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Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Samaria

Background

From the Jezreel Valley in the north to the Jordan Rift Valley in the east, to the Carmel Mountain Ridge and the Sharon Plain on the west and the Jerusalem Mountains in the south is an area in Israel called the *Shomron* or *Samaria*. It was called the Shomron from ancient times until Jordan conquered and occupied the area in 1948. The Jordanian occupiers then changed the name and coined the term "West Bank," of which Samaria was the northern part, north of Jerusalem. This area is home to nature preserves, boutique wineries, springs, museums, organic farms, restaurants, and places to stay overnight.

Judea, when used in *Judea and Samaria*, refers to all of the region south of Jerusalem including Gush Etzion and Har Hebron.

On a cold, wintry January day, we were part of a group of foreign journalists who boarded a special bullet-proof bus, under



David Ha'ivri, Shomron Liaison Office Executive Director. Photos by Barry A. Kaplan/Jerusalem.

the auspices of the Israel Government Press Office and Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs, Yuli Edelstein, who accompanied us, for a tour of the Samaria (*Shomron* in Hebrew) Regional Council. Our guide was David Ha'ivri, executive director of the Shomron Liaison Office, 44 years old, former American who has lived in Samaria for 21 years, married with eight children.

Shomron Regional Council

The Council is comprised of 30 towns and 28–29,000 residents in communities ranging from 20 families to 1,000 families. Sixty percent of the residents are secular; 40% are religious.

Barkan

Our first stop, an hour out of Jerusalem, was the Barkan Industrial Park, founded in 1982, which includes 140 factories and employs 6,000 Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs.

The plastics factory is managed by Yehudah Cohen from Kibbutz Timorim. He is an enthusiastic and proud person who extols the fact that half of his 80 workers are Israelis and the other half are Palestinians who are entitled to the same workers' benefits. They have had "no event or terrorism based on security issues and no terrorist attacks here." The Arabs live in nearby villages.

"We are a bridge for peace," he tells us. Factory managers are both Israelis and Palestinians. They barbeque together, travel together and celebrate together, as indicated in a wall of photographs in the office. Abed, the warehouse manager has been with the factory 4 years and says, "People accept without problems that we work. We would like to live together like in the factory."

The plastics factory, with sales of 50 million *shekels* in 2011 (approximately \$13 million dollars), makes plastic installations and sanitation products for the Israel market and most recently is exporting to the Netherlands, Italy, Australia, France, and the U.S. Cohen's "baby" is a toilet brush in a holder with a button at the top of the brush which releases the liquid inserted



Abed, Palestinian warehouse manager, of Barkan Industrial Park plastics factory.

when cleaning the toilet; its matching waste basket has a special rim allowing for the basket liner to fit the basket but be hidden from the outside. Both are in a wicker-like plastic design.

Itamar

Riding on Road 60 is riding the highway of the bible – where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob walked. When one lives in this area, "This is the core of Zionism, the core of connection to the country, reconnecting to our roots," says Ha'ivri.

Itamar is an Orthodox, Torah-observant community, founded in 1984, with about 250 families today. It made worldwide news when, in March 2011, two Arab cousins, Amjad and Hakim Awad, teens from the nearby village of Awarta (where the sons of Biblical Aaron are buried), hiked from their village to the security fence of Itamar on a Friday night.

They stabbed and shot to death Udi and Ruth Fogel, their 11-year-old son, Elad, his 4-year-old brother Yoav, stabbed the four-month-old baby Hadas, and left.

(see Kaplan/Israel, page 20)

Editorial

While working on this issue and also watching the 84th Annual Academy Awards, one trend stood out. Physical beauty and glamour are temporary. How quickly the fashions come and go. One year a precise style of clothes, hair, shoes and make-up are all the rage and the next year all are outdated.

My mother, Helen Cohen, z"l, who wrote a column for this newspaper for 27 years while raising eight children, had a favorite adage: "Nothing is sure in life but change."

This is also true with the actors, directors, producers, musicians and all the others who contribute to making successful entertainment. Although a few continue excelling at their craft year after year, for most their popularity waxes and wanes. One year they have a box-office hit and then their next three movies are flops.

When Meryl Streep gave her acceptance speech for winning the best actress award for her role in *The Iron Lady*, she highlights the importance of long standing values over temporary successes. Instead of beginning by thanking all of those responsible for this particular movie, teary eyed, she starts by thanking her husband Don because "everything I value most in our lives, you've given me".

Then she thanks her make-up artist, J. Roy Helland who also won an academy award for his work in the same movie. She said he has worked with her in all of her movies for the past 30 years starting with *Sophie's Choice*. Finally she thanks her fellow actors – her friends living and those passed on – for the sheer joy of making movies together in her "inexplicably wonderful career".

If physical beauty is illusory, if fashions are fads and if awards acknowledging the best job achieved among all the others in the same field are not that significant, then what is important? What will still be valuable a thousand years from now?

Although I don't agree with the language that my brother uses in his column by referring to God only with masculine pronouns (see *Chassidic Rabbi* p. 3), I do agree that studying and practicing the words of our sacred texts are keys to those values that will stand the test of time.

Love God with all you heart, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself are examples of teachings from the Torah that come to mind as values that will never go out of style. Looking out for the blind, the widow and the orphan and visiting the sick are others. A similar one from a sacred text is, "Deeds of lovingkindness are equal in weight to all

the commandments." (Jerusalem Talmud, Peah 1:1)

Several years ago after a near death experience, actress Jane Seymour had a similar realization. She said that once you go, you can take absolutely nothing with you. The clothes you love to wear, the car you love to drive, cherished acting awards – all of those do not matter. All that you can take with you is the love you gave and received, and what you have done to make a difference in the world.

Since it is the month of Adar when *Purim* is celebrated and one is supposed to increase ones joy, it is worth mentioning that we here in Indianapolis started experiencing joy early from hosting the Super Bowl earlier in February. Besides record breaking high temperatures and a great game, a lot of celebrities were in town and fun activities took place.

Since I am no Billy Crystal, this year's Oscar host (for the ninth time), I am including below one-liner jokes for *Purim* by mostly Jewish comics. *Chag Sameach!*

Jennie Cohen, February 29, 2012 ★

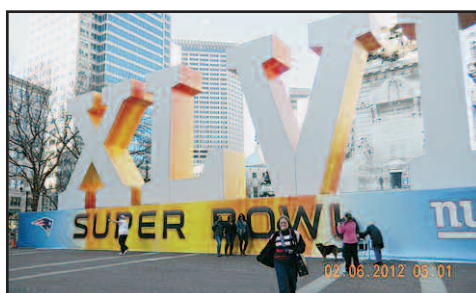


Photo by Bobbi Frankovitz

Bits of Wit

You may remember the old Jewish Catskill comics of Vaudeville days, Shecky Green, Red Buttons, Dotie Fields, Milton Berle, Henny Youngman, and others? You've probably heard of them before, but don't you miss their humor? Not one single swear word in their comedy.

A drunk was in front of a judge. The judge says, "You've been brought here for drinking." The drunk says "Okay, let's get started."

There was a beautiful young woman knocking on my hotel room door all night! I finally had to let her out.

A car hit an elderly Jewish man. The paramedic says, "Are you comfortable?" The man says, "I make a good living."

I just got back from a pleasure trip. I took my mother-in-law to the airport.

I've been in love with the same woman for 49 years. If my wife ever finds out, she'll kill me!

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My wife was at the beauty shop for two hours. That was only for the estimate.

Someone stole all my credit cards, but I won't be reporting it. The thief spends less than my wife did.

(see More Wit, page 19)

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Miracles

Soon it will be *Purim*, a celebration of the miracles that saved the Jewish people 2,500 years ago. Now is a good time to tell about a more recent miracle that I was personally involved in.

Three months ago I spoke with one of our relatives, Mrs. S. She told me that for two months she had been suffering from serious pain in her lower back. She went to the doctor, who gave her some pills, but that didn't help. Now she was scheduled for more tests.

I suggested that she should take upon herself to learn Rambam every day. Rambam (Maimonides) was one of the greatest rabbis. He lived 900 years ago in Egypt. His most famous work was the 14 volume *Mishneh Torah*, which details the laws of all of the 613 Mitzvahs.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe established daily study of the Rambam 28 years ago, for men women and children. I myself learn one chapter every day, and this week, together with all who learn Rambam daily, we will finish the last chapters, make a celebration, and start again from the beginning.

What does learning Rambam have to do with back pain? In general, when we do what the Rebbe asks of us, this strengthens our connection with him. The Rebbe is a very holy man, and his blessings have brought about countless miracles.

Mrs. S. agreed to learn Rambam every day. I then suggested that she write a letter to the Rebbe with this good news, and ask for a blessing for a complete recovery. She agreed, and I added my own blessing for her.

A month later she called to tell us that she was feeling better. *Baruch Hashem*, there was no more pain. Here is what she told us:

"Right away I sat down, learned Rambam, and wrote to the Rebbe. The next day the pain started to go away. Every day the pain was less and less and soon stopped completely. This was a tremendous relief. I did the ultrasound test that I had scheduled. They told me that there were signs of kidney stones, and that was probably the cause of my pain. But the kidney stones themselves had disappeared."

What a wonderful miracle! What is the meaning of miracles? We live in a material world. We don't see *Hashem*. He has hidden Himself. If we look for Him we will find Him, but this may not be easy. The



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Time for *L'chayims* Adar began February 22

Chodesh Tov! With gratitude and joy, we entered the month of *Adar*. At this time when there is real concern over the possibility of another war with Iran (ancient Persia) and her proxies Hamas and Hezbollah, it is a gift that we have the story of *Purim* on the full moon of this month to remind us that we have all

result? Some of us don't believe in Hashem. I saw a recent poll that 95% of Americans believe in Hashem. That means about 230 million Americans. But that leaves 10 million who don't or aren't sure. Hashem is our father and we are His children. He loves us and wants us to keep in touch. So sometimes he sends us a miracle just to let us know that He is here.

Why do so many of these miracles involve the Lubavitcher Rebbe? Again, there are a lot of rabbis out there. Which one should we follow? The one who is involved in the most miracles.

The bottom line? All of us need miracles in our lives. Some of us need to find a spouse. Some need a blessing to have children. Some desperately need to make peace with their spouse. Some are going through financial difficulties and some suffer from health problems. Even if you are very fortunate and don't have any of the problems mentioned above, probably someone who is close to you needs one of these miracles.

And we all really need the biggest and most important of all miracles, that Hashem will redeem us and take us out of exile, *now!*

Let us take upon ourselves to learn the Torah that the Rebbe taught us and follow his instructions. Put on *tefillin*, light *Shabbos* candles, eat *kosher*, learn Rambam every day, and so forth. Your local Chabad rabbi will be happy to help you out.

You can find the daily lessons in Rambam in Hebrew and English at www.chabad.org and at other Chabad websites. Write to the Rebbe and tell him the good resolutions. Ask him for the personal miracles and blessing that you need, and ask for the most important miracle, *Moshiach* now! Long live *Moshiach*!

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that we need to overcome our enemies, internal and external.

Though it may seem like a very dark time, we must also remember that the greatest light is hidden in darkness. The rabbis teach that *Purim* is higher than *Yom Kippur*. What we accomplish on *Yom Kippur* through fasting and prayer, we accomplish on *Purim* through eating, drinking, and partying. On *Purim* we are told to drink so we do not know the difference between "Blessed is Mordecai" and "Cursed is Haman". They both have the same *Gematria* (Hebrew Numerology).

Why would the rabbis elevate the alcoholic drinking? Whether we drink so much or not, the rabbis are reminding us of a very powerful spiritual practice that will transform our lives and the world; that is, to see God in everyone and everything, the good and the bad, is to reveal the oneness of God. To even have a taste of God's oneness is to be filled with joy.

So let us have many toasts of *L'chayims* this month. There are battles that can be fought with guns and bombs, and there are greater battles that must be fought with joy, faith and a little holy wine. When we fight with our spiritual weapons, we "cut off" evil at its root, for it feeds only on fear, illusion, and falsehood.

So this month let us have many *L'chayims* to toast the gift of life itself, to toast our friends, ourselves, our enemies, and our most awesome, holy, loving, beyond, and most hidden God. Our enemies may love death, and want to martyr themselves for their ideologies, G-d forbid, this is not what G-d wants, but we love life and want to transform this world into a dwelling place for the *Shechinah*. So let us drink *L'chayim* to all that is good and beautiful and share our love and light with everyone.

The sages have said that "Joy is increased in the month of *Adar*". According to my book, *Kabbalah Month by Month*, this month is all about learning to grow and heal through joy and laughter. Joy is the greater healer. According to Reb Nachman of Breslov, sickness comes from a lack of joy that is sourced in anger, and healing comes from joy.

We live in a world where there is hiddenness and concealment, and there is revelation and clarity. Some people think that if I can see, touch, hear, taste something then it is real. Otherwise, it is not real. But there is much in life that is concealed, hidden, that can not be processed through our five senses, that is beyond our realm of rational understanding.

