in Iran in his day, and daughter of highly esteemed cantor Farid Dardashti, Middle Eastern vocal innovator, Galeet is the first woman in her family to continue her family tradition of distinguished Persian and Jewish musicianship.

After performing in the US and Canada with The Dardashti Family from her childhood into her teenage years, she began her own solo musical pursuits in the US and in Israel, including significant cantorial work. Galeet received a Six Points Fellowship and a Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Fellowship to pursue her independent project THE NAMING, a multi-disciplinary work, including lush electronica-edged Middle Eastern compositions in Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian and Arabic. Her songs unite the stories of the women of the Bible with her own Iranian family's tales of women breaking the rules as well as with those of women in the Middle East today fighting to have their voices heard. The CD release for THE NAMING will occur in 2010.

Galeet holds a Ph.D. in anthropology, having completed her dissertation on the cultural politics of contemporary Middle Eastern music in Israel in 2009. Her work was supported by fellowships from Fulbright-Hays, The National Foundation for Jewish Culture, and The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, among others. She has published her academic work widely and offers lectures and artist/scholar-in-residencies throughout the country.

Divahn is the edgy all-female powerhouse ensemble led by Galeet. The group has engendered an international following, performing in venues ranging from international concert halls to the most prestigious clubs in NYC. Infusing traditional and original Middle Eastern Jewish songs with sophisticated harmonies, entrancing improvisations, and funky arrangements, their thrilling live shows feature lush string arrangements, eclectic Indian, Middle Eastern, and Latin percussion, and vocals spanning Hebrew, Judeo-Spanish, Persian, Arabic, and Aramaic.

“Divahn,” a word common to Hebrew, Persian, and Arabic, means a collection of songs or poetry. Through their music, the group creatively underscores common ground between diverse Middle Eastern cultures and religions. www.divahn.com; www.galeetdardashti.com

Josh Nelson, formerly of Boston but now New York City, is one of the most popular performers and producers in modern Jewish music. Mayyim Hayyim is blessed to have had Josh arrange and direct past productions—including last year's *The Colors of Water* as well as the *Mikveh Monologues I and II*—as well as produce the CD *Immersed—Music for Mayyim Hayyim*.

A multi-instrumentalist and songwriter, Josh's music is celebrated and integrated into the repertoire of congregations, camps and communities around the world. 2009 marked the long-awaited release of "Lift," the debut CD from the Josh Nelson Project. Built upon songs of Jewish identity and continuity, "Lift" breaks new ground with razor-sharp lyricism and a progressive, radio-ready sound.

Josh has performed over one thousand shows in a variety of venues. Highlights include: International conventions for each of the major youth movements in the USA, (NFTY, USY, BBYO, etc.), URJ Biennial Conventions, JCCA National Conventions, JCC Maccabi Games, CAJE Conferences and JCCs across the country. Josh serves as the music director for the URJ Biennial Convention, faculty for the Hava Nashira Music Institute, and a musical artist in residence for the JCC Maccabi Artsfest. www.joshnelsonproject.com

Shira Kline (aka ShirLaLa) is a celebrated New York based performer and music educator. Traveling across the country and internationally with her kiddie rock band, Shira delivers a dynamic, interactive program of joy and spirit, story and song. Raised in the world of music and the tradition of Torah, Shira has worked for over a decade with a diverse array of Jewish communities to enliven rituals, holiday celebrations, and love for Jewish life and prayer. Words, story and music are blended into a rich musical experience for children and adults alike.

Shira has performed in a variety of venues including the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, The Toronto Ashkenaz Festival, The Jewish Museum on Fifth Avenue, the Alyeska Resort in Alaska, and Limmud Conferences in England and Los Angeles. Her three “outrageously hip Jewish kiddie rock” albums have sold over 20,000 copies and are played repeatedly in homes, cars, and classrooms. Shira is also a founding company member of *Storahtelling: Ritual Theatre Revived* with which she is an actor, writer, performer, and ritual leader. Shira’s newest project, “Earth Worm Disco,” celebrates eco-music for all the little rock n’ rollers out there who love to sing and dance and who love our planet too! Visit Shira online at www.shirlala.com.

