

# *The Jewish* Post & Opinion *National Edition*

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## *Chag Pesach Sameach!*



## *Shmot: From Darkness to Light – from Slavery to Freedom*

Cover Art by Jackie Olenick  
(see About the Cover, p.3).



# Editorial

*This week I received a check for a two-year subscription renewal. You might be thinking, "Nothing earthshaking about that." If I told you it was from a woman who is 102 years old you might reconsider.*

*Perhaps she has lived to that age because she has always been optimistic and a positive thinker. I call it chutzpah to subscribe not for one, but two more years when most people over 98 do not even buy green bananas. Biz hundred un tsvantsik! (You should live till 120!)*

*For this Passover issue I am reprinting my editorial from March 18, 2009. (Jessie turned 95 in December.)*

This editorial is dedicated to Jessie (Levin) Bernstein. It is a story about a Passover Seder that she organized in 1944 in Naples, Italy. She was a dietitian for the United States Army and she served six station hospitals at that location starting in 1943 for a year and a half.

In the beginning of 1944 there had been a lot of artillery and airplanes dropping bombs. After the fighting subsided and a couple of months before Passover, she asked permission to hold a *Seder* for the Jewish soldiers who were hospitalized in her area. The army issued her cans of beef which she immediately exchanged for canned chicken.

Naples is a port and when she heard the Navy was in town, she got a driver and a jeep to take her to talk to the Navy captain so she could see about getting more food items for the Seder. He was not Jewish but was very supportive of her mission. He took her canned chicken and exchanged it for what turned out to be much tastier frozen chicken on the bone. She also was able to get a half grate of fresh eggs. They had dehydrated eggs which were no comparison to fresh eggs which no one had seen for more than a year.

The officers were already being favored with fresh fruit and vegetables so she was able to get those fresh greens for the Seder plates along with the fresh eggs. The Jewish Federation saw that they got all of the *matzah* and *Mogen David* wine they needed for the Seder. She used white sheets on the tables for tablecloths.

There was only one Jewish cook but all the cooks pitched in. There was one little hand grinder that was used to make *matzah* meal for the *matzah* balls for the soup. About two weeks before the Seder, Bernstein put notices about the date and time on the bulletin boards of all six hospitals.

She didn't want the hospitalized soldiers to have to stand in line for a Seder so she hired 45 extra waiters who were friends of the wait staff who worked in the officer's



## Why Faith Matters

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The first words a Jew is to say upon waking are addressed to God: "*Modeh Ani Lifanechah...*" I am grateful before You. Gratitude – before we think about the tasks, the schedule, our problems, our sadness, before even our anticipation and our joy. Thankful to be alive. If we began each morning in that spirit, how much more beautiful our days would be. ~ 3-23-12

Rabbi Simcha Bunim taught that every person should carry two pieces of paper, (see Wolpe, page 3)



mess hall. At the last minute, all of the 45 waiters got scared and were going to leave.

At that time the Catholic Church ruled with an iron hand. They had instructed their members not to listen to the religious services of any other religion. Bernstein ran and found their Catholic chaplain who knew some Italian. She asked him to tell the waiters that half of the service would be in Hebrew which they would not be able to comprehend and the other half would be in English, also not understandable to them without a translator. He convinced them that they would not be violating any rules.

There was a Jewish chaplain from Caserta Army Headquarters who had about 300 of the Maxwell House Coffee *Haggadahs* that he brought for the men to use. On the night of the Seder about that many soldiers showed up in their hospital robes. Probably less than half were Jewish but the men had heard there was going to be a great meal! There was no way to tell which ones were Jewish so they accepted all of them. All sat down and participated in the Seder. None of the other hospitals had a Passover Seder that year because none had a Jewish dietitian. It turned out to be a wonderful evening for all in attendance.

This story and others will be part of a book titled, *Sir, I come from Indiana: True stories of a female in a man's army in Italy during World War II*. Jessie Bernstein met her future husband, David Bernstein, z"l, a U.S. soldier in Naples when someone pointed out to her that they were both from Indianapolis.

There was only one synagogue in Naples during the war. Because there were approximately 500 bombings of that area, the rabbi and cantor had left. She and David were married during the war by the *shammas* of that synagogue. (A *shammas* is a person who assists in the running of a synagogue.) After the war they returned to

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Indianapolis and raised three sons. The oldest became an attorney and the younger two became rabbis.

*Chag Pesach Sameach!!*

Jennie Cohen, March 28, 2012 ★

# About the Cover

## Shmot: From Darkness to Light – from Slavery to Freedom

BY JACKIE OLENICK



This sweet picture tells the story of the exodus from the time Moses was rescued until we rejoice and receive the Torah at Sinai. This is a companion piece to "*Breisheit*." They work together as a set, or stand beautifully on their own. A beautiful addition for "children of all ages." This signed piece measures 12x14" in the double mat and is printed on fine art velvet paper with archival ink.