(see Ribner, page 5)



Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

Feb. 17, 2012,
Mishpatim, Exodus 21:1–24:18,
Shekalim, Exodus 30:11–16,
24 Shevat 5772

I am blessed to be in a community that values its relationship with Israel in the Partnership2gether program. Canton is part of a large consortium of Jewish communities across the Midwest and Texas that is tied to northwest Israel – that area from Akko to Rosh Hanikra and eastward a bit. As a result of this partnership, the Canton Jewish community has shared cultural, educational and arts related projects for many years.

Temple Israel sees this relationship as so important that it supports the rabbi and each new temple president to travel together on the Partnership2gether mission about every other year. On Sunday, Temple President Tom Porter and I leave for Israel and a week in northwest Israel also known as Matteh Asher or the area of the tribe of Asher.

From the time we arrive on Monday afternoon until we leave a week later we will be engaged in learning about the partnership and encouraging ways to strengthen the Israel-American relationship in the areas of culture, arts, and education. What is most important is that this isn't a one way flow in the relationship, but one that benefits both communities. We have much to offer our Israeli brothers and sisters and they have much to offer us.

Israel is no longer the struggling, developing country it once was when I took my first of now ten trips there in 1971. We aren't talking about building roads, starting a new kibbutz, or clearing land. Israel is over 60 years old as a modern country and in those short 60 years it has created a complex, multi-layered, multi-cultural society that has areas of greatness and all the problems of a modern nation-state.

Northwest Israel is unique to the country for several reasons. First, it has one of the densest populations of Arabs and Israelis living together. Breaking down the barriers between these two populations has been an ongoing project for Matte Asher. For example, many Arabs don't believe or understand the Holocaust and many Israelis don't understand the sense of loss created by the 1948 War of Independence that



Jewish America

By HOWARD W. KARSH

Israel and the Iran Effect

Within the history of any nation, there is a complex pattern of nature and politics that have shaped the life of the country. There is probably no nation like Israel whose history has been so dominated by its location and the quest for control. It has no buried wealth, but events that happened there, religiously and developmentally, have always managed to keep this small plot of land in the center of world history.

One of the complex factors since the development of the modern state has been the effect of aggrandizing enemies. I can think of no other nation that is so defined as Israel by the fact that it has never been at peace for the entire 64 years of its existence; and peace does not seem to be in its near future.

Important, as well, has been the effect of all these threats as a unifying issue in World-Jewry, and even though there has never been a consensus on how to proceed, there has been a universal determination that Israel must live.

This last week Prime Minister Netanyahu survived a challenge to his leadership within his own party, but steering a course with his glued-together majority in parliament is a very delicate journey. And now due to Iran the people of Israel have had to push back their own agendas in the face of what is an imminent danger.

What is that danger from Iran? It is impossible to say, but with an economy being strangled by international decree and sanctions, the unstable party in charge with growing nuclear potential,

brought a loss of Arab lands and freedom. Facing the past together, understanding each other's pain works to help bridge these two populations.

Second, northwest Israel is far from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and this distance causes many to feel sort of forgotten by the powers that be (though this isn't always bad). Finally, northwest Israel is the first line of defense against the Hezbollah in Lebanon. In the Lebanese War, many of the rockets fell in Matte Asher; wounded soldiers were brought

(see Adland, page 5)

cannot be trusted to do the right and sane thing.

This week, the United States government indicated that terrorist attacks by Iranian operatives and sympathizers are a real and present threat within the United States. If we believed in conspiratorial plots, nothing could work better to keep Israel's allies on high alert more than the schizophrenia of the Iranians. They seem to be a bomb waiting to explode. And rather than planning in secret as was the process in the past, the whole likelihood of a preemptive attack by Israel or Israel and allies is daily reported in the news, not as rumors, but as possibilities.

The computer virus, "Studnex," created a problem for the development of nuclear power in Iran, but it was not a solution. And with Iran busily burying everything deep underground, time seems of the essence. Recent reports emerging from North Korea, where paranoia is a national disease, confirms that all these years while the population was dying from hunger, North Korea was building a subterranean world. What does it all mean?

We are temporarily saved from the "hot issues" of people "spitting on children" in contemptuous religious fervor, and failing to choose when religious modesty determines separation and when it does not.

If you have been on Israeli buses, crowded and breaking speed limits, you can understand why women are concerned about being in crowds that make them uncomfortable, but when women scientists can't receive their own awards, somehow judgment has been cast aside.

People in Israel are not demanding separate seating on buses. It is simply Egged's response to serving the market of Orthodox passengers in Jerusalem.

There is an undercurrent of issues in Israel that only occasionally surface at the street level. Housing is a hot-button issue. Housing in Israel was not subject to the U.S. catastrophe because Israeli banks were not allowed to speculate with mortgages. They would have, however, if they could have. They didn't make the mortgages, but they bought the toxic bonds.

Housing, food prices, wages are issues that fall under the National concerns of defense, but these are the very issues that concern the daily lives of its people. We pray for peace every day. It would make sense to lengthen that prayer and ask the Almighty to bring us not only peace, but the ability to survive the aftermath.

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Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Jewish Living: Making questions part of the quest

One chilly Saturday afternoon, I had the chance to engage in a different kind of Torah study than the one offered at my synagogue. I met with a group of interfaith friends, an eclectic collection of Jews, Sufis, Baptists, and a few lapsed Catholics thrown in for good measure. Our guide was a liberal Catholic priest and our agenda was to explore the different dogmas of each religion – a daunting task made easier by the presence of Starbucks coffee and a box of Dunkin' Donuts.

It didn't take long for me to hear a theme emerge from my non-Jewish friends: Each one had felt disappointed, frustrated and even angry as children because they were prohibited from or punished for questioning the dogmas and creeds of their faiths. Simple and honest questions like: "How could a baby who isn't baptized and doesn't know about God be destined to Hell?" Or, on the lighter side: "If the Bible is history, then where did all the women come from who gave birth to all the children?"

As our conversation progressed, it struck me how differently Judaism approaches the idea of asking questions – about faith, religious beliefs, accepted practices, even about the concept of God. In the Jewish tradition, uncertainty and doubt are not signs of religious heresy; they are the basis of true discernment and understanding. To question is to be human: to ask "why" of God, of our tradition, of our rabbis and teachers, is encouraged because Judaism is designed to reach us where we live, in the trenches of our hearts and our lives, in the midst of our uncertainty, anger, fear and doubt.

One of the first and best examples of doubt and questioning in our texts is found in Genesis 18:25 when Abraham questions God about His decision to destroy the city of Sodom. With a boldness not yet encountered in human history, Abraham challenges God on the basis that there might be some good people living among the wicked by asking: "Shall not the Judge of the earth do justice?"

Even more important than Abraham's compassion towards potentially innocent

RIBNER

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We cannot always find logical ways to understand the events that take place in life.

Thankfully, there are times in life, through faith and grace, when we are gifted and lifted up with a glimpse of the underlying reality, the Godliness that is hidden in the physical reality. This revelation brings joy.

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people is the manner in which he engages God. From the outset, Jewish tradition establishes the right to question God, to build a relationship which permits us to pour out our anger, frustration, fear and sorrow without reprisal or retribution.

Jews are called the Children of Israel, descendants of a man whose name was changed from Jacob to Israel after he wrestled with an angel and refused to release him until the angel blessed him as follows: "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have wrestled with God and men and have prevailed." (Gen. 32:28-9)

The word Israel in Hebrew (*Yisrael*) means "to struggle with God." It is our namesake and our legacy to struggle in our relationship with God in order to build a life of meaning. Our starting point is the Torah, the central Jewish document which serves as our blueprint for understanding man's encounter with God. Whether we believe it is the Divine Revelation of God or the inspired authorship of man, we can be certain that struggling with questions about the nature of God, about suffering and evil, about why we should follow the commandments (*mitzvot*) are all legitimate Jewish questions.

Throughout Jewish history, the obligation to question the meaning of sacred texts has served to strengthen, rather than weaken, our understanding of Jewish law and ritual observance. The Talmud is a wonderful example of how the process of questioning, debating and reconciling theological differences can result in a deeper and more practical

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to the Western Galilee Hospital, and many of the residents fled the area to the south. As a result, a lot of energy was focused on this usually peaceful area and then, poof, it was gone. Rebuilding lives and community is an ongoing shared project.

Next Shabbat, I will be worshipping with Emet vShalom, a progressive Jewish congregation in Nahariya. It is rare that when I am in Israel I don't spend Shabbat in Jerusalem, but Shabbat is relegated to this holy city or the people there. Shabbat is an experience that is for all Jews in all places. It will be nice to see the sun set over the Mediterranean Sea and know that as the orange glow of the sun disappears that Shabbat has begun.

Celebrating Shabbat is one way to link us together as Jews, but travelling to Israel, seeing the country where Judaism and the Jewish people began, hearing Hebrew spoken as a living language, seeing Judaica in shops wherever you go, and tasting Jewish foods from around the globe is an experience that links Jews together forever.

If you haven't been, it is never too late. No, they don't have Birthright for adults, but there are many trips or opportunities. And if you go, remember our connection to Matteh Asher. Spend some time in Akko or the surrounding areas. It is one of the most beautiful parts of Israel, the people are warm and welcoming, and there is more to do there than you might think.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for our continuing link to Israel and the special role it plays in our lives. Light the other candle for Shabbat knowing that in Israel and around the world Shabbat candles are also burning as part of the peace of this day.

Rabbi Adland has been a Reform rabbi for more than 25 years with pulpits in Lexington, Ky., Indianapolis, Ind., and currently at Temple Israel in Canton, Ohio. He may be reached at j.adland@gmail.com. ★



understanding of the meaning of the Torah. Filled with legal rulings, legends and parables, it is a continuous rabbinic conversation and debate spanning more than 400 years and testifies to the concept that "there are seventy faces of the Torah."

How lucky we are as Jews to have the freedom to engage in meaningful questioning as part of our quest to be Jewish.

Lederman is an award winning author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney who lives in Tucson. Visit her website at amyhirshberglederman.com. ★

Gather the People



BY RABBI MOSHE
BEN ASHER, PH.D.
AND MAGIDAH
KHULDA BAT SARAH

Is nothing sacred anymore?

Occasionally in our Sunday morning introductory Judaism class, someone would opine that humankind is on a downward spiral. It was almost always a variation on the theme that human beings are more unkind, even cruel, and more immoral and murderous than ever. And from time to time, in the same vein, in the face of the world's horrors, we would hear the plaintive question: "Is nothing sacred anymore?"

It's a legitimate, crucial question, if we want to persist as more than just animals that care for nothing but survival of the fittest. For many of us, for much of our lives, we seem to be satisfied with a largely non-spiritual existence, or at least we're able to sublimate our spiritual needs with material and sensual satisfactions. But for some of us, some of the time, the spiritual emptiness, the enervating effect of endlessly struggling to satisfy *ourselves*, our egocentric preoccupation, becomes boring at best, and enough to unsettle our *kishkes* when we occasionally look ahead on the finite line of our lives. We feel a spiritual need or drive, something within us that seeks a higher connection, not simply the endless feedback loop of our own imagination and appetites and their satiation.

So the question of whether anything is yet sacred, when unpacked, may be a cry for something beyond us. The easy answer to what's sacred for us as Jews is "the Torah." But *parasha* (weekly Torah reading) *Ki Tisa* raises some provocative insights into the sanctity of the Torah.

Moses is up on the mountain to get the *luchot*, the pair of tablets, with the commandments engraved upon them. God tells him that the people had made for themselves a molten calf and they were worshipping it. (Exodus 32:7)

What do you imagine Moses thought at that moment?

Akedat Yitzchak (Rabbi Yitzchak ben Moshe Arama, 1420–1494), teaches us that, "Moses may have thought that this could have been the act of a single individual, and that God had [simply] referred to the collective responsibility

every Jew bears for the actions of another Jew." Or we might more plausibly assume that Moses knew from his encounter with God that the *whole* people had "dealt corruptly" because, at best, the majority had acquiesced in the evil of a minority.

So as he approached the camp, Moses may have expected to find apostasy. But, according to Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, 1040–1105) it was much worse: they had gone beyond idolatry to incest (commentary on Exodus 32:6) and murder, since they had killed Hur for rebuking them (commentary on 32:5). Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) comments that the pagan idolatry had passed from mistaken *ideas* to "the practical poisoning of morals and...moral excesses..." When Moses saw the calf and the dancing, the Midrash tells us, he also saw that "the words flew away" from the tablets. (Exodus Rabbah 46:1)

The people were jeopardizing the very survival of their newly acquired peoplehood by wholesale rejection of what they had been taught were the essentials of its continued existence. They were showing themselves undeserving of Adoshem's compassion, for which Moses had argued so eloquently and courageously, and they were entirely insensible to the gifts – blessings and commandments – that God had given them.

