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Author Celebrates Life by Collecting Rabbis' Best-Loved Inspirational Tales

For Jews the word *chai* has nothing to do with Starbucks. It means “life.” And when journalist and author Laney Becker was seeking a way back to her writing life after a bitter struggle with breast cancer, she looked to two Jewish traditions to set her on her path: storytelling with a message, and the connection Jews have always made between the celebration of life and the number 18.

The result? *THREE TIMES CHAI: 54 Rabbis Tell Their Favorite Stories*, an anthology of both original tales and classics newly retold. In stories ranging in length from one to seven pages, fifty-four rabbis offer their favorite story and explain why they chose it.

In assembling the anthology, Becker sought out stories with an inspirational message—folktales, legends, Bible stories, and modern commentary—from rabbis representing all the major branches of Judaism. Stories they love; stories they use, whether from the pulpit or in their roles as teachers, comforters, mentors. Included are stories from Rabbi David Wolpe, Rabbi Ed Feinstein, Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg, Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Rabbi Sally Priesand.

“My health crises left me feeling lost, angry, and sad,” said Becker. “Collecting and editing these stories became a true blessing for me “I went from feeling abandoned to feeling that my prayers had been answered—although not quite in the way I had expected.”

Each story reflects a Jewish ideal or principle and is told in the individual rabbi’s unique speaking style. Each concludes with a note from the contributor explaining its lesson and

why it is the rabbi’s favorite. There are stories about our relationships with others, our responsibilities to heal the world, about spirituality, truth, honesty, and courage. There are stories about our relationship with God and our search for justice in the world.

“You don’t really need to be religious, or even Jewish, to appreciate what these stories have to say,” said Becker. “They can remind us all that we can do better—we can all be kinder, better, more charitable human beings.”

Laney Katz Becker is an award-winning writer and the author of the novel *Dear Stranger, Dearest Friend*. Her articles have appeared in more than fifty magazines and newspapers. She lives in Westchester County, New York.

Behrman House is a publisher of general and educational Judaica. Founded in 1921, the firm has previously published such well-known authors as Abba Eban, Milton Steinberg, Lucy Dawidowicz, and Rabbi David Wolpe. Behrman House is the 2007 winner of two Distinguished Achievement Awards from the Association of Educational Publishers.

TITLE:	Three Times Chai: 54 Rabbis Tell Their Favorite Stories
ISBN:	0-87441-810-0 978-0-87441-810-1
BINDING:	Hardcover
PUB DATE:	July 17, 2007
PRICE:	\$22.00
TRIM:	7” x 10”
PAGES:	144