Olenick creates Judaic illuminations in several mediums based upon her favorite Torah text, psalms and prayers. She also designs personalized, illuminated *ketubot* for the bride and groom. The images created are joyful, contemporary, inspiring, and speak to issues that guide us on our day-to-day journey. They are intended to bring blessing and holy reminders to every Jewish home. She also creates beautiful spiritual jewelry appropriate for men, women and teens. All jewelry is designed with words and symbols, to bring one closer to the sacred, to lift one up and open one's heart.

Olenick presents and teaches hands-on workshops for temples, schools and organizations where participants of all ages and all levels of skill can learn about Judaic art and create their own unique pieces for their home.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has honored Olenick as an artist and artisan in the Sacred Guild of the Disciples of Betzalel. Two of her images are included in the set of the Coen Brothers movie, *A Serious Man*.

The Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) has selected several of Olenick's images for book, CD and songbook covers. Many images adorn greeting cards, which can be purchased at fine gift and Judaica shops throughout America.

The artist's work has been exhibited and extensively collected throughout America and is in private, organizational and synagogue collections.

She works in several mediums including acrylic and collage/multimedia, for which she is noted. Olenick has created bold and bright, large pieces that are appropriate for a temple or can serve as a focal point in a home.

Olenick is married to Rabbi/Chaplain Leon Olenick. They have three grown

# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

## Pesach

We wish all of our readers and all of Israel a *Kosher* and a Happy Pesach. Pesach is always a special time for me. Pesach is the holiday of redemption. Our ancestors were slaves in Egypt. *Hashem* sent Moses to take them out of Egypt and show them how to find real freedom.

I, too, grew up as a slave. Not in Egypt, but in America. Not physical slavery, spiritual slavery. I was taught "Look out for number one." Take care of yourself. Nothing else, nobody else, matters. Learn a good profession, make a lot of money. Then you can buy a beautiful house and a fancy car and find real happiness.

My life was a misery. We had a nice house and a Chevrolet station wagon, but so what? Other people had nicer houses in better neighborhoods, and drove Cadillacs. *Baruch Hashem*, I was healthy, but so what? I wasn't on the football or basketball team, and I wasn't very popular at all. I had very few friends. True friendship comes when you really love and care for others. I was taught to love and care only for myself.

I suffered for many years. Finally, *Hashem* had mercy on me. He sent Moses to take me out of Egypt, to help me find real freedom. In every generation there is a Moses. The Moses of our generation is the *Lubavitcher Rebbe*. We believe that he is the long awaited *Moshiach*, who will bring complete and final redemption to each and every one of us and all of the world.

The Rebbe and his followers showed me the way to freedom and happiness. Live a life of Torah and *Mitzvos*.

What is the difference, for example, between football and Torah? At the end of a football game, one team and their fans are happy. They won. But the other team and their fans lost. They are sad. And the poor boys who wanted to join the team but weren't good enough are even sadder.

When we live a life of Torah, everyone wins, everyone is happy. If I give charity, I am happy. I just did a big *Mitzvah*. The person who receives the charity is also happy. Now he can buy himself some lunch, and he won't be hungry.

Love your fellow man. Don't be selfish.

children and nine grandchildren, from whom she constantly draws inspiration and *naches*.

To see more of her artwork, go to [www.cybershuk.com](http://www.cybershuk.com). Also check on Facebook and Twitter. ★

Do you want to be happy? Easy enough! Go out and make someone else happy! Try it! It really works! Five days a week I visit the geriatric ward at our local hospital. I know some of the patients there for years. We have come to love each other a lot. In the beginning, I would smile at them and give them a blessing and some love, and they would smile back. Now, whenever they see me they already smile. It warms my heart and soul.

We are living now in a very special time. The Rebbe told us that our generation is the last generation of the exile, and will be the first generation of the final redemption. If we only open our eyes, we can see that this is really happening, right now.

I, personally, found freedom and redemption, and so have many millions like me. Dictators are falling left and right. For thousands of years the nations of the world made war with each other. Now they are making big efforts to help each other and bring peace to the world.

The Rebbe also told us that this is also dependent on each of us. It is up to us to complete this process. We ourselves have to work to bring freedom and redemption to ourselves and to all of the world. How? By living a life of Torah and *Mitzvos*, by learning and following the teachings of the Rebbe, we can find personal freedom and happiness. Then we can be a good influence on our family and friends, and all of those who come in contact with us. They will see that we are living a good and happy life and will be inspired to follow our example. Who wants to be miserable? Learn the secret of happiness and share it, until all of world will be free and happy.

Our rabbis taught us that in this month, the month of Nissan, our fathers were redeemed from Egypt, and in this month we too will be redeemed. Let us make a real effort that it should happen this year.