And the Torah reads: "And it came to pass when he [Moses] came close to the camp, that he saw the calf and dancing; and Moses became very angry, and he cast out of his hands the tablets, and he broke them beneath the mount." (Exodus 32:19)

Why did Moses destroy the tablets?

We may agree with Rabbi Natan, that Moses did not shatter the tablets until he had received a command to do so from God. (Avot de Rabbi Natan) Or we may agree with Rabbi Hirsch, that he smashed the Tablets based on his own feelings, not God's instructions. Rashi suggests that he wanted to punish the Israelites severely, which is why he shattered the tablets within their sight.

In any event, as Or Hachayim (Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, 1696–1744) teaches, "Clearly he would not have destroyed something unless he was convinced that by the destruction he would perform something infinitely more useful than that which he had destroyed."

Answering our question of why Moses broke the tablets hinges on whether the destruction of a holy object is ever justified. Rabbi Meir Simha Ha-Kohen (1843–1926), one of the brilliant Talmudists of his age, wrote: "Do not imagine that the Temple and Tabernacle are intrinsically holy. Far be it! The Almighty dwells amidst His children and

if they transgress His covenant, these structures become divested of all their holiness...Even the tablets – 'the writing of God' – were not intrinsically holy, but only so on account of you. The moment Israel sinned and transgressed, they [the tablets] became mere bric-a-brac, devoid of sanctity."

It's also instructive that Moses smashed the tablets beneath the mount, in the sight of the holy place in which God had given them, so clear was his purpose and his knowledge that the tablets were only a symbol. Presumably, neither God nor Torah could be diminished by shattering them, only strengthened, because they had already effectively been shattered in the experience of the people through their apostasy. We might conclude that the people had shown themselves unworthy of the Torah – their rejection of its gifts had already broken its spirit among them – so Moses, by physically breaking the tablets, compelled them to confront what they had forsaken.

Nowadays we tend to live our lives as if the Torah automatically conveys holiness, regardless of our ignorance or indifference to it. It's as if we assume that notwithstanding what we do individually or as a community, our access to Torah and its influence in our lives is undiminished at any given moment. But certainly it ceases to be sacred when we cease to sanctify it with our day-to-day actions.

And if or when the Torah becomes a ritual object, an item of *veneration* but not *emulation*, it can escape the grasp of whole generations of Jews – and that has in fact happened, with devastating effect. Its sanctity then becomes mere potential, to be tapped by future generations.

Communities that lose the Torah are hardly bereft, because many of their members never truly possessed it. But those who come after them, who have to rediscover Torah in their own time, never cease to wonder at the underserved handicap they carry throughout their lives – which almost certainly is the fate of some of our own children.

Our tradition teaches that the engraving on the stone went entirely through the tablets and was readable from both sides. But, of course, we can't imagine how that's possible, short of God's authorship.

Maybe it would be more useful, in lieu of the endless debate on the authoring of the Tablets, to consider how the tradition understands the *meaning* of this miraculous engraving – to wit: Because the *luchot* were readable from both sides, the people were not dependent on any intermediary to convey the law to them. And in this respect the *luchot* signify the freedom of human beings, on their own

(see ben Asher, page 18)

Faith and science

BY RABBI DENNIS C. SASSO



Out of fear of legal action, Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma killed Senate Bill 89, which would have allowed the teaching of biblical creationism as part of the public school science curriculum. That is good news. Bosma, however, remarked, "I didn't disagree with the concept of the bill." That commentary is sad news.

Although the study of the Bible in comparative religion or world literature classes makes perfect sense, its inclusion in the science classroom is a disservice to both religion and science. To read the Genesis account of creation through the lens of the astronomer, physicist and biologist ruins the intent of a perfectly wonderful sacred narrative. It teaches bad science and bad religion.

Science investigates, is based on experimentation and verification. It probes into the origins of the universe; it studies the origins of life, the chemistry and biology of plants, animals and human beings, following a long progression of evolution from earlier forms of life to the present and into the future.

The emphasis and purpose of the Genesis narrative (and of other biblical poetic passages about creation) is different. The Bible offers a celebration of creation. The refrain in Genesis is – *Ki Tov* – "It is good!" Genesis is a faith narrative, not a science textbook.

In *The Dragons of Eden*, Carl Sagan summarizes into one calendar year (Jan. 1–Dec. 31) the 15 billion-year unfolding of cosmic history. In fascinating detail he tells of the origins and formations of galaxies, the Earth, the appearance of the earliest plant and animal fossils and, finally, the emergence of humans. According to this compressed calendar of the lifetime of the universe, the Earth assumes its formation around mid-September; the first humans appear on the stage of cosmic history around 10:30 p.m. Dec. 31. The invention of writing does not happen 11:59:51 p.m. Most of the scientific discoveries since the Middle Ages occupy just about the last second in the cosmic calendar. Religion would teach us that these last seconds are the decisive moment of human responsibility. It is humbling and empowering!

Science helps us to decode our world and consider our place in it. It fills us with a sense of "creatureliness" and humbles us in the perspective of the vastness of it all. Religion inspires us with the moral courage to be not merely creatures of the

May immigration policy reflect Lady Liberty's spirit

BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO



This [past October], the National Park Service marked the 125th anniversary of the dedication of the Statue of Liberty. The statue was a gift from France to the United States to celebrate the friendship between the two countries and to serve as sign of the shared values of democracy and liberty. But it is the poem that was engraved on the pedestal of statue that has shaped our understanding of its symbolism.

In 1833 a young woman, Emma Lazarus, herself a fourth generation American descended from a wealthy Sephardic Jewish family whose great-great uncle welcomed George Washington to Newport, Rhode Island, wrote the words that transformed the French gift of "The Woman with a Torch" into an American "Mother of Exiles", a beacon of welcome for millions of immigrants.

Give me your tired your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

At the time, Congress was probably not paying much attention. The year Lazarus wrote that poem, Congress passed the Chinese Extradition Act. Still, over the years, millions of immigrants were greeted in America with these words of welcome.

Another poet, Thomas Aldrich, writing at the same time as Lazarus, expressed an

universe, but partners of the Divine in the ongoing drama of creation.

A Jewish prayer says, "God renews daily the works of creation." The world is constantly changing, unfolding. Evolution is not antithetical to religion. It is godly!

Twenty centuries ago, Seneca, the great Roman thinker, wrote: "Our universe... has in it something for every generation to investigate. Nature does not reveal her mysteries all at once and for all." (Natural Questions, Bk. 7)

To believe that the Bible teaches us all we need to know about the nature of the world is to exhaust not only our intellectual curiosity but to betray our sense of spirituality, awe and mystery. It is a disservice to science, religion, government and education.

Rabbi Sasso and his wife Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis since 1977. Reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star, Feb. 18, 2012. ★

opposing nativist view of immigration. His words bemoaned *unguarded gates* through which pass *a wild motley throng* who bring *unknown gods and rites, strange tongues and accents*.

I was taught Lazarus' New Colossus as a child. Until recently, I had never heard of Aldrich's poem *Unguarded Gates*. Given our present policy discussions on immigration, it seems we have forgotten Lazarus' grand embracing words, in favor of Aldrich's rejecting ones.

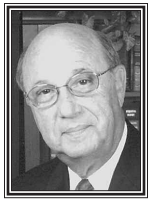
Despite the need for agricultural workers, we treat those who pick the farm produce Americans won't as criminals and do not protect them from employer abuse. We separate families, detain undocumented immigrants without benefit of due process, target and profile certain ethnic groups, seek to deny children born here health care and education. Assuredly, we need a federal immigration policy that protects national interests, but one that is also reasonable, compassionate and just.

Immigrants have made major contributions to America in science, architecture, law, journalism, medicine and music. From physicist Albert Einstein to AIDS researcher David Ho, from Secretary of State Madeline Albright to Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, from naturalist John Muir to architect Ieoh Ming Pei, our country has been transformed for the better. The songs we sing – "White Christmas" and "The Easter Parade" – were written by a Jewish immigrant from Russia, Irving Berlin. He also wrote – "God Bless America."

And that is what these immigrants did; they blessed America. And we are all the beneficiaries. As we make decisions about current immigration policy, we dare not forget that heritage. On this 125th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty, we would do well to reacquire ourselves with the poem of Emma Lazarus.

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowed world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Sasso and her husband Rabbi Dennis C. Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis since 1977. Reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star, Dec. 6, 2011. ★



Wiener's Wisdom

By RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

To believe or not believe, that is the question

It is amazing, at times, to witness a peculiar dynamic when connecting with fellow-Jews in discussing the belief in God. There are those who claim to have faith in the existence of God and there are an equal number who will describe their association with their Jewish heritage in a more secular manner, void of all reference of God.

I am reminded of something I read in "The racial motif in Renan's attitude to Jews and Judaism" which can be found in anti-Semitism through the ages:

A peculiar people, in very truth, and created to present all manners of contrasts! This people have given God to the world, and hardly believe in Him themselves. They have created religion, and they are the least religious of peoples. They have founded the hopes of humanity in a kingdom of heaven, while all its sages keep repeating to us that we must only occupy ourselves with the things of this earth.

Throughout my career within the framework of the Jewish experience, I certainly have come across evidence of this on more than one occasion. I have witnessed the devout praying constantly, learning incessantly, and preaching forgiveness through Divine acceptance. And yet the necessity to extend that knowledge to the masses is missing which, to me, eliminates any chance for continuity. When knowledge is not shared ignorance results and those who have the understanding withdraw unto themselves which defeats the very purpose of learning and sharing.

There are those who suggest that God is not a necessary ingredient in living a good life or setting an example for others because it is inherent in each of us to do marvelous things. We are endowed with the ability to be God-like without believing in God because, in reality, we are the end-all for all that happens in the world. We create and we destroy. This makes us a god in the minds of those intellectuals who believe in self-determination and self-fulfillment.

And then there are some who believe that the answer to believing lies somewhere in the middle – belief in a

Supreme Being enables us to create and destroy because that is the way of the world and the essence of creation. There can be no good without evil and vice-versa.

Perhaps the late Nobel Prize laureate, Isaac Bashevis Singer summed it up with the following observation:

In the 1920s, a Jew travels from his small Polish Shtetl to Warsaw. When he returns, he tells his friend of the wonders he has seen:

"I met a Jew who had grown up in a yeshiva and knew large sections of the Talmud by heart. I met a Jew who was an atheist. I met a Jew who owned a large clothing store with hundreds of employees, and I met a Jew who was an ardent communist."

"So what's so strange?" the friend asks. "There must be a million Jews in Warsaw."

"You don't understand," the man answers. "It was all the same Jew."

The beauty of the story, other than being a true microcosm of reality, is that we are unique, particularly because we understand the very nature of choice. All of us have the ability to choose what to believe and what not to believe because we can also reason within ourselves the opportunities for acceptance or rejection of God.

There is, in all of us, the ability to select the times or the events which promote reliance on God as a need for comfort and solace. We also, at times, determine that gratitude for the events in our lives that give us joy is necessary for fulfillment.

We as a people do not concentrate on the here-after because we know, only too well, that there can be no tomorrow without the present. Our teachings emphasize the value and importance of living for the moment and the moments that will follow to illustrate the importance of the giving of life and the purpose for which we were created. We were not created to wish for death but rather to hope for sanctity of life. It is this concentration that creates the illusion that we do not believe in God and just believe in ourselves.

One of the most frustrating comments I hear at funerals, for example, is that the person who passed is now in a better place. This says to me that this place we now occupy is bad and we wait for the time when all will be right with us. It negates the reason for our existence and denounces the concept of God's creations. The simple truth is that God did not create to destroy but rather to give us the opportunity to take the life we were given and enhance it with all that is there for us. When we die we do not go to a better place, we go to the next place which is the eternal reward promised to us as described so eloquently by the Prophet Isaiah: "No ear has heard, nor eye has seen, still it is our sure inheritance."

There is a Midrash which describes a

A Bit of Wit

Test Your Yiddish Skills

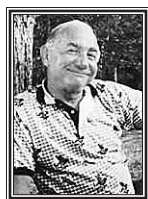
- 1) Which one of these people might best be described as "zoftig"?
a) Callista Flockhart
b) Lara Flynn Boyle
c) Kirstie Alley
d) Woody Allen
- 2) You're driving around in *eckveldt* (the boondocks) and have no idea where you are. You are:
a) *farblunget* c) *fartoost*
b) *farklemp* d) *farshvitzed*
- 3) You found it! The Holy Grail! A \$2,000 designer dress for just \$39.95! You've found a:
a) *mechayeh* c) *machashafer*
b) *mishpucheh* d) *metziah*
- 4) Which one of these people has a "*ferbisseneh punim*"?
a) Michael Jackson c) Barbara Walters
b) Leona Helmsley d) Julia Roberts
- 5) Which of these is NOT a body part?
a) *poulikie* c) *pupik*
b) *potchki* d) *punim*
(see Yiddish Test, page 9)



conversation between God and the Angels. In this conversation the Angels question as to why God would want to create human beings because they would be unworthy of such a gift as Earth and vegetation and sky, and animals. People would not really appreciate a rainbow or watch fish swim or see the marvel of a waterfall. The Angels argue that only they can truly value these wonders because they were there and saw it from the beginning. God simply states that there would be no value to what was created if there was no one there to appreciate it and nurture it and be thankful for the magnificence of life.

