



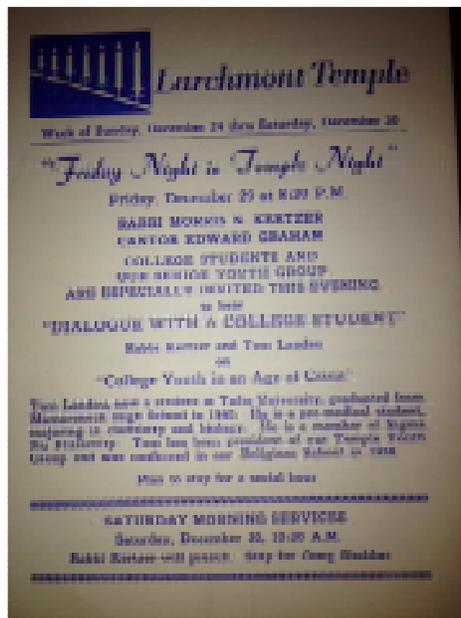
Tom Landau

I was born in NYC on November 20, 1942. We grew up there as members of Temple Israel at 91st just off Amsterdam Avenue. My parents, who were very active at Larchmont Temple, were Mort and Elnor. She was from Lexington, Kentucky.

Mort's ancestors were here before the Civil War in Brooklyn and Manhattan. That side of the family has been here forever.

My mother's side was from Cincinnati. She was definitely not first generation. My grandfather on my mother's side was named Kahn. Kahn is a form of a boat. We always felt he came from Germany. Eight siblings... first cousin did a CD with a history of family. Maybe originally from somewhere in Russia, stopped in Germany for some time. He (Solomon) is on the boat sleeping next to him to a guy selling furs and in the middle of night someone was trying to steal his furs and Solomon kicked the shit out of him. This guy says come and help me. So he went to Cincinnati and it was during the Spanish American war. He opened a store selling pots and pans in Lexington.

My grandmother was called, Maman. She was a very hoighty toighty woman. They ended up coming to NYC.



I did stand up comedy in the 60's in college. I'm a Master of repartee... Fraternity house stuff. When I was in college, I went into public health, and I got a uniform. It was the medical arm of coast guard. It looked like a navy uniform. I went into public health service because I didn't want to go to Vietnam. I was not so much of an objector, but I didn't like bugs and hot places.

If I hadn't become a doctor, I would have become a rabbi. We are all performers in my family.

I always had a religious bent. When I was 8 or 9 years, I gave a service every Saturday. Being Jewish was a big part of my life.

I was not bar mitzvahed because my mother was ultra-reform. Only about 50% of kids were bar mitzvahed back then. I did it later as an adult.

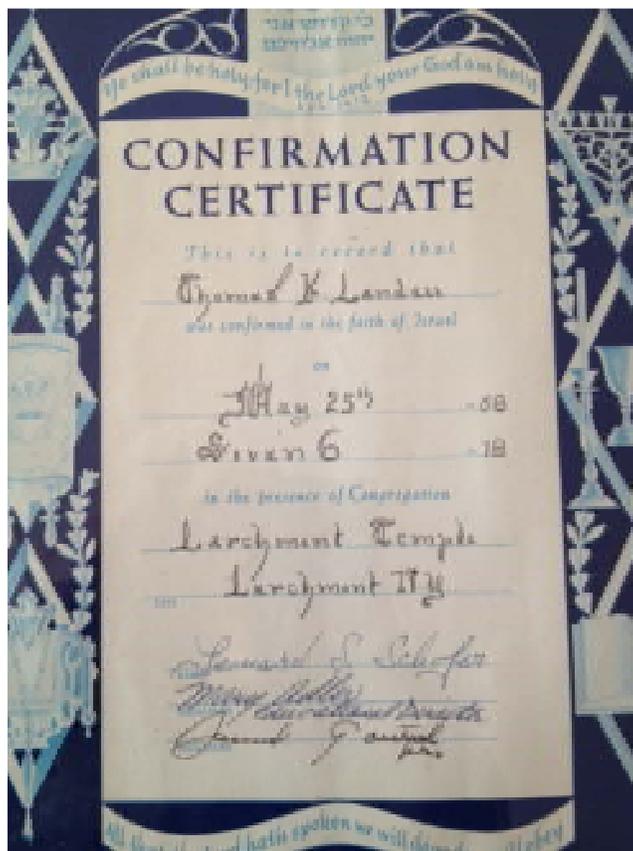


During the late 60's, the reform movement was becoming more conservative. But some people at LT were resisting. An Israeli flag went on the bima, and there was such a cry of objection that they took it down. A few months later, there was another flag on the bima, and I said to Cantor Ed Graham, "How could you put it back?" He said "Doctor, go take a look at that flag...what do you see? It's purple, not white and blue, so it was not an official Israeli flag."

Then we switched to the *Gates of Prayer* book. We started following a more conservative agenda. People didn't know Hebrew. There was a lot of Jewish anti-Semitism. People were afraid to be too Jewish. The idea that people would stand on the street with a tallis and kipah was really objectionable to a lot of members. They wanted to keep it private, keep it inside the temple. The service just became more conservative—with a lot more singing— and I love it.

Larchmont Temple had biennial trips to Israel. I didn't want to go through the whole Bat Mitzvah party thing for my daughters cause I thought it was superficial. I asked Rabbi Poller, "How would you feel about doing a Bat Mitzvah as part of the Temple trip?" and he said, "Great." So in 1982 and 1984, we had the girls' Bat Mitzvahs in Israel at Masada.

We all got up at the crack of dawn. Went up the elevator, stood at the top. It was a little ceremony with 30 people. It was hosted in the synagogue part of the monument.



Tom Landau was named to the “Minyan of Mensches” of Larchmont Temple in 2009. Tom was very close to Cantor Ed Graham, whom he credits with “keeping the Temple together” and stable through a succession of rabbis in the 60’s and 70’s. Tom also recalls that Rabbi Sirkman started at Larchmont Temple around 1998 when Tom became the doctor for Rabbi Sirkman and his family, until he retired three years ago. He says that, “Jeff is one of the 36 sainted souls that walk the earth.”