We want *Moshiach* now! Long live the King *Moshiach*!

Rabbi Cohen lives in K'far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at [bzcohen@orange.net.il](mailto:bzcohen@orange.net.il). ★

## WOLPE

(continued from 2)

one in each pocket: in one pocket, "For me the world was created." and in the other, "I am but dust and ashes." When we have moments of self loathing take out the first; in moments of grandiosity the second. Our souls are poised between greatness and nothingness; in knowing both are we blessed. ~ 3-21-12

From Facebook posts of Rabbi Wolpe. Wolpe is the senior rabbi of Temple Sinai in Los Angeles and author of several books including *Why Faith Matters*. ★



## Kabbalah of the Month

By MELINDA RIBNER

### Prepare for Passover Nissan began March 23

*Below is a meditation that I have sent out for several years right before Passover. I still like it and do not feel the need to write something new, even though Passover is all about ushering in the new. Pre-Pesach time may not be easy. Old issues may surface. I hope that this meditation is healing and supportive, and helps you to open to the new light and blessings that are available at this auspicious time.*

#### Meditation for Passover and its preparation

As Passover is quickly approaching, it is such a busy and intense time. Whether we are rushing around either preparing for the holiday or simply living our lives, doing what we need to do, it is important to remember to give ourselves some time to simply be each day and focus our intention. Just like we eat to nourish the physical body each day, every day our souls require a time for prayer, centering, meditation and attunement.

Even as you read this note, take a long conscious and deep breath, relax, attune yourself to the present moment, and open your heart. Breathe into the heart. Allow the mind to quiet, let go of thoughts of the day and all the things you must do. Give yourself the gift of the awareness of your breath and life force energy. Open to the experience of being breathed. We do not breathe by our own will but rather we are breathed by Divine will. Open to receive the divine support, love and nurturing in this very moment. How loving and faithful is God who sustains our lives. Every day, and even every moment we receive so much. Experience the stillness in the spaces between the breaths as you slow down the breathing. It is here that you touch the higher levels of your soul. Allow yourself to soar beyond this world.

Come to the awareness that the holiday of Passover will soon be upon us. Passover brings in a new order in your life and the world. Your intention, your *kavannah* is most important. It will shape your experience. This time can be a springboard for you to really go forward in your life to greater freedom. That is if you want it to be.

Are you open to newness? Are you open to living more authentically and with greater meaning, joy and purpose? What

do you want to open up to in your life? Will you let go and leave what no longer serves you? Will you stand in the question, "What does God want of me right now? Take a few moments to breathe and align yourself.

As we approach Passover holiday, we need to remember that we each have our own personal Egypt, that place of narrow constraints that comprise all the energetic blocks, the imagined fears, the unhappy ways we feel constrained internally or externally in our lives. Some of us think too much of ourselves, others think too little. It does not matter what category you are in, for each Passover there is the invitation to go beyond yourself, to leave the box of your personal Egypt and be in the not knowing.

Everything begins with your desire, with your yearning. God can give you only what you are open to receive. Take a moment to accept the invitation that is generously given to you by God during the Passover holiday. Be grateful that you do not do this life journey alone. You are not here on your own accord. God loves you and will help you.

Hear these words spoken directly to you. It is good to repeat them to yourself and to share them with others. When *Hashem* says to open your mouth, I suggest that you literally do this. Open your mouth like a baby ready to receive nourishment.

"I am the Lord who has taken you out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. Tell me what you truly want. Your needs and your desires are important to Me. Pour your heart out to Me. Make a space for Me in your life. To give you what I want and what you really want, you need to let go of your old habits, change your vessels, open your heart, so you can receive something new from Me. I am your healer and your redeemer. I love you. I took you out of Egypt in the past and I will take you out in the future. I want you to be free and joyful. The holiday of Passover is a special time for Me to pour my light and love upon you if you are open to receive it.

To best receive from Me, go on a Passover diet, eat simply, pray, sing, be happy and have faith and trust in Me especially during this time. If you attach yourself to Me and my Will, I will liberate you. I will bring you close to Me. I will attach Myself to you. You will then know true love and a joy that is beyond this world. You cannot live this life without Me. You cannot free yourself without My help. I have entrusted you with a very important mission of perfecting My world. I will empower you to do what you need to do. I am here for you. I love you, more than you can imagine."