Perhaps this is an answer to the question as to whether to believe or not believe and can be found in each of us even when we feel the need to deny or remain self-contained. And maybe, just maybe, it is our way of believing whether we want to admit it or not. There is no litmus test for belief just a feeling that runs through us and reinforces our understanding that God is. And how we express it does not negate God's existence.

Rabbi Irwin Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. He welcomes comments at ravyitz@cox.net. ★



Spoonful of Humor

By TED ROBERTS

When me and Sophie met Isaiah

There's never been a *Bar Mitzvah* teacher who didn't loudly declare that he learns from his students – a slogan of our profession; a pious protestation that advertises our humility – our open mindedness. And occasionally, it's true. We Bar Mitzvah teachers have said it for years – a half truth. But I did learn from Betsy Silverstein – at our lunch lesson – that mustard on a Swiss cheese sandwich wasn't half bad. Her mama had run out of mayo. She also taught me that the *Haftorah* blessing could be sung to the tune of *God Bless America* and nobody but the rabbi and Irving Berlin, spinning in his grave, noticed.

But that's before I met Sophie, the student you dream of when your real-life student tells you he's converting to Buddhism because his folks have agreed to sponsor a three-month vacation in Tibet and Buddhists have no Haftorah requirement.

Sophie was a whiff of pure oxygen to a fatigued, over-age Bar Mitzvah teacher on his last gasp. Girls are always better students. Rarely do their athletic interests compete with their studies. And they're not strong enough to snap the ropes you've used to bind them to the dining room table with the Haftorah open in front of them. Girls are better. Most young ladies prefer mall to football, which though more expensive doesn't demand two hours of practice five days a week.

Besides, Sophie had a talent all too rare among teenagers. She was as obedient to her teacher as Rabbi Akivah was to Torah. Five lines of her Haftorah by Tuesday? A done deal. You could bet on it.

But her greatest attribute was her birthday, which in the complicated world of synagogue programming, landed her Bar Mitzvah smack on the 7th of August. So what, you ask. Well, the Haftorah for that day is Isaiah 49. So you might say that this 12 year old, diligent achiever introduced me to Isaiah. Oh, I knew him before, but not as well as Sophie – who due to my insistence – repeated Chapter 49, in Hebrew, ten times on tape. And obligated by my sense of responsibility, I listened ten times.

Like I say, after several similar assignments, she knew him better than I.

Well, Isaiah is her Haftorah, not mine. Why shouldn't she? (Besides, she was nowhere near my level of expertise on Amos and Jeremiah.)

"Ted," she says, "did you see those beautiful metaphors that Isaiah uses?" (I prefer "Ted" to "Mr. Roberts, my teacher and persecutor".)

Sophie had an ear for beauty. Isaiah 49:14 makes Wordsworth, Keats and even our own Hayim Bialick sound like jingle writers. The prophet who wrote almost 3,000 years ago (only a heartbeat away considering the breadth of eternity) is as fresh as Krispy Kreme Doughnuts. Naturally, he retains his charm and currency. Why should that be surprising since prophets can see over the rainbow. They know the language of every tomorrow. Shakespeare, Chaucer, even the English sonneteers of the Elizabethan Age sound rusty to our ears, but not this troubadour of Israel who wrote in a 3,000 year old lingo.

Isaiah speaks to you as though this morning you personally signed the covenant with the God whom Isaiah variously symbolizes as Mother, Father, lover, bridegroom, Feudal Lord; the awesome, but merciful magistrate that looms over your personal world. He makes the ultimate case for your acquiescence to the covenant. He has a knack for talking solely to you, as though the Book of Isaiah began, "Dear Ted" or "Dear Sophie". The prophet's song reminds us of that old love affair of God and Israel; whose Ketubah is the covenant.

This brought on a unique thought. Why couldn't the liturgy for the Holidays and Sabbath match the inspiration of Isaiah? We all have trouble coping with the length of the services and our short attention span and the dreary repetition (yes, I know it's traditional) of *Amidahs*, *Kaddishes*, and other prayers. The Amidah, gray with age; it's cluttered and clumsy language has no power after all these years. We've worn it out like a comfortable, but ragged shirt. Likewise, the Kaddish goes flat after three or four recitations. And even if the *Moshiach*, himself, arrived after the second hour of prayer, we might not notice. Who can stand on spiritual tiptoes after the second hour?

In my humble view, the overwhelming, stifling length of our service is a major attendance wrecker. Even the Baal Shem Tov had to stop his spiritual exaltation to chop wood once in a while. And who knows how many times Maimonides looked up from his prayer book to worry about that patient with the festering wound on his forearm? We are all far too human to spend hours in elevated ecstasy. A conversation with our Creator cannot be measured in earthly minutes. Two

YIDDISH TEST

(continued from 8)

- 6) He eats like a pig and wipes his face with the back of his hand, farts and picks his nose at the dinner table, and curses like a drunken sailor. He's a real:
 - a) *shnorrer* c) *grubber yung*
 - b) *gonif* d) *mensch*
- 7) Which of these is NOT an insult:
 - a) *shana maydel* c) *shmendrik*
 - b) *shmegegge* d) *shlub*
- 8) You've gone to a wild party where you've been downing vodka jello shots like candy. You can barely stand up anymore, and you've made a fool of yourself in front of everyone you know. You are totally, completely:
 - a) *fershtayst* c) *ferchadded*
 - b) *farblunget* d) *fershikert*
- 9) Which of these things would you never find at a kosher restaurant?
 - a) *shmaltz* c) *treyf*
 - b) *luckshen kugel* d) *kasha varnishkes*
- 10) Of these various uses of "*kishka*," which one is incorrect?
 - a) "Yes, waiter. I'll have the roast chicken with a side order of *kishka*."
 - b) "That Yetta, she's such a piece of *kishka*!"
 - c) "After twenty years of keeping secrets, he finally went to a shrink and spilled his *kishkas*."
 - d) "If anyone ever tried to mug me, boy, I'd give him such a *chamalyah* in the *kishkas*!"

Solution to Quiz:

Question: 1=c, 2=a, 3=d, 4=b, 5=b, 6=c, 7=a, 8=d, 9=c, 10=b

Submitted by Steve Aronson, Brooklyn. ★



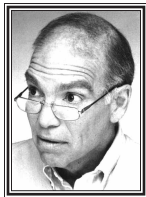
hours of prayer may not be as good as a microflash of heartfelt inspiration.

On a practical level, guess how many more Jews will come home to temple and synagogue if the service is halved?

I know an unconventional rabbi in Memphis, Tenn., who bows to tradition with a teasingly simple solution to this problem. "Cut nothing," he says. "Don't amputate the service, just jiggle your arrival time." He sees many levels of stamina in his congregation. Some come promptly at the beginning and stick it out, with joy. Others straggle in late like reluctant school boys. Finally, there's my friend, Herb – an extremist – who shows up about kiddush time. "I rarely miss *Adon Olam*," he claims.

I say – give 'em more of Isaiah and his prophetic colleagues instead of repetitive Kaddishes and Amidahs and their like. I'll

(see Roberts, page 19)



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

A zealot is a zealot

In 1951, the Longshoreman/philosopher Eric Hoffer published *The True Believer* where he postulated that all extreme philosophies and movements were pretty much the same. Whether called Communism, Fascism, militant Islam or the Settler Movement, their tactics, extremism and lack of common sense are pretty much the same.

Hoffer said "a dissenting minority feels free only when it can impose its will on the majority. What it abominates most is the dissent of the majority." So, we see militant Islam killing many, many more Muslims than Christians, Jews, and agnostics together. We see the same tactics in Stalin's Soviet Union as in Hitler's Germany. Stalin, by actual count killed more Jews than Hitler and was accepted as our ally in the war.

You cannot shake the true believer. He is dedicated to a non-existent past or a long gone concept or something that never existed in which to become involved so that he is not alone. He does not listen to reason. He is not interested in reason. There is no shaking him. He can quote chapter and verse to prove his thesis. He is stalwart. Much like the true non-believer that felt if God wanted man to fly he would have grown wings on him.

The True Believer can always quote some scripture that proves his point. Never mind the accuracy of the quote or the bona fides of the person they are quoting. The guy on the corner of the intersection with the sign proclaiming "The End is Near" is pretty well harmless. As the traffic thins and the lights go out, he will retreat to his hovel and be back the next day. But, he does not disrupt traffic; he does not toss a bomb into the crowd to get their attention. The True Believer on the other hand, must convert the rest of us. Because, we are obviously missing the point.

The Settler Movement draws most of its financial support from those thousands of miles away who have no skin in the game. They send checks as their participation in this particular True Believer Movement. Interesting. Hoffer said if you start in the center and bend equally the far left and the far right, the two philosophies will meet at the bottom of the circle where they may interchange place cards.

Was there a time when Israel controlled from the Litani to the Euphrates?

Perhaps. There was also a time when there was no sacred and holy Land of Israel, before our forefathers followed God's dictum and "came into the land to possess it". And while it is true that The People of the Book are back in the land of the Book never to leave, ever again, we live in the real world. We have to make accommodations. Be cool if we did not have to, but reality is reality.

Therefore, there is little to be gained and a ton to be lost by ripping up olive trees and defacing mosques. And it is an act of treason to attack an army base of your own country. Yes, these are a few zealots and do not reflect in any way the majority of Israelis, left center or right, and that is just the point.

They are the True Believers, nothing you can do or say will sway that belief. Any more than you can talk reason to the 18-year-old Arab strapping the suicide belt on his chest as he prepares for his 72 virgins on the other side. No, we do not in our heritage qualify killers as "martyrs".

The Ultra-Orthodox classify as True Believers. But, like the guy on the corner with the sign, they too are pretty much harmless. Yes, they tend to throw stones at cars driving on Shabbat, they dress like they are at a never ending costume party, but they do not create mayhem.

More wars are fought, more people die because of religion than any other reason. To burn Jews at stakes, to create a Holocaust; the perpetrators, be they priests, kings or mad dictators must be true believers.

To throw away the generations of work spent in re-inserting our people into the Middle East you have no regard for history, the future or the consequences of your actions.

The Israelis are divisive, passionate and dedicated to the survival and flourishing of the State. They will not tolerate missiles from Gaza, suicide bombers on their busses or random stabbings in the Old City. And, they cannot tolerate a militant minority bent on recreating a time before the world was as it is today.

Unfortunately, the Israeli political system is designed to give too much power to tiny minority parties, who can in fact, bring down a government. Religious groups like Shas can be bought off by using government funding to allow their adherents to spend a life studying at the expense of the State. No such tactic will win over militant Settlers. They know that God is on their side. So do the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommunications. He began his working life in radio in Philadelphia. He has written his JP&O column for more than 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. Submitted Jan. 18, 2012. ★



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

Hold your horses

In studying a foreign language, you may have thought that native speakers spoke too fast at first, but slowed down over time. It is unlikely that the natives ever changed the pace of their speech. Rather, they probably used speech "shortcuts" you had never encountered before. Speech shortcuts often entail omitting "weak" consonants such as "h" or "y," and omitting a vowel at the end of a word that precedes a vowel. For example, a native English speaker may mean to say "the United States," or "to appeal," or "to each his own." But, unaware of his own speech shortcuts, the native may actually pronounce "the nighted states" and "ta peel" and "t' each 'is own," which sounds like "teach zone." As a language learner becomes fluent, he learns the natives' speech shortcuts and "hears through" them. Until that point, shortcuts impede comprehension.

For two millennia, most Jews have been Hebrew learners, not native Hebrew speakers. And for most of that time, prayer books and Hebrew Bibles were uncommon. As a result, congregants could only listen to prayer-leaders recite prayers or scripture, but could not follow in books. If a leader took speech shortcuts, congregants often could not understand what was recited. Modern radio announcers understand the relationship between diction and comprehension. Likewise, the Tiberian scribes who devised vowel-marks for Hebrew texts understood that a prayer leader's speech shortcuts could confuse congregants. So the Tiberians devised a sign to warn of speech shortcuts. The sign is a vertical line called a "metheg," which is placed beneath any syllable a reader is likely to mispronounce.

The name "metheg" means "a bit in a horse's mouth." The choice of name is not fortuitous. When a rider pulls on reins, a horse notices the bit in its mouth and slows down. A metheg beneath a word is the scribes' cue to the modern reader, "Hold your horses! There's a speech trap here!" In *Parshat Beshallah*, for example, a metheg occurs under the second syllable of the word "u-fa-ra-shav" ("and his horsemen"). The metheg warns the reader not to shorten the word to "uf-ra-shav," meaning "his dung piles."