Sheree Galpert is a professional actor, writer, educator, and organization development consultant. Her consulting company, *Dramatic Results*, uses theater-based techniques to help business clients address critical organizational issues, including diversity, communication, and leadership development. She is a veteran of regional theaters across the country, including ACT in Seattle, Actors Theater of Louisville, the Hangar Theater in Ithaca, N.Y., and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. After a show-stopping performance in *Mikveh Monologues II*, Sheree is delighted to be participating in *Take Me To the River*, celebrating the presence of Mayyim Hayyim in the Greater Boston area.

Tiffany Gordon is a second year student at the Rabbinical School at Hebrew College. She finds pleasure in serving her community as a teacher in and director of the Beit Rabban Youth Program at Temple Beth Zion in Brookline. She worked as the director of children's programming for Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, CT in 2009. In her spare time, she volunteers with MAB Community services, reading to elderly blind women and leads Shabbat services at an assisted living home. Spending time with both children and the elderly gives her a full view of life which helps her engage her own wise discernment and appreciate the beauty and complexity of the gift of being.

Rabbi David Wolfman is a Lay Leader-Clergy Relationships / Transition Specialist for the Congregational Consulting Group. Rabbi Wolfman is also the Director of the North American Commission on Rabbinic-Congregation Relations (NCRCR), which is a joint commission of the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. Before serving the Reform Movement, Rabbi Wolfman served as a congregational rabbi in Stamford, CT

and Lexington, MA. He holds a Masters of Hebrew Letters at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he was also ordained rabbi in 1987. Rabbi Wolfman has performed once before in the *Mikveh Monologues* and is a proud member of Mayyim Hayyim. He lives in Lexington, MA with his wife. They have three daughters.

Playwrights:

Bestselling author **Anita Diamant** and television writer-director **Janet Buchwald** co-wrote the script for *Take Me to the River* with **Amichai Lau-Lavie**, the founder and executive/artistic director of Storahtelling. Ms. Buchwald is also directing the production. Ms. Diamant and Ms. Buchwald have collaborated on past Mayyim Hayyim performances, including the nationally performed *Mikveh Monologues*.

Honorees:

Amy Fleming is one of Mayyim Hayyim's biggest supporters, a board member and mikveh guide since 2006. "I started my Jewish journey at age 15. I'm still on it and Mayyim Hayyim is part of it," she says.

Amy has been an active volunteer in her children's Newton public schools, K-12, and for the past few years at More Than Words, a non-profit used bookstore in Waltham that is run by young people who are involved in the courts or foster care system, homeless, or out of school. "My kids had every advantage as teens: travel, SAT tutors, everything. These kids need a chance. Helping youth and my love of books makes this a perfect combination for me."

Though Mayyim Hayyim did not seem like an obvious fit for her interests at first, she recalls going to a host committee meeting and being "moved by the powerful yet tender spiritual vision and mission of Mayyim Hayyim." Amy appreciates having a place where "we're all just Jews."

After joining Mayyim Hayyim's board of directors, Amy decided to take the mikveh guide training course. Every week, she spends a morning at the mikveh, witnessing immersions. "I am afforded moments of true human connection. The people I witness and their families let me know that I really make a difference. What I love about Mayyim Hayyim is the embracing, inclusive atmosphere. Everyone is valued. We rejoice in everyone who walks in the door."

Jonathan Fleming is the Managing General Partner of Oxford Bioscience Partners, an international venture capital firm specializing in life science technology based investments, with offices in Boston and Connecticut. "I support Mayyim Hayyim because I support entrepreneurs," he says. Using business language to describe a mikveh is perfectly natural for him.

"Entrepreneurs are agents of change. Mayyim Hayyim began with a vision, drew up a business plan, raised money, and hired people who do a good job. Response has been overwhelmingly positive and has led to requests by other communities who want to emulate the model."

As a volunteer, Jonathan has served as a Trustee and member of the executive board of the Boston Museum of Science, where he supports the mission of using technology for the greater good. He also serves on the faculty at the MIT Sloan School of Business, teaching a graduate course on strategy for life science business executives. He stays involved in health care public policy as a member of the executive board of The New England Healthcare Institute and as a

member of the Science Advisory Board of the State of Massachusetts Life Science Center.

After visiting Israel with Acharai, the young leadership program of CJP, Jonathan also co-founded Medica Venture Partners, the first venture capital investment firm specializing in early stage healthcare and biotechnology companies in that country. Mr. Fleming holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

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