## A Bit of Wit

### T'was the Night After Seder

T'was the night after *Seder*,  
and all through the house  
Nothing would fit me,  
not even a blouse.  
The fish and the *kugel*,  
(oh my, what a taste)  
After both the sederim,  
went straight to my waist.  
When I got on the scale,  
I couldn't believe it!  
The treadmill and bicycle  
wouldn't relieve it.  
I remembered the marvelous  
meals I prepared;  
The light airy *matzah* balls  
everyone shared.  
The brisket, the turkey,  
the *tzimmes* so sweet;  
*Oy*, let me recline  
and get off of my feet.  
I know we made *kiddish*  
and recited each plague,  
But right now I'm soggy,  
and my memory is vague.  
So, don't give me *matzah*,  
chopped liver, or wine  
I'll do my aerobics  
and never more dine.  
I'm walking to *shul*,  
so what if it's far?  
I'm not even thinking  
of taking the car.  
With 10 lbs. to lose  
and 10 inches to shrink,  
Macaroons when wrapped tightly,  
can so nicely freeze.  
Pack the sponge cake  
and *tayglach* away, if you please.  
Out of sight, out of mind –  
by this oath I'll abide;  
Bring me the boiled chicken  
with romaine on the side.  
I'll keep on that program,  
to my diet adhere,  
And let's all get together  
for Pesach next year! ★



At the Passover *Seder*, take some time to share with others the blessings and the miracles that you have already experienced in this last year as well as what blessings you would like to receive in the coming year. We each have so much to be grateful for. Miracles are taking place all the time.

*Hashem* tells us to eat *matzah* on Passover in the Torah. *Matzah* is called the bread of affliction, the bread of humility, the bread of healing, the bread of faith. *Matzah* is all of these things. How special

(see Ribner, page 13)





## Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

### Passover: The holiday of renewal and hope

Passover in Israel is a magical time of year. The winter rains and chilly air are replaced by a flurry of activity and sense of renewal that is unequal to any other season. Flaming poppies, black-eyed Susans and Queen Anne's lace fill the fields while birds travel back to the Hula Valley to build their nests. In the north the Baniyas River, swollen with winter rains, tempts even the most timid nature lover to take off her shoes and socks and feel the springtime mud squish between her toes.

But it is not just winter waking up to spring that intrigues me. It is the transition of a country moving from *chametz* to *matzah*, a country in the process of cleansing itself that makes me marvel at the power of Jewish tradition and faith.

On the eve of Passover during the year I lived in Israel, I walked with my husband for more than 3-miles from our apartment in Bakka to Mea Shearim, Jerusalem's famous ultra-Orthodox neighborhood. The city was working double time to get itself ready for Passover and *Shabbat*, which, like this year, fell on the first *Seder* night. The clanging of pots and dishes resonated as restaurants and bakeries frantically labored to convert their kitchens for Passover. A symphony of sounds accompanied us as we moved through the streets. People laughing, babies crying, closet doors banging, horns blasting; the air was charged with energy and purpose. But the smell was what got to me. The dense smell of the last vestiges of burning bread products hovered over us like a cloud, reminding me of fall in New Jersey when we would burn big piles of leaves in our driveway.

Huge cauldrons of boiling water lined Strauss Street enabling people to *kasher* their pans and utensils for the holiday. I thought of our tiny Jerusalem kitchen and how, earlier in the morning, my family and I had spent hours soaping down the counter tops and washing out the cabinets. We felt so clean and tidy afterwards, "all spic and span" as my mother would say. There was something deeply gratifying about the process of cleaning up our home, as if we had lined our nest with downy, new feathers. We put



## Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

*Pirke Avot 2:21 – Rabbi Tarfon used to say: It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it. If you have studied much in the Torah much reward will be given you, for faithful is your employer who shall pay you the reward of your labor. And know that the reward for the righteous shall be in the time to come.*

**March 23, 2012, Vayikra  
Leviticus 1:1-5:26,  
Hachodesh Exodus 12:1-20,  
29 Adar 5772**

Before I begin my words, a shout out to my big sister Susan who becomes the final sibling to read from Torah. The four of us didn't attend Hebrew school, but each of us has found a way to learn a bit of Hebrew and to read from Torah. *Mazal Tov* Susan on your accomplishment tomorrow. I wish I could be there.

The verse from *Pirke Avot* at the top of the page brings to a close chapter two. Starting about a year ago I decided



our house in order, just as the *Seder* creates an order to the telling of the Passover story.

As we walked home along King George Street, we watched the city in its closing moments of cleansing; a community making its way from winter to spring, dark to light, *chametz* to *matzah*. The streets were hushed; the smells of burning bread and cake all but gone.

I understood for the first time the longing that for centuries has dominated the Jewish heart and spirit. Passover is not just a time to cleanse our kitchen cabinets of last year's cookie crumbs and "Next year in Jerusalem" is not just a physical call to bring people from all over the globe to the most holy city in the world.

Passover is meant to inspire all Jews – as diverse and conflicted and divided as we may sometime seem, to work together to bring a sense of order and renewal, a sense of purpose and hope to our lives, our future and the world. It is a holiday that gives us a chance to renew our commitment – to our faith, tradition, and each other – to live a life of dignity and freedom.