Prayer books and other non-Biblical (see Ben-Mordecai, page 19)



Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

A new *Porgy and Bess*

Can you imagine the American musical theater existing without the Gershwins – or Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein? Or, for that matter, the numerous other songwriters and lyricists – immigrant Jews and their descendants who hailed from Eastern Europe? Their contributions have been incalculable. Broadway, Hollywood, and the musical comedy world would indeed have been barren without their existence.

But back to the Gershwins – and George Gershwin and *Porgy and Bess* in particular. What George Gershwin conceived to be an American folk opera became his *Porgy and Bess*, written in the 1930s and opening on Broadway in 1935. It would go on to become a classic, deeply cherished worldwide and occupying a niche of its own, somewhere between opera and Broadway show. As for Gershwin himself, it was, in many ways, the height of his career – in fact his swan song – since he died two years later, his life cut short by a brain tumor while in his 30s. But other contributions as well must be credited for the success of

“Porgy”: his brother Ira’s lyrics, as well as the original story and adaptation by DuBose and Dorothy Heyward.

And now a new version of the classic appears on the Broadway stage, a “Porgy” for the modern age, as its ads proclaim. With good reason, the show has been retitled *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*, for new professionals have been brought in to achieve drastic changes. The show has been stripped down, made more gritty, more real, with less emphasis on the glorious Gershwin tunes. What emerges is a world of real people (that of South Carolina’s coastal blacks), and a strong sense of place. Despite racism (strongly evident in this production), poverty, and threatened violence, a strong community emerges.

This “Porgy” is, in its own right, sensational. The entire cast is in sync, working beautifully in ensemble. Choreographer Ronald K. Brown has created marvelous routines which evoke an African background. And certainly topping the cast is Audra McDonald as Bess. McDonald gives a performance, from the moment she comes on stage, of subtlety and individuality. Her struggle between good and evil, between determination and temptation is written in every movement. She fights her demons each moment, and shares them with the audience. Other characters are less delineated, as the story goes, but give strong performances all the same. Topping the list is Norm Lewis as Porgy. This time around, he is not legless, but crippled – enough to make him a target of mockery and sympathy. He is a good



Audra McDonald and Norm Lewis as the leads in *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*.

man, the first in Bess’s life, and the chemistry between them (the characters and the actors) is vibrant.

David Alan Grier is a sinuous, slinking Sporting Life, the very essence of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Others give equally fine support – Phillip Boykin as the violent Crown, NaTasha Yvette Williams as the nurturing Mariah, as well as Bryonha Marie Parham, Nikki Renee Daniels, and Christopher Innvar. Innvar, incidentally, who plays the bullying white police officer, is one of only two white players in this mostly-black cast. There is no question that the show would be cast in this way, whatever might be said for cross-racial casting in other plays. Such casting simply adds to the authenticity of the show.

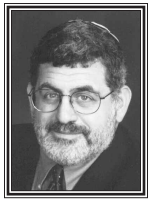
A minor criticism: one wonders why there are no children in this community, except for one infant (so necessary to the story). Certainly these several couples would have had children. But why spend time quibbling over this one lapse from reality?

In all, *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess* is a marvelous addition to the New York season. This differently-conceived production deepens the understanding, the value, and the glory of *Porgy and Bess*. Hopefully it will have a long run on Broadway.

Theater critic Irene Backalenick covers theater for national and regional publications. She has a Ph.D. in theater criticism from City University Graduate Center. Her book *East Side Story – Ten Years with the Jewish Repertory Theatre won a first-place national book award in history*. She welcomes comments at IreneBack@sbcglobal.net and invites you to visit her website: nytheater.scene.com or at: jewish-theatre.com. ✪



Norm Lewis as Porgy (seated right) and the ensemble in *The Gershwins’ Porgy and Bess*. Photos by Michael J. Lutch.



Addictions Counselor

By RABBI STEVEN M. LEAPMAN

Pema & Parve & Pace

The world exists only on account of the one who disregards one's own existence.

~ Bavli: Hullin 89a

*If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
If I am not for others, what am I? And if not
now, when. ~ Rabbi Hillel*

While a student at the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 1985-86, I came to believe I needed another semester or even two in preparation for my rabbinate. This meant staying in Israel a second academic year. Not an easy call! But given costs, "calls" were all we could afford to send across the Atlantic during these difficult months. Compelling reasons existed for me to complete my required first year in Israel then commence courses back in the U.S. that same autumn. During what would be my "first" year overseas my family endured pressing health and personal challenges. It is a tribute to my loved ones that they remained committed to my training at HUC-JIR, even while it meant my being far from our corner of Pennsylvania as losses and uncertainty mounted.

The deaths of two grandparents and a beloved uncle, the dissolution of an aunt's twenty-five-year marriage, another severe medical crisis faced by Dad, even a pet's dying, were addressed via phone lines only. Much of what I knew from childhood, and many who had been fixtures of youth and adolescence, were swept aside, soon to dwell either in Eternity or memory but no longer just across town. A shift of personalities and those remaining present prompted realigned priorities. With seminary as a backdrop, a fresh absence of loved ones altered my perspective. It was as if a deeper awareness beckoned me to evaluate anything or anyone I thought "permanent." I would need to let go of guidance and insight from long-trusted sources. As sickness and adversity reshaped the family, much of what had been constant was called into question. Much of "me" too! Does maturity arise as we submit to the eventual erosion of childhood's certainties?

As I write these words, words which reflect a phase of emerging awareness now nearly 30 years in the past, I confess

to a poignant self-centeredness that pains me. This narrative depicts my reaction to a series of deaths and transitions, but my truth, my centeredness, was one of a young adult moving earnestly and somewhat insensitively into his late 20s; for others this time primarily meant the passage of a parent, for others it meant their parents' marriage was over. It is both understandable and sorrowful how adversity forces us into a self-first orientation that blinds us to what life is doing to others. Yet, ignorance cannot excuse self-absorption.

The same stroke that ends one's years also concludes a time of suffering. The same divorce that terminates a failed romance, allows a couple's shared unhappiness to find resolution elsewhere, if apart. The same collapse of health that curtails one's vigor, also entices compassion and devotion. Please understand, it is no betrayal of our loved ones to recognize the seemingly rude and abrupt entry of suffering into our lives, but is utterly foolish to deny or pretend suffering cannot or will not or must not penetrate our days and doings. This is delusional. We can, however, use our heritage and its wisdom, so that what our sages and circumstances teach us, may be positioned as cognitive and spiritual bulwarks against despair. There needs to be an antidote to the emphasis we place on "self" as the years scurry by. "Time" doesn't race, we do!

Humility becomes a rare and precious commodity when fear dominates conviction; when perception is hostage to what is tenuously rooted in "wants vs. needs", it is understandable for fear and ego rule the day. The Torah depicts times and teachings where a character's ego did not capitulate to harsh conditions. Rebecca may be seen as manipulative and calculating on behalf of Jacob, yet she held to her vision despite assorted upheavals she encountered. Later, Jacob would observe his children's acrimonious behavior, and though hardly the unbiased or always-sensitively supportive father (just ask Dinah!), Jacob was able to contain his insights; the Torah records his ability to keep the matter to himself.

God does not appear as the most appreciative mentor to Moses, whose singular act of rebellion in striking the rock, loses Moses entry into The Promised Land. God may have been trying to make a point, but we suffer for Moses' plight and Divine stringency, given Moses' overall track record of putting others first. These tales reflect episodes where people stepped aside from themselves. They adopt a position of detachment or a posture of neutrality regarding self-interest,

or so it seems. How do we learn to step aside from self?

What then to make of "self" and any hope we might have of serenity, especially given changing conditions in our lives, adjustments neither sought nor amenable at first approach? It hardly appears rational or right to assume "self" remains stable as our lives evolve! To better understand the questions I was asking, I found guidance in the thoughts of American Buddhist nun Pema Chodron, specifically her CD titled, *Start Where You Are*. She teaches that in Buddhist thought there are three kinds of people we encounter. There are those we are fond of and "like" (though not in a Facebook fashion). Then, no surprise, there are those we strongly dislike. As yet, there is no neutrality. The emotions ride betwixt "either – or."

Chodron's next insight struck a chord deep, the same decades-old chord of understandable-yet-persistent-self-absorption I noted earlier. All the forces which shape my reality can impact others far differently and maybe more drastically. Pema Chodron shares that while it is understandable to wish favored ones well, and nasty ones their due desserts, those for whom we have little regard may prompt our greatest growth. I use the Jewish dietary category of *parve* here. We have not assigned them category nor condition. They have no assigned attachment, free of our impositions, expectations, or inclinations.

Such souls may have their meanings and motives, yet none of them are yet to be distorted or deliberated in our favor or against. When Tradition praises one for making a friend of a former enemy, what is being praised is really an adjustment of inclination. Yet, to move hastily across the *parve* spectrum means we ignore a vital space in the heart and head. We moderns move so rapidly we feel compelled to attribute qualities to places where the heart has yet to resolve conviction or reach any consensus.

What is it that makes another human being "neutral" in our value scheme? Are we ignoring something that requires generosity? Are we according someone too much attention? Are we blind to what others may see as a treasure or a tragedy? And then, as we do come to evaluate and embrace, or evaluate and eject another, what is the true cause of all we place on that "other?" A brief interview with our own needs and neediness is also a modern *mitzvah*, especially as whatever traits we stick on another person or situation can well determine that person's destiny or set the stage for our very own desperation and pending disappointment.



Confidentially Yours

BY AVI & ADELE

First-date cancellations make poor first impressions

Dear Avi and Adele,

I'm a 29 year-old Jewish professional and I don't have a problem meeting men. I find it easy to have either email or phone conversations and these potential suitors generally express a lot of interest in getting to know me. But as soon as we make plans for an actual date, I've noticed that the communication takes a nose dive and more than once he will cancel at the very last minute – often by text. Why can't these men commit to a first date? ~ Frustrated and Farmisht

Dear Frustrated and Farmisht:

When any adult makes plans and then breaks them at the last minute, they are telling you exactly where you rank in their world. Sometimes cancellations are just fine: you should rank lower than a sick parent, a car accident or a true emergency. But in the cases that you're mentioning, we're guessing that your date ranked you lower than a work endeavor, a personal project, or (gasp!) a better date.

The most problematic element, though, is that he just doesn't care about making a good first impression. Which means he doesn't care about any impression he makes with you.

But back to your original question: Why? We're not really sure why someone would so blatantly cut off an opportunity at the knees. And if he's really not a bad guy, he'll make it up to you. Our guts tell us, though, that he's probably long gone after that cancellation.



Invite all that appears to be "parve" deeper into your consciousness, so it will show you its vitality and splendor, its biases and suppositions. It may be a great blessing, or at least, a great awakening! Either way, the "self" will never be the same. Nor can it!

Rabbi Steven M. Leapman, LMHC, LCAC is licensed as a clinical addictions and mental health counselor in the State of Indiana. He is a former US Navy / USMC chaplain who currently serves a staff therapist at Samaritan Counseling Center in South Bend, Ind. He is interested in pastoral and general counseling, bereavement and loss, interfaith relations, and creative writing. ★

The thoughts we apply, and the speed with which we apply them, are not without consequence. This happens endlessly in personal, business, congregational, or organizational settings where a person, place or thing, which has no reason to tote our emotional baggage is suddenly saddled with all that we wished for, or all that wished against!

Thus, I conclude with the word "pace." It is healthy and necessary to respond to our environment. We are not without feelings and are usually far from devoid of thoughts. But what is the worth and content of those ruminations? Where we risk discontentment is when we do not allow events to unfold without our immediate assessment in terms of our gain or our loss, our betterment or our betrayal. That which is neutral, that which is "parve," will clearly disclose whatever we place upon it! Questions tell us much about those who pose them! Perceptions declare much about those who possess them!

Just as we do not allow ready entry into our homes for an unwanted guest or into our workplaces any unsought colleagues, we are bound to question how rapidly we form alliances, how readily we move from one extreme to another, from one perception to its unfolding. It is easy, indeed numbingly automatic, to react to our world as we have grown accustomed to its place in our minds. Yet the mind is equally malleable and hardly always trustworthy. It is idolatrous to make of these assessments anything more or less than a passing surety.

The fact is that the grounds of one's neutrality are a very rough-hewn surface; these surfaces contain impressions of all the biases and the best intentions which have carried us to this emotional space and place in our lives. Maybe my neutralities aren't so necessarily "neutral." I may be unaware of what I impose, I may be disconnected from what I believe, I may be detached from what I feel, but in allowing these seemingly neutral corners to remain unnoticed or unexamined is to fall into entropy and confusion.

Such neglect of what one holds to be certain will do a soul little good, nor does it set a healthy standard of spirituality for the community. I must not only attend to what I feel strongly and believe passionately, I must be attentive to what is evolving-if-somewhat-still-hidden within my head and heart. Otherwise, I have overlooked what appears to be neutral, what appears to be inactive, what seems to be insignificant.

