

## SPRING PLANTING WILL BE AT *HOME* THIS YEAR

by Susan Cohen Levin

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Walking up West Napoleon today I saw a mockingbird light on the electrical wire before me. There it was, against an azure sky, beckoning me back to the rental. I am sure there are more to follow, as spring is here and my mother's Yahrzeit is this week. I have a personal belief that she sends the mockingbirds to me. She's done it for some time now.

Gloria Plitman Cohen passed away twenty-eight years ago on an Erev Shabbat that was also the first day of spring. It was the close of a forty-nine year week, the separation of Heaven and Earth, holy and profane; peace, rest, metamorphosis, and the birth of an afterlife—all on one day. At the prettiest time of year and the most peaceful time of the week; a beautiful woman of valor entered the ultimate springtime.

Waiting for our Road Home money kept me awake at night crying, and drove me nuts. All these dreams of mine were hanging above my head in suspended animation. Not knowing when this poorly run government program was to compensate us for having our lives wrecked was like idling on a road of endless bumper to bumper traffic nowhere near home. Many of us have been screwed by this program, especially the elderly. We were blessed to have our closing go without a hitch this past January; sixteen months after we applied.

Little did I know that a month ago, this would be the last Tuesday of exhausting, unsuccessful house-hunting. As I followed my realtor to the last house, tears filled my eyes when Minnie Ripperton's "Sitting on the Edge of a Dream" promptly came up on my CD player. That was the record album I used to play for my momma in 1979, her last of a five and a half year battle with terminal illness. She told me she loved the song, and confided that I was the only one who understood when she said she wanted to end it all. She would lay in the bed listening ...while sitting on the edge of a dream.

As the song played my heart was heavy but bursting with hope. Somehow, I knew that if I could just be a little more patient, it wouldn't be long until this

seemingly endless journey was over and we would find a house to call home. Just two days later it finally was. The owners of the house we had liked the best had received Road Home money and they lowered the asking price to an amount that we could afford. After our nearly three years of wandering, Adonai's special cloud would lead us to our new dwelling place.

I am sitting here on the patio of the rental where we have lived since October of 2006, finally able to fully soak in spring for the first time in three years. There has been hell, despair, depression, tears, faith, hope, and much learning. And much hell. And much faith. (And much learning—like how to do spring planting wherever you are.)

There was much imagining about God being in places I couldn't; imagining God's presence in my flooded house; toxic torrents having turned into battered belongings flaccidly floating. Imagining God's mighty hand moving my Road Home papers from one person's desk to the next; and pondering on why God could want me going insane in places where, before Katrina and the Federal Flood, I never would have in my life imagined myself to be.

There will be no spring planting along the side of a FEMA trailer or in the backyard of a rental this year. There will be spring planting at HOME. My little Japanese Magnolia which I couldn't resist buying last spring and I will be lifted from our pots and placed in the ground to root, bloom, and stretch our branches upward, singing, HALLELUYAH! THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF GOD'S GLORY!

Adonai's colors vibrate vividly before me: blue, green, pink, periwinkle, purple, magenta, yellow, and orange. I'm soaking in a *new* spring, a promising spring; basking in the cool breeze, colors and bird sounds. I reflect upon my Momma, and this time of renewal; and how so many are finally starting again. I'm older now, but hopefully still strong enough for digging my new landscapes.

For right now, I can sit here and talk to the blue jays, and follow the monarchs, sulphurs, and swallowtails with awe-struck eyes. I can admire my pretty new azaleas that will be planted at my new home. (I have literally ached to have azaleas again.) I tell my little-girl-with-the-rabbit and

Miriam's-angel figurines that we're going home. It's all I can do right now—while sitting on the edge of a dream.