*Lederman is an award winning author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney who lives in Tucson. Visit her website at [amyhirshberglederman.com](http://amyhirshberglederman.com). ★*

to include a *perek* (verse) each week. (There are six chapters in all.) You can look up the verse if you choose and find a commentary or five on the internet. *Pirke Avot* (literally the "verses of our fathers," but more commonly translated today as the "sayings of our ancestors") is a tractate (section) of the *Mishnah* (Oral Law) and is used extensively in the *Siddur* (prayerbook) and Jewish ethical teaching. I don't usually comment on the *perek* at the top, but let it stand alone for you to read. This week's verse, though, is one that is particularly meaningful to me and my life and probably to others as well.

Many of you who have gone to Jewish summer camp might know the words in Hebrew: "*Lo a-le-cha ham-la-cha ligmor....*" as it is part of a popular song. Anyone who has participated in thinking and studying about social justice or *Tikkun Olam* has come face-to-face with these words of Rabbi Tarfon, "*It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it.*" All of us must feel the obligation to participate in making this world a better place or as I like to frame it – to finish God's creation. On the sixth day of Creation, God said it was "very good." God didn't say it was perfect or done or complete. It was "very good." Rabbi Tarfon teaches us that we must participate in finishing what God started; bringing the "very good" to fruition, even if we can't be there to see the final product. Our reward will be in the time to come which I believe is in someday knowing that what we did today helped bring the world toward this completion.

It is important to realize that we can't do everything. I am on the CCAR Peace, Justice, and Civil Liberties committee. We met at the recent convention in an open committee forum and as we went around the room I heard people's different passions. Whether it was organizing hotel workers, community organizing, women's issues, feeding the hungry or more, I recognized that my colleagues had an issue or two that moved them to do this work, but these issues were varied. Together, as a group, we touched on many of the problems, concerns, or troubles we face in our communities. As individuals, we can only work on a few issues at a time or several over a career. The important thing is to not feel overwhelmed that our actions won't solve the problems. To paraphrase our rabbi, just because there is so much to do and the end may not be in sight does not free us from participating in the process of helping or trying to solve a problem or a world ill. The food bank in Indianapolis uses the tag line, "Until every bowl is filled." Who knows when

(see Adland, page 6)

# Gather the People



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

## From secular to sacred ashes

Our first secular experiences of ashes – both of us had similar backgrounds growing up in Southern California – were of cleaning them out of our family's incinerators, which were widespread behind backyard garages in the 1940s and 1950s.

Although it was a chore we regularly resented and mightily resisted, there was a kind of wonder attached to it. So much interesting stuff – colorful wrappings, gift boxes, magazines, and the like – was reduced to a shovel-full of ashes in a matter of minutes by the hypnotic flames, as we watched intently through the open loading door. And then we quickly disposed of the ashes in the de rigueur metal trashcan that we dragged down the driveway to the street for the weekly pickup.

Ashes hardly entered our consciousness again for many years, not until we took notice of Jews who were planning on cremating their remains after they died – an idea that seemed both unsettling and alien.

So ashes came to represent for both of us the final, conclusive end of life, whether of human life or its artifacts now finding their way into massive municipal incinerators.

Then many years later we took notice of the verses in *parashat hashavua* (weekly Torah reading) *Tzav* in which the *kohen* (priest) is to "...put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes to which the fire has consumed the elevating offering (*olah*) on the Altar... Then he shall put off his garments and put on other garments and carry forth the ashes outside the camp to a pure place." (*Vayikra* 6:3–4)

Our first inclination was to project onto these sacrificial ashes all of our secular experience. They simply represented the end of what had been an offering on the Copper Altar of the Sanctuary. But when we began to study the Torah commentary of Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) on *terumat hadeshen*, the "lifting up" of the ashes by the *kohen*, a

whole new realm of understanding opened up.

Strange as it seemed to us initially, this daily early morning ritual was performed only by a *kosher kohen* fully dressed in formal priestly attire.

To take out the ashes?!

But the irony dissipates when one understands that the ritual was a "...remembrance of the devotion represented by the sacrifices of the past day to God and to His holy Torah..." Every day individuals brought offerings to the Sanctuary, symbolic surrogates of their own commitment to kill the animal within and use their free will to marshal their mental and spiritual powers in the service of God and Torah.

In effect, the daily repetition of this "lifting up" of the ashes signaled to the entire nation that the new day was but a continuation of the previous day's devotion to its national mission. It also signified implicitly that the Jewish child of every generation has the same Torah inheritance and responsibility as those who pledged themselves to God and Torah through their offerings on the Altar of the *Mishkan*.

There is an even stranger irony, however, in the ultimate disposition of these ashes. Typically, once an object has satisfied its sacred function, it is no longer forbidden for ordinary use; but in the case of *hadeshen* (the ashes) they remained *kodesh* (sacred, separate and set aside for a special purpose) even after being taken outside the camp and deposited in their final, "pure" resting place. They were not to be used for any other purpose. (*Pesachim* 26a)

But why should ashes from the offerings on the Altar remain permanently holy?