Disregarding that material is a hallmark of complacency and a potential for ruin.

Unfortunately, in his mind, he'll likely see you as being inflexible if you communicate that it's not cool to cancel a first date. If you'd like to contribute to the betterment of mankind, consider voicing how lame this behavior is, but don't expect an enlightened response.

How to prevent such unattractive behavior? Do like Adele does when she goes to a new hairdresser: ask if they've ever screwed up (in your case, on a first date. In Adele's case, on a perm.) The good ones will fess up to minor (and perhaps even major) transgressions, and the less-good will likely tell you that they've never faltered, that their first kisses are accompanied by Francis Scott Key and full fireworks, and that they've only dated "crazy" girls. Run, don't walk, from the latter, and schedule your dates with the former in ink.

Sexy Texts, i.e. Sexts, Cause Discomfort

Dear Avi and Adele,

My boyfriend and I have been dating for 6 months. We're having a lot of fun getting to know each other. While I've been dating him, my guy friend of 5 years (who I met when he and I were counselors at a Jewish camp and who I've always had a platonic relationship with) has been sending me somewhat suggestive "sexts" about how things are going and inquiring about my personal life in this relationship. I think he means well, but I don't really know to respond to these texts that are sexual in nature – it sorta feels like he's prying. How should I handle this?

~ Flumoxed

Dear Flumoxed:

Tell him to stop. Now. Don't think that you have to be polite or pussyfoot around. Don't just ignore them, thinking they will go away. Tell him that your sex life is your business.

Guys typically respond well to direct instructions. If you're feeling girly and insecure, you can add the words "Please" and "Thank you" into your directions. And if you've ever responded to them, or if in past relationships you were prone to kissing and telling, let him know that these are the new rules, effective now.

Then, after he confirms that he will send you no more sexts, make sure you've erased all the old ones for your own mental well-being.

Livin' and Lovin', Avi and Adele

To submit questions to Confidentially Yours: Avi and Adele, please email aa@letmypeoplegrow.org. For additional Jewish content, please go to www.letmypeoplegrow.org. ★



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Of Marilyn and Sherlock

My week with Marilyn

In 1956 23-year-old Colin Clark, scion of a distinguished British family, was looking to break into movie production. By sheer persistence he won the position as an assistant to Sir Lawrence Olivier, who was preparing to direct and to act in a film with Marilyn Monroe. By default and by desire, Clark became Monroe's watchdog.

My Week with Marilyn is the moving yet discomfiting film version of a memoir that Clark (Edie Redmayne), who was to distinguish himself in the documentary field, published decades later. Clark proved to be a keen observer of Monroe's entourage, including her then husband, celebrated playwright Arthur Miller. Directed by Simon Curtis and written by Adrian Hodges, this film is breathtaking in its psychological perspectives and British panoramas.

In this motion picture the floodgates to vulgarity open with the appearance on the scene of Monroe's publicist, a Mr. Jacobs (Toby Jones), who intones the first four-letter word. The Brits follow suit after that. Jacobs also introduces crude references to Miss Monroe's anatomy. Referring to Arthur Miller, it is Jacobs who dismisses "all those pain in the ass New York intellectuals" as "reds."

Also coarse is one Milton Greene (Dominic Cooper), whose dialogue begins with the disclaimer that he owns 49%, and not half, of Monroe's production company. He turns out to be very much the bottom line guy, who pops pills into the star's mouth so that she will be productive.

Then there is drama coach Paula Strasberg (Zoe Wanamaker), constantly on hand to bring "the method" to Marilyn's neurotic, passive aggressive sort of madness. At first Strasberg comes across as a domineering sour puss. Soon, however, she is calling Marilyn "bubeleh" like a (rather forced) Jewish mother.

As for Arthur Miller (Dougray Scott), he offers Marilyn (Michelle Williams, in a stunning performance) no emotional or moral support whatsoever. He scribbles descriptions of her (or an actress based on her, for a play) which are hurtful and devastating, and leaves them around for her to find them and to obsess on them.



Marilyn's theory that he did this on purpose seems more plausible than paranoid. He can hardly stay around her, declaring, "She's drowning me." Declaring that he "needs a break" he leaves England to return to New York for a few days, using his kids as an excuse for such flagrant abandonment. When we discover that she was pregnant, Miller comes across as an even bigger cad.

Yes, most of Marilyn's handlers, including her trophy intellectual husband who wanted a trophy sex symbol wife, are Jews, with the exception of Colin, her security man, the local production crew (whom she is constantly holding up) and of course, Olivier (Kenneth Branagh), who is cruel to her while admiring her chemistry in front of the camera. Monroe has been consistently late and petulant and unprofessional and scared. The pivotal scene is her escape for a day at the lake with Colin and the security man. She seduces Colin into some sensual encounters, without submitting to him in any way. She seems to delight even more in her own manipulations than he does.

My Week with Marilyn may well be subtitled, "Escape from the Jews." There is actually a scene in which Colin protects her from Greene and Strasberg by literally barricading her bedroom door from within. In the film, Strasberg appears devoted and sincere, but also tragically unwilling to deal with the sex symbol's mental and emotional issues. ("I love you like a daughter. You're the greatest actress who ever lived.") Miller just leaves and returns at will. Greene had already warned, "Try and change her and she will drive you crazy." The Marilyn of this film does not want to change. Nor does she seem able to.

Even while toying with Colin's emotions, Monroe resolves that "when this movie is over I'm going to be a good wife" to Miller. "I'm going to make matzo ball soup as good as his dad." Is this a film in search of Jewish men who can make matzo balls?

Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows

A second splendid Sherlock Holmes spectacular, offered by Guy Ritchie and a staff of writers, and featuring the impressive Robert Downey, Jr. in the title role, fills the screen with lavish, almost surreal panoramas of city and country, exciting action scenes, engaging and thoughtful plot and characters, and literate dialogue.

Holmes engages in a declared war with arch villain Professor Moriarty (Jared Harris), who conspires to incite France and Germany to war in order to enrich himself through a number of war-dependent industries, including a munitions factory in Germany. Moriarty is pioneering in terrorist methods, like bombings, in order to get his way. He goes after Holmes' good friend and collaborator, the newly married Dr. Watson (Jude Law), as "collateral damage" in a grueling war of wits and weapons.



There are no Jews in this one. The beautiful and wily Miss Adler (Rachel McAdams), who may or may not have been Jewish, is killed off right away, in this episode at least. When the first Sherlock Holmes film appeared two years ago, Ritchie was criticized for trivializing Kabbalah. He leaves Kabbalah alone here. The only Jewish reference is Holmes' surprising use of a Yiddish expression at the beginning of the film. He utters the word, "noshing," while referring to Dr. Watson's increase in weight.

Is Ritchie teasing those who resisted the Kabbalah references in Holmes I with an opening Yiddish salvo? More startling than the uttered Yiddishism are certain pictorial motifs in the absence of any reference to Jews and Judaism.

In addition to protecting Watson, Holmes must shield a gypsy woman, in pursuit of a brother brainwashed by Moriarty, from the evil professor's assassins. Holmes enters the gypsy camp and enlists the gypsy woman's help as he heads to the munitions factory where her brother may be held. Then there are haunting scenes of German soldiers, allied with Moriarty, chasing Holmes and Watson and gypsies through the forests. There are new German weapons and diabolical medical experiments by German physicians.

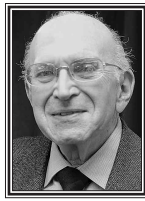
Both the factory and the forests appear surreal, but the scenes come across as real and are familiar enough. It is like watching a Holocaust film about an era almost fifty years before the Nazi war against the Jews. Gypsies were also victims of the Holocaust. Could Ritchie's film be rendering gypsies the first victims of war-mongering Germans? Does he circumvent Jews in order to avoid complaints or because he wanted to provide an explanation for the Holocaust?

After all, as Moriarty admonishes Holmes, "You are not fighting me as much as you are [fighting] the human condition...All that I have to do is wait." The implication here is that the human drive to war and cruelty is so strong that it was only a matter of time, and not much time, before greater barbarities occur, such as the campaign to destroy an entire people.

Visually speaking, if not in the text itself, this film comes across as a prophecy of the Holocaust, as an early indictment of the Germans for putting their efforts into building an ominous and lethal military industrial complex that could lead only to evil.

Whether the film educates audiences in the conditions that can result in genocide, including the human condition itself, remains to be seen. In the meantime, however, it is cultivating within a large and diverse audience of all ages, including countless young people, an appreciation of clever use of language and of proper grammar. Where else can you hear turns of the phrase like, "It's so overt, it's covert." In what other film will you hear, during a moment of chilling and pivotal suspense, "To whom did you send the telegram"? A film that reintroduces the word, "whom," into the English language can't be a bad thing.

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. A native of Springfield, Mass., he attended Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, *What Jews Know about Salvation* and *Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and*



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Klezmer character

I recently came across an unusual CD to which I would like to call attention. It is called *Border Crossings* and features the talented duo of Nathan Kolosko playing guitar and Carl Dimow, who plays the bass flute. I would make the analogy that size-wise a bass flute is to a flute what a flute is to a piccolo, or what a cello is to a violin. The range is lower than a flute giving the lower notes a sensuous quality and it is more powerful in its upper register than a normal flute.

The CD was first brought to my attention because the title of one of the pieces referred to the unusual street name, Bacon Street, the location of a modest synagogue I often attend in Biddeford, Maine. (More on this below.)

This is the second CD released by this duo and the title refers to the integration of different styles ("classical music, world music and jazz") with *Klezmer* character often an added factor. Indeed Mr. Dimow is a member of a group called the Casco Bay Tumblers who regularly perform in this area and add their talents to enhance many a happy occasion.

The opening selection features the guitar in a composition by Baden Powell and it is apparent from the "get go" that Mr. Kolosko is a virtuoso guitarist. The second piece, in four movements is called "Nayarit" and was written by Kolosko. It is an atmospheric piece. That is to say that if one wants some quiet background music for a candlelight dinner this would do very nicely. That said, it is also much more than that because the music successfully attempts to portray ideas found in the story called "The Pearl" by John Steinbeck. Both instrumentalists lend their considerable talents in portraying the feelings suggested by the different titles.

What was of more interest to me was the "Klezmer Suite" the second of the three works on this disc. There are four distinct pieces in this Suite. (The word



Suite usually refers to a series of dance-like pieces that comprise a larger work. Examples range from the Suites by J.S. Bach to the Latin American Symphonette by Morton Gould. Sic)

The first piece "Tarras" is a "Doina, a type of rhapsodic fantasy inspired by the playing of the legendary clarinetist Dave Tarras. If one has never heard quarter tones and various pitches in between I encourage you to listen to this. This technique is normally in the territory of a Klezmer clarinetist, but Mr. Dimow has this technique down to a science. The second piece is called "Casco Bay Chusdl/Bacon Street Bulgar." "A Chusdl is a walking dance; a Bulgar is an up-tempo, joyous dance. The second title comes from an annual dance party featuring the Tumblers which takes place at Temple Etz Chayim, on Bacon Street in Biddeford, Maine. The tempo marking for that section of the tune is 'sizzling'."

For any readers who have not heard Klezmer music or anything about the origin of the term the following is a brief background. In the 19th century in Eastern Europe, *Klezmerim* (plural of Klezmer) were itinerant musicians who eked out a living by traveling from village to village supplying happy, dance like music for weddings and other joyous occasions. The standard number of players in the group was not set but usually included an accordion, violin, clarinet, trumpet and some kind of drum.

Klezmer music in this country started to become popular in the last decades of the previous century. It can now be studied in many academic institutions and it was given a stimulus by such groups of the New England Conservatory Klezmer Ensemble CD's. There is a similarity between Jazz and Klezmer music in that after a melody is introduced by the full ensemble, each individual performer improvises on that tune. The melody is not so much developed as it is embellished by each performer.

The third dance is called "Dreams of Yesterday and Tomorrow" and is based on both Jewish and Middle Eastern musical styles. The last piece "Oriental Hora" which to put it mildly is a very wild and happy dance. The concluding work on the CD is "Afro Sambas" by Baden Powell. While Argentinean in origin, it still has a Klezmer flavor to my ears.

Sometimes less is more and so it is with the pairing of Kolosko and Dimow. This pair can sound like a much larger group or they can evoke an intimate chamber music like sound. Whatever it is they do, they do very well and I am pleased to recommend this CD.

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor, and columnist to the Post & Opinion. He may be reached at: Drmortongold@yahoo.com. ★

Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic for The Jewish Post & Opinion since 1979. ★

Israel, Special Olympics, Co-Existence

A remarkable young man volunteering for the IDF

Elad Gevandschnaider, 23 years old, was born with Down's Syndrome. Because of his disability Elad, is not required to serve in the Israeli Army, still, he decided to volunteer. It started with two years of national service in a primary school in the southern part of Israel, Beer Sheva, and now Elad has just learned he has been accepted to serve two more years at an Israeli army equipment base. As a volunteer soldier, Elad has dreamed of the day when he would be able to wear a real soldier's uniform and serve his country. Talk to Elad and he will tell you that the primary reason he has been able to do something that no other special needs person has done in the history of Israel, and he will tell you the story of his love for tennis and how the Israel Tennis Centers have been the focal point of his life for many years.