It's almost certainly because they have a symbolic meaning beyond being the remains of the offerings that were sacrificed to empower the pledges being made for those striving upwards to God and Torah. Those strivings were not simply the exertions of individuals seeking atonement (*kaparah*) and closeness to God (*kirvat Adoshem*), but together represented the eternal mission of the Jewish people – which, as history has verified, has an ineluctable *kedusha* (holiness).

It's no wonder that the *kohen* was dressed in his priestly finery when removing the ashes from the Altar – not as a show of position or piety, but to bolster his own *kavanah* (intention), to clarify and strengthen his inner mental and spiritual purpose in carrying out this symbolically laden ritual.

Every day as the *kohen* removed the ashes, he communicated to every observer – both those present to witness his task and those who might imagine it in their

## ADLAND

(continued from 5)

everyone will have enough food? Hopefully that will be tomorrow, but if it isn't then we must continue to work toward that day.

My hope in life is to fulfill the Jewish value of leaving this world just a bit better than when I entered it. If that happens with each person, then over time we can and will finish God's creation. Don't feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task so that it prevents you from doing something, as to do something is better than doing nothing. We are not free to desist.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one to remind us that we are part of the process. No matter how young or old, we can participate in finishing God's creation. Light the other candle to remind us that it is the light of our work that helps prevent the darkness of despair.

Let me add one note to this *Shabbat Shalom*. My heart is filled with sorrow about the murders in Toulouse, France this week. Let us keep in our thoughts the families of Rabbi Jonathan Sandler, his two sons Arie and Gabriel, and Myriam Monsenego. May their memories be for blessing.

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](mailto:j.adland@gmail.com). ★



mind's eye – that the mission of the nation is eternal, and that each day we are to approach that mission with fresh hearts, eyes, and limbs. The *kohen's* dedicated and disciplined service in the Sanctuary was a reminder to each and every member of *Am Yisrael*.

Each day as the *kohen* removed the ashes from the Altar, he lifted up a symbolic banner that eschewed self-satisfied complacency, every day proclaiming his renewed conviction and commitment and calling for the same from the entire nation.

It was and remains an extraordinary lesson:

In Jewish life ashes are sacred because they signify not an ending, but a call to the ever-fresh beginning of our eternal mission as a nation.

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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](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)). ★

# Four Children, Four Stages of Growth, Four Parts of Ourselves

BY BRUCE DAVID



*Excerpt from David's, The Jewish Soul Haggadah*

Since children and adults have varying needs and different levels of understandings, we must look at the various ways that we can share our tradition's teachings. We do this in order to reach them in ways that will be beneficial. While the traditional Haggadah ordinarily shares these levels in the opposite order than you will find here, by representing them in the following way, one can see how they depict the growth stages of people's lives.

1) **The one who doesn't even ask questions** - Like a baby, or one who is very early in their development, this child needs help with the first step. They must be taught to crawl before they can walk or run. This one is not even aware that they are missing out. When one is at this level, it is necessary to keep things simple. Explain to them that we are celebrating this festival because God saved us from a hard and terrible life.

2) **The one who is just starting to develop** - Most often referred to as the "simple child," this term can be misleading. Everyone has to start somewhere, and just the fact that this one is asking, "What is this all about?" is a step in the right direction. Because they are still at an early, youthful stage in their growth, it is important to teach them the basics. Since they are not yet developed enough to comprehend all the technical, in depth information, we need to spell it out in a way they can understand. Explain that God cared about us enough to work miracles in order to bring us out of slavery in Egypt.

3) **The one who is rebellious** - This one most closely portrays the teenager who questions authority. Not understanding the value of what is happening, this one may take a seemingly confrontational approach in asking, "What's the point of all this nonsense?" Yet, just the fact that they are still questioning presents us with an opportunity. Since a part of them is still seeking, we must take advantage by providing them with answers in a way that will help them to learn. We have to teach

## Religious Institutions & Birth Control

BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO



Imagine we had the means to reduce infant mortality and improve newborn health; that we could significantly reduce the number of abortions each year; that we could cut teenage pregnancy by 77 percent; strengthen family relationships; lessen a woman's risk of developing endometrial and ovarian cancer; and even provide short-term protection against colorectal cancer. Imagine the expenses were low and saved money in the long run.

Who among us would not celebrate and act to ensure these possibilities for everyone?

The truth is that we have the means: the availability of contraception. The tragedy is that instead of celebrating, we are arguing.



them that they are part of a unique people with a special heritage. By helping them to understand our relationship to a Divine Entity Who would intercede on our behalf in ways unknown throughout all the rest of existence, we can help them to recognize their own importance as part of our community.