Elad has been playing tennis for six years. He is the son of immigrants who arrived in Israel in the 1960's: his father is Polish and his mother hails from Morocco. The family lives in Beer Sheva and Elad trains three times a week at the Israel Tennis Center near his home: twice in the Special Tennis Program and once on the Achievement Program where he competes with all the other children. At the end of February, Elad will travel to Florida for three weeks to participate in exhibition matches in order to raise funds for the Israel Tennis Centers ("ITC") and the special needs children programs – marking the first time that a player with special needs will travel to the United States and represent the Tennis Center Foundation in such an event.

In the past year and a half, Elad has made great progress with his tennis. It started at the National Special Olympics tournament which was followed by the European Championships held in Warsaw, Poland in February 2010. Elad, during his first tournament abroad, won the silver medal; it was very emotional for his Polish father, who accompanied him to the tournament. Elad's father Yossi Gevandschnaider noted that, "When Elad was 17 his physical education teacher suggested he try to play tennis. I didn't even realize that he was talented or that he had any potential for success. His coaches proposed that he start competing in tournaments organized by the Special Olympics organization which works with

the ITC. We started traveling to tournaments throughout Israel where Elad achieved some great results."

In June 2011, Elad continued with his international success – this time at the World Games for Special Olympics in Athens, Greece. Four players went out to represent Israel: Elad, Tamir Segal (ITC – Kiryat Shmona) and two Arab children who train at the Tennis Centers in Jerusalem, Muhammad Kunbar and Jafar Tawil. It was the first time that Arab sportsmen represented Israel at an international Special Olympics event and both came from the tennis programs of the Israel Tennis Centers. Elad won the silver medal in singles and in the true spirit of Co-Existence, he won the bronze doubles medal with Muhammad Kunbar.

When they returned to Israel, the athletes attended receptions hosted by the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu and the President, Shimon Peres. The most emotional moment of the reception with the President came when Elad, who even before the Games in Greece was filmed for a television commercial singing the "Hatikva", was asked by Peres himself to stand and sing it again. Elad stood up and sang the Israeli Anthem in its entirety in front of the whole crowd.

The Israel Tennis Centers Foundation (ITC) (www.israeltenniscenters.org/) is a 501 (c) 3 non profit organization that has worked for over 35 years to enhance the social, psychological, and physical development of Israeli youth through the medium of sport. Most of ITC Centers are located in disadvantaged neighborhoods or outlying development towns throughout Israel, from Kiryat Shmona on the Lebanese border in the North to Beer Sheva bordering the Negev Desert in the South. ★

Spring festivals

BY SHLOMO BEN YITZHAK HALEVI
(DR. ANTHONY REBUCK)

"People ask me what I do in winter when there's no baseball. I'll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring."
~ Rogers Hornsby

"There are three things in my life which I really love: God, my family, and baseball. The only problem – once baseball season starts, I change the order around a bit."
~ Al Gallagher, 1971

"Baseball? It's just a game – as simple as a ball and a bat. Yet, as complex as the American spirit it symbolizes. It's a sport, business – and sometimes even religion."
~ Ernie Harwell

The Game for All America, 1955.

On the airport bus to Tel Aviv to catch the flight to Toronto, I asked what the name of the city meant – "Mound of Spring" I was told. Inevitably my mind drifted to whom would be on the mound for the Blue Jays after Spring Training.

Interesting isn't it that when thousands of sports fans were wondering if Manchester C would beat Manchester U in England, or if Sachin Tendulkar would get his 100th century at the Melbourne Cricket Ground or if Yusain Bolt would win another three golds in London, it was baseball's Spring Training that drew my mind.

Are sports fans who get intoxicated with Spring Training absolutely crazy or is there really something special about that annual ritual?

Observant baseball fans have been traveling to the Spring Training Festival for
(see Rebeck, page 19)



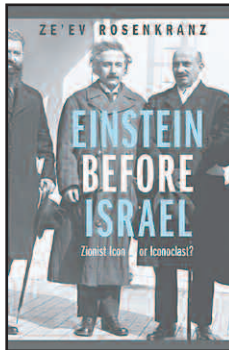
Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Einstein and Zionism

Einstein Before Israel. By Ze'ev Rosenkranz. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. 362 Pages. \$35.

As senior editor at the Einstein Papers Project at the California Institute of Technology and former curator, Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University, Rosenkranz has been in "the Einstein business for 22 years." He is familiar with and has ready access to Einstein's papers which he used fully for this book and for a previous one, *The Einstein Scrapbook*. Before moving to California in 2002, Rosenkranz emigrated from Vienna to Israel in 1981. His "youthful idealism" about Zionism gave way to the "harsh, cynical reality of Israeli society." He calls himself a "post-Zionist" and is critical about Israel having largely forgotten about Einstein to the point that the name "Einstein" leads Israelis to think of a pop star named Arik Einstein rather than scientist Albert Einstein.



Rosenkranz frankly acknowledges his own somewhat jaundiced views at the outset of the book, recognizing their influence on its content, claiming that it is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss Zionism with "complete impartiality." However, he insists that his treatment of his subject, Einstein and Zionism, has been approached "with a maximum amount of objectivity." This is a hard claim to justify since Rosenkranz opens the book by quoting Einstein as saying, "The Zionists are shameless and importunate..."

The exploration of Einstein's relationship to Zionism is limited to the years from 1919 when Einstein was widely recognized for his general theory of relativity to 1933 when Einstein left Germany to settle in Princeton, N.J. Before beginning this discussion, Rosenkranz devotes an introductory chapter to Einstein's family background and his youth which included anti-Semitic encounters even though his parents were not observant and he had no *bar mitzvah*. Also, his first wife was not Jewish. Although they had two sons, the

marriage ended in divorce and Einstein then married his cousin, Elsa.

Einstein had some minimal exposure to Zionism when he lived briefly in Prague. This became more intensive after he settled in Berlin in 1914. Shortly after World War I ended, Einstein declared that he was ready to enlist in the Zionist cause. His mentor was Kurt Blumenfeld who is described by Rosenkranz as a "prominent Zionist propagandist." As Einstein's involvement deepened, he became interested in the idea of establishing a university in Jerusalem that would "provide a refuge for Jewish academics from Eastern Europe." This project was more important to Einstein than the hope for a Jewish state in Palestine.

In 1921, Einstein accepted Chaim Weizmann's invitation to accompany him on a fund-raising tour to the United States, seeing it as an opportunity to help provide a financial base for Hebrew University. While he was modestly successful, he also inadvertently became involved in the quarrel between Weizmann and the American Zionist leader, Louis Brandeis. A brief visit to Palestine is also described.

Arguments about the governance of Hebrew University take up many pages of the book. Fierce struggles took place regarding the location of the board and academic committees. Judah Magnes, the American rabbi who was the University's first head, insisted on authority being vested in Jerusalem while Einstein and others argued for a British or European location. Einstein and Magnes were at sword's point about these and other policy issues.

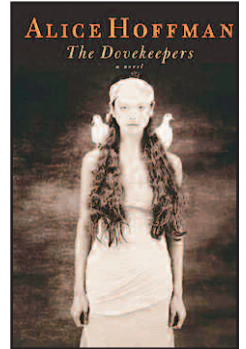
Einstein became increasingly disenchanted and by 1928, three years after the University opened its doors, he threatened to cease his involvement. He was also troubled by the fighting between Jews and Arabs in 1929, arguing against those Zionists who advocated removing the Arabs from Palestine. By contrast, Einstein called for cooperation with the Arabs and this led to a falling-out with Weizmann as well as a lessening of Einstein's support for Zionism.

By 1933, when Einstein decided that he had to leave Germany, he went to America rather than to Palestine, partly because he was unhappy about what had happened at Hebrew University but also because he was increasingly disenchanted with the Zionist movement. Author Rosenkranz concludes that Einstein was not "a fully committed member" of the Zionist movement. His unusual access to Einstein's papers, along with his status as an Einstein scholar, requires attention to his findings.

Fictionalized version of Masada

The Dovekeepers. By Alice Hoffman. New York: Scribner, 2011. 504 Pages. \$27.99.

This beautifully written novel is a fictionalized version of what happened at Masada in the first century of the Common Era. The major sources of information are a contemporary account, *The Jewish Wars* by Flavius



Josephus and archeologist Yigal Yadin's reports of his excavations at Masada in the 1960s. Josephus's chronicle is based in large measure on what he learned from one of the two women survivors of Masada. Hoffman has expertly used her literary skills and her imagination to create sympathetic characters whose actions give life to this somewhat contentious episode in Jewish history.

After the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 CE, a group of 960 Jewish zealots sought refuge on Masada, a hilltop mesa, near the Dead Sea, some 70 miles south of Jerusalem. Their leader was Elazar Ben Ya'ir who figures importantly in Hoffman's story. When the Romans besieged Masada, it was Ben Ya'ir who decided that the Jews on Masada should commit suicide rather than be captured or killed. His final speech was reported to Josephus by the survivor who talked with him and is preserved in his book as well as in Yadin's narrative, *Masada*:

"...it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom...Let our wives die before they are abused and our children before they have tasted of slavery; and after we have slain them, let us bestow that glorious benefit upon one another mutually."

The action that followed this plea – mass suicide – presents a controversial issue. According to Jewish law, someone who commits suicide has to be buried, not in a Jewish cemetery, but on its outer borders. Moreover, the customary mourning rituals are not followed. In actuality, efforts were made to avoid calling a mortal self-inflicted wound a suicide. Instead, the act might be seen as the result of insanity in which case laws affecting suicide do not apply. Other Jewish scholars held that suicide is worse than murder or that the individual who commits suicide should be neither

(see Teicher, page 19)



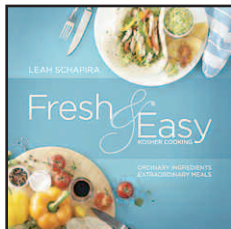
My Kosher Kitchen

REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

User friendly kosher cookbook

Fresh & Easy. By Leah Schapira. ArtScroll. \$34.99 hardcover. November 2011.

For those unfamiliar with the name ArtScroll, it is an imprint of Mesorah Publications, based in Brooklyn, N.Y., one of the largest publishers of Jewish books in English for adults and children. It is geared to Orthodox Jews and *baalei teshuva* (those who become Orthodox).



Leah Schapira is Orthodox and co-founder and food editor of CookKosher.com, an online kosher recipe exchange.

Being a busy wife and mother, Mrs. Schapira decided to appeal to kosher cooks with, as her subtitle says, "Ordinary ingredients, Extraordinary Meals."

With 170 recipes and many color photographs, she has created an exceptionally appealing, user-friendly cookbook. There are 10 soups, 16 salads, 13 dips and sauces, 21 side dishes, 23 brunch and lunch recipes, 34 main dishes, 15 traditional recipes and 38 desserts.

Format wise, each recipe states whether it is dairy, meat, or *parve*; the yield is clear; ingredients are in a column with amount in one color and the ingredient itself in another color. Directions are clearly numbered. Best of all, every recipe has a comment that is engaging.

For example, "Everyone can always use another way to prepare the humble spud" (baked basil fries); "this is a man's egg roll – without vegetables" (flanken egg rolls); "chocolate makes everything taste better!" (chocolate fudge sauce); "everyone can always use a new pasta idea for supper" (eggplant & tomato fettuccini).

In the main dishes section, she includes thumbnail photos for two possible "goes with." For example, Teriyaki sesame chicken goes with couscous with vegetables or sriracha Thai noodles; Beef with caramelized pearl onions goes with warm sweet potato salad or confetti orzo; Pistachio-crusting tilapia goes with cream of leek soup.

There are also some clever additions to this kosher cookbook like five sections showing thumbnail photographed food ideas with the page number (e.g., appetizer ideas, Pesach, make in-take out, quick & easy, freezes well) so the cook can see a group of finished products at a glance and decide if any are dishes to prepare.

This cookbook is especially attractive to people whose cooking time is limited, so if you are a busy housewife or you know one, this will definitely make a special gift. A new bride-to-be or bride who keeps kosher will particularly appreciate this cookbook because the directions are so very explicit.

Squash Soufflés

Parve (8 servings)

Water as needed
5 large or 8 small zucchini squash
3 eggs
1/2 cup mayonnaise
2 Tbsp. flour
1 tsp. salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 tsp. baking powder (*optional*)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Wash squash well, add to pot and boil whole for 15 minutes. Remove squash from the pot. Allow to cool; peel and grate. Strain the grated squash very well, pressing out all the excess liquid. Place drained squash into a large bowl. Add eggs, mayonnaise, flour, salt, black pepper and baking powder, if using. Mix with a fork until well combined. Divide between individual ramekins or pour into one deep 10-inch round pan. Bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour until lightly browned.

Penne with Lemon Cream Sauce

Dairy (2 servings)

3 Tbsp. butter
1 clove peeled and crushed garlic
Juice of one lemon
1-1/4 cups heavy cream
3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
1-1/4 tsp. dry basil
1/2 lb. penne pasta, cooked according to package directions
Salt and pepper to taste

Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the crushed garlic. Sauté for a few minutes, taking care not to burn it. Add the lemon juice (add only 2 tablespoons of lemon juice if you don't like it so lemony) and stir. Add heavy cream. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the Parmesan cheese. Stir until cheese is melted. Season with basil. Add the pasta and toss well. Season with salt and

BEN ASHER

(continued from page 6)

initiative, to raise themselves above their animal instincts, reaching upwards to realize the full capacity of their spiritual inheritance.

The engraving of the luchot is a reminder of the vision and path of Torah that is bequeathed to every generation, which is given the opportunity to learn it, live it, and leave it to the next generation.

And the question of whether anything is yet sacred is answered when we, *Am Yisrael*, pass the test of every Jewish generation – to trust that God will care for us if we keep the Torah at the center of our lives.

© 2012 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah
Rabbi Moshe ben Asher and Magidah Khulda bat Sarah are the Co-Directors of Gather the People, a nonprofit organization that provides Internet-based resources for congregational community organizing and development (www.gatherthepeople.org). ★



pepper. If pasta is prepared in advance, reserve 3 Tablespoons of sauce to add while reheating. Serve with additional Parmesan cheese if desired.

Everything but the Kitchen Sink Cookies

Parve (16 jumbo cookies)

1 cup (2 sticks) margarine
1 cup sugar
1 cup brown sugar
1 Tbsp. vanilla sugar
2 eggs
1-1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking powder
Pinch salt
1 cup coarsely chopped pecans
2 cups quick cooking or old-fashioned oats
3 1/2 oz. good quality coarsely chopped chocolate
1 cup chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°F. In the bowl of a mixer, cream the margarine and sugars. Gradually add the eggs. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder and salt. Turn the mixer to low and add the flour mixture to the batter. Gradually add the pecans, oats, chopped chocolate and chocolate chips. Using an ice cream scoop, form balls. Place up to 6 balls on a parchment-lined baking sheet, allowing space for them to spread. Bake for 19–21 minutes.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food and feature writer, and author of nine kosher cookbooks. She leads "Shuk Walks" in Jerusalem produce market, Machaneh Yehudah. ★

MORE WIT

(continued from 2)

My wife and I always hold hands. If I let go, she shops.

A doctor has a stethoscope up to a man's chest. The man asks, "Doc, how do I stand?" The doctor says, "That's what puzzles me!"★

**ROBERTS**

(continued from page 9)

consult Sophie, who like her teacher, adores Isaiah. I think I know her answer.

Ted Roberts, a Rockower Award winner, is a syndicated Jewish columnist who looks at Jewish life with rare wit and insight. When he's not writing, Ted worships at Etz Chayim Synagogue in Huntsville, Ala., where for 25 years he has served as bar mitzvah teacher. His inspiration is his patient wife, Shirley. Check out his Web site: www.wonderwordworks.com. Blogsite: www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com. His collected works The Scribbler on The Roof can be bought at Amazon.com or lulu.com/content/127641.★

**BEN-MORDECAI**

(continued from page 10)

texts apply the metheg in a slightly different way: to caution readers to stress a syllable other than the expected one. Thus, in the "Aleinu" prayer that concludes synagogue services, a metheg occurs beneath the second syllable of the words "mi-MA-'al" ("above") and "e-MET" ("truth"), to show readers to stress the second syllable, not the first. Readers who do not notice the metheg may mispronounce these words as "mi-ma-AL" and "E-met." Readers who notice the metheg and rein in their enthusiasm help Hebrew learners to understand the words chanted at services.

An attorney and Semitic linguist with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford and Univ. of Calif., Seth Watkins (pen name, Ben-Mordecai) merges linguistic analysis with legal sleuthing to uncover lost meanings of ancient texts. His Exodus Haggadah uniquely includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com.★

**REBUCK**

(continued from page 16)

about 100 years. The services are held in deliciously warm cities such as Tampa, West Palm Beach and Phoenix and the

congregations are impregnated with accents from the Great White Frozen North. The Festival starts in early February and continues for six weeks. It concludes with a High Holiday known as Opening Day. Throughout the festival, special symbolic foods are consumed, usually laden with mustard and relish accompanied by the world's most widely consumed alcoholic beverage.

For Jewish baseball fans, it is a particularly busy time as they prepare for the other spring festival, Passover. Aside from a total prohibition on hot dogs and beer during Passover, the festivals are eerily similar.

Passover, like Spring Training, occurs in the spring. While the traditions of both festivals are exciting and faithfully followed in detail year-to-year, neither is the actual climax of the season. For baseball fans, Spring Training is the curtain raiser to the big show, known as the regular season and ultimately the World Series. For the other group, Passover is an event on the way, 49 days later to the Torah's being given to the Israelite nation assembled at Mount Sinai.

The rabbis usually give exciting talks in the synagogue at Passover. Our Rabbi Joe climbs the mound – he calls it a *bimah* – and addresses the heavy hitters in front of him, all of whom will be wearing skullcaps and prayer shawls. His topic of course is the Exodus from Egypt and he is likely to start with a blazing fastball.

"If the ten plagues that descended on Egypt were in the order of severity, why do blood, lice and pestilence come before darkness?" His next pitch I predict will be a wicked curve ball. "If Pharaoh was a hard-hearted ruler, and G-d wanted him to *Let His People Go*, why did he harden Pharaoh's heart even further?"

The other big spring show will also take place on a day that has become sacrosanct – Mon., April 9 this year. Down by the lake shore, Ricky Romero will ascend the *bimah* – he calls it a mound – and will face several highly committed gentlemen, all of whom for some reason, will be in Red caps and Sox and will be wearing a glove on one hand. He will address them in a solemn ritual that has remained virtually unchanged for approximately 135 years. He will challenge their belief in themselves, their level of commitment for the arduous weeks that lie ahead and their ability to concentrate on rules and observances of their affiliation. He knows that among their friends and families in their hometown they are accepted and even loved, but they will experience intolerance and even hatred when they venture into other territories.

I plan to attend both springtime festivals this year: the one that celebrates our

release from bondage and the one that will bind us to heartache if we don't make the playoffs.

Go Jays. Yasher Koach.

Shlomo ben Yitzhak HaLevi ("Solomon son of Isaak the Levi") is the Hebrew name of Dr. Anthony Rebusk, a life-long sports fanatic with a penchant for the Toronto Blue Jays. Rebusk neglected Torah study in his early life in favor of watching, playing, and reading about sports but as an adult he began to take a more active role in his religion. During retirement Rebusk wondered if he could combine his two interests by finding in each weekly Torah reading something that would strike a chord with sports-lovers. In his book, A Sportsman's Guide to the Torah, Rebusk draws parallels between two seemingly different worlds – sports and religion – by pairing stories from his holy book with modern sports anecdotes (available at BarnesandNoble.com and Amazon.com).★

**TEICHER**

(continued from 17)

condemned nor exalted. Some Christian thinkers declared that suicide is worse than homicide.

These differences of opinion may be partly reflected in modern Israeli attitudes to what happened at Masada. In the early years after the State of Israel was born, Masada was an important tourist site as well as a place where groups of Israeli soldiers were taken to swear the oath, "Masada shall not fall again." Today, fewer visitors are taken to Masada and it is hardly used as a site for swearing in Israeli soldiers.

These important issues are not dealt with directly in Hoffman's book. Instead she tells the story of Masada as seen through the eyes and experiences of four Jewish women who came to Masada with many complications and secrets in their lives. Readers are caught up in the well-told narrative that has these women interact with each other and with some of the men. They all share the task of dovekeeper – hence the title of the book.

Hoffman skillfully personalizes the story of Masada, successfully transforming it from a tale of relatively anonymous Jews killing themselves to the saga of how named individuals lived with each other under fearfully stressful conditions. She makes history come alive.

The author as previously published 28 novels. This one is surely a pinnacle achievement.

Dr. Morton I. Teicher is the Founding Dean of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University and Dean Emeritus, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.★

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from cover)

When the 12-year-old sister returned from being with friends, she could not get in so she went to a neighbor who climbed through the window to let her in. Because it was Friday night, it was dark inside and they did not see what had happened.

Hakim, one of the murderers, was sentenced in September to five life sentences plus five years. Amjad received a sentence of five life terms and seven years just two days before we visited the boarded-up Fogel home in Itamar. In May, Amjad said he did not regret what he did and would do it again.

Over the past 10 years, 22 members of the community have been killed by terrorists, related Brooklyn-born Leah Goldsmith. Her husband, Moshe, explained that "this is a community of tremendous idealism not for comfortable living. People realize we are faced with terrible hatred in the world since the Fogel attack," Moshe added. The couple, who met during high school, married in 1985, moved to Israel soon after, and to Itamar in 1986 where they have raised their five children.

Minister Edelstein tells the journalists standing in the backyard of the Fogel home that the government debated whether to release the pictures of the murder scene and decided they would do so even though very few publications printed them. "We did this with full permission of the family so that people would realize what had happened," he explained.



Leah and Moshe Goldsmith, Itamar residents.

Giv'ot Olam –

"Eternal hilltops of the universe"

Giv'ot Olam is an organic farm or ranch, founded by Avri and Sharona Ram in 1998. It produces 80% of Israel's organic eggs and is the largest producer of organic eggs; they also produce cheese from sheep and goats. The farm is on a hilltop 2-3/4 miles up a winding road from Itamar. It is meant to be an inspiration for the residents of Judea/Samaria and an inspiration for the hilltop movement. (The Hilltop movement has gained momentum in recent years as groups of youth have established unauthorized communities on



Rabbi Israel Zoberman with Congregation Beth Chaverim Virginia Beach in D.C.

On Feb. 20, Rabbi Zoberman attended a concert by Kazakh performers at the Carnegie Institution for Science followed by a reception at the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Washington, D.C., in honor of its 20th Anniversary of Independence.

Rabbi Zoberman was born in Chu (now Shu), Kazakhstan in 1945 to Polish Holocaust Survivors. His father's family was first exiled to Siberia's Tundra by Stalin and then to Kazakhstan. (L to R: Ambassador Erlan A. Idrissov of Kazakhstan, Rabbi Israel Zoberman, Ambassador Ilhom Nematov of Uzbekistan, Ambassador Olexander Motsyk of Ukraine. Motsyk's hometown is 17 kilometers from Sarnay, Ukraine, where Rabbi Zoberman's mother, Chasia, was born.)

barren hills in Judea/Samaria.)

Avraham, "Avri" Ran is called the father of the so-called "Hilltop Movement" because in 1997, he pitched his tent on a hill and formally founded an organic farm. The farm employs 50 workers who work with four sheds for goats, the free-range chicken farm and the production of organic feed.

We are taken into the round wood dining hall, reminiscent of a camp dining hall, where picnic tables and benches are set with lunch – stuffed cheese bread, *shakshouka* (a spicy egg and tomato dish where eggs are simmered in a sauce of tomatoes, onions, peppers and spices), rice, boiled potatoes, a special brown bread, raw vegetables, and an array of cheeses and dips. Three closed-circuit TVs are on one wall so workers can see what is happening in the work areas when they eat lunch.

Gershon Mesika, governor of the Shomron Council, welcomed the visiting journalists, in Hebrew, to the land of the Bible where there are "historic and Biblical connections to the land which also has strategic importance." He was glad we came to see the farm where everything is natural, "interacting with the nature of the land."

Har Bracha – Blessing Mountain

Our final stop was at the winery of the community of Har Bracha on Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim is located near

the city of Nablus and is home to a village inhabited by Samaritans (a group who observe Judaism as ancient Israelites did, claim Mount Gerizim as their holy place but are not part of the mainstream of Judaism) and the Israeli community of Har Bracha. Originally a military outpost, it became an Orthodox community in 1983 inhabited by more than 270 families. One of its members, Nir David, who came here in 1998, had a dream to plant vineyards; despite the stones, he cleared an area and planted vines. He established a winery in 2007 which produces close to 30,000 bottles of wine from Cabernet sauvignon and Merlot grapes. For the past eight years, Christian volunteers have been coming to the community to work in the vineyards.

Tommy Waller from Tennessee heads this project and comments, "coming to this mountain is an education. The very words of the prophets are being fulfilled. We bring people from all over the world. We have them preserve the land of Israel. G-d meant for Jewish identity to be established here."

Minister Edelstein summarized the day for the foreign journalists saying, "People who live here live normal lives. This is what we wanted to show to you."

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food and feature writer, and author of nine kosher cookbooks. She leads "Shuk Walks" in Jerusalem produce market, Machaneh Yehudah. ✪