4) **The one who seeks wisdom** - As people continue to grow and learn, true seekers strive to fulfill their potential. Having already developed a maturity that allows them to understand the true value and importance of Passover, people at this higher stage seek more responsibility. This type of individual wants to know all about God's *mitzvot*. Since they are up to the challenge, they should be instructed in all the means by which they can continue to grow as a person, and as a Jew. This is the person who will eventually find true success and fulfillment in their life by becoming someone who feels good about who they are and what they are accomplishing.

In viewing the "four children" in this order, it is easy to see how the different perspectives are just a reflection of the life growth process. Each of these steps depicts a stage of development necessary to achieving the next level. Since they are actually parts of all of us, perhaps that is why we are referred to as the "Children of Israel."

*Bruce David is a Judaic artist and Jewish educator from Bloomington, Ind. His art may be viewed by visiting [www.davidart.com](http://www.davidart.com). He also welcomes comments at that address. He is also president of Light of the Nations ([lotnexperience.org](http://lotnexperience.org)) a contemporary Jewish educational outreach organization. ☆*

The issue has gone from an internal religious debate to a national diatribe.

Individuals and groups certainly have the right to preach against the use of contraception, even if more than 98 percent of sexually active women of childbearing age are not listening, even if contraception has a clear health benefit. However, they do not have a right to impose their morality on others.

Catholic hospitals and educational institutions employ and serve people of diverse faiths. The Obama administration is not requiring that those organizations provide health insurance that includes contraception. It is requiring insurance companies to provide it free of charge. If this were to result in higher health insurance premiums to the hospital, an argument could be made that, in effect, the hospital is paying for the service. But the opposite is true. Such coverage will lower premiums, since contraception is far less expensive than pregnancy.

To convince those who care about a woman's right to control her health and reproductive choices, an effort has been made to frame this as an issue of religious freedom. In other words, you can both believe in the need for access to contraception and oppose government's requiring a religious organization to provide for it in its insurance plans.

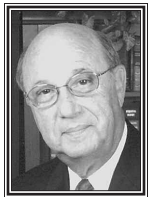
It is a popular argument, but it is false. Catholic churches are not required to provide contraception as part of their health insurance benefits and now neither are Catholic hospitals or educational institutions. No woman is required to use it. According to a press release issued by the Religious Institute, a multifaith organization dedicated to sexual health, Christian Scientists who run secular organizations must provide health insurance even though they preach against seeking medical care, and Jehovah's Witnesses who do the same must provide insurance that covers blood transfusions, even though that contravenes their religious principles.

As Catholic hospitals expand and absorb secular public hospitals, this issue becomes one of increasing importance. It is not about religious freedom; it is about religious coercion.

Religious leaders who represent millions of people of faith - Protestants, Jews and even Catholics - have signed a statement supporting the White House's decision on contraceptive coverage. More than 20 religious denominations have policies affirming birth control. The Rev. Debra Haffner, executive director of the Religious Institute, said in the press release that the debate is not about religious liberty, "but (about) playing politics with women's lives."

(see Sasso, page 8)





## Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### Where does our responsibility begin and end?

*You shall stand before those who are old, and show respect for those who are old.*  
~ Leviticus 19:32

One of the most daunting prospects in human existence involves growing old and the feeling of abandonment. Sometimes we have visions that we will become helpless and a burden to those who know and care about us. The thought of not being able to dress ourselves or complete routine acts such as bathing or maneuvering independently can leave us depressed.

A large segment of the senior population gravitates to retirement communities that offer the comfort of sameness. There is a feeling of togetherness and the ability to commiserate with stories of ailments and reminisces of days long gone. There is the joy of visits from children and grandchildren. They come, they go, which is one of the benefits of being a grandparent.

However, when the dust settles and the car has left the driveway, there is a feeling of loneliness accompanied by a feeling of despair. We open the door, enter our home and find room after room filled with pictures of yesterday. Where has the time gone? Where there used to be laughter and tumult there are echoes of silence.

Then we suddenly cannot remember a name or an event and fright sets in. In a lucid moment, we realize that we are forgetting more than we remember. A puzzled look settles on our face. Who are we? What are we? Why are we here? Our life flashes before us and with it the dreams of yesterday and perhaps the reality of today.

The most discouraging feeling gives us pause because we, for that short moment are feeling discarded. Some of us relocate to different environments that are more hospitable to our new disabilities. Our friends who once joined us in all kinds of activities are no longer within reach. We sit lonely and quiet in thoughts of what was and will no longer be. No more visits – it is too far or too much of an effort. We dial the phone to keep the connection but the conversations are short and become infrequent.

Can you imagine how the Israelites felt after experiencing visions and connection to history, then finding themselves subjugated by people who cannot fathom their existence? The Torah and the Haggadah teach us that their spirits were broken and their lives indescribable as they toiled day in and day out with no hope for a future.

The Jewish people collectively witnessed a determined effort to eradicate not only the memory of their existence, but also their very souls. They were systematically destroyed – both body and spirit. They were cast into the dump heap of history.

The world turned their back. God seemed to have turned away. The promise of tomorrow as described to our fore fathers and mothers and then continued with the Prophets appeared to be ancient history. The penalty for being messengers of the Most High was a terrible burden culminating in destruction beyond understanding.

If these lessons of age and infirmities and prejudice teach us anything it is that life is to be lived. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations that boggle the mind or have no explanation. However, remembering a life or a friend or family member is the act of kindness that allows the hurt to dissipate, if only for a short time.

We certainly cannot explain away the inhumanities that exist nor should we make excuses for them. What we can do is learn that humanity is also capable of good things that make the experiences of life worth living. There is an obligation to survive so that the generations that follow will be able to redeem the future with memories of the past.

We cannot forget even though at times it seems that we cannot remember. We should not forget our neighbors, our friends, our families and our history. We repeat the stories because to understand the present and look forward to the future we need to remember how we got here. We need to remember who brought us to this moment in time. Even in sorrow, we acknowledge with gratitude the One who gave us the ability to survive regardless of the suffering we experience.

An essay I read, I believe, speaks to this most eloquently. The author is unknown.

#### The Rain

*It was a busy morning, about 8:30, when an elderly man in his 80's arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb. He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 a.m.*

*I took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him. I saw him looking at his watch and decided,*

#### SASSO

(continued from 7)

We have the cost-saving means to promote and improve women's health. Providing access to contraception is about that and nothing else. Denying it is a disservice to women, prudent medical care, and individual and religious freedom.

*Sasso and her husband Rabbi Dennis C. Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis for 34 years. Reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star, Mar. 6, 2012. ★*



*since I was not busy with another patient, I would evaluate his wound. On exam, it was well healed, so I talked to one of the doctors, got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound.*

*While taking care of his wound, I asked him if he had another doctor's appointment this morning, as he was in such a hurry.*

*The man told me no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife. I inquired as to her health.*

*He told me that she had been there for a while and she was a victim of Alzheimer's disease.*

*As we talked, I asked if she would be upset if he was a bit late. He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now.*

*I was surprised, and asked him, "And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?"*

*He smiled as he patted my hand and said, "She doesn't know me. But I still know who she is."*

*I had to hold back tears as he left. I had goose bumps on my arm, and thought, "That is the kind of love I want in my life."*

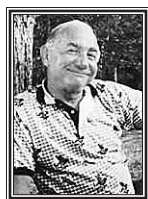
*True love is neither physical, nor romantic. True love is an acceptance of all that is, has been, will be, and will not be. Life is not about how to survive the storm, but how to dance in the rain.*

Communities pride themselves on being caring and supportive. Let us not relegate those feelings to just our immediate confines. If you have had friends that were part of you, continue to keep them in your lives through visits and calls and letters and cards. Each of you is a member of your extended family.

As we approach the holiday of Passover and the commemoration of the Holocaust, we should remember that God did not abandon His people. Our survival is a testament to that. We too should not isolate those who need our connection, if only for a moment of our time. Amen.

*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

### What I like best about Judaism

How do I love Judaism? Let me count the ways.

1) I love that big, fat book that drives our ethics and our ethos. I mean the Total Book; *Humash*, prophets, and writing; our *Tanach*. I love its honesty. It is a soap opera of saints and sinners. The celestial spotlight reveals every blemish in the character of our ancestors. There's no cover up. It is bound in credibility and illustrated in truth. It is not a Neiman-Marcus brochure. Whether written by the finger of G-d or dictated by him to the heart, soul, and mind of a mortal mouthpiece, it speaks truth. A no-spin zone.

2) I love it that we don't have a Pope or a hierarchy of any sort. My city doesn't have a head rabbi, nor does my state. I don't even know the name of the head rabbi of Jerusalem. If I wanted to ask him how to improve my brother-in-law's ethical behavior, I'm sure I'd have trouble locating him – the head Rabbi, not my brother-in-law. We respect the teacher, the *rebbe*, but we know the way is not given to him alone.

3) I love the tenderness expressed toward the fragile creatures that share the male, warrior-centered culture of biblical times. Imagine. It's an age of might makes right. The World Wrestling Federation – vintage 2000 BCE – is in charge. Yet, here's this book of history, ethics, and poetry that says pile driving your opponent into a granite cliff is illegal – unless he's a pagan who thinks sticks and stones and clay figurines run the universe.

4) I love the tenderness in Deuteronomy that cares about the muzzled ox and forbids plucking the mother bird from its nest. Not to mention its regard for the weakest of the down-trodden; widows and orphans. You should allow them to harvest your orchards and "the corners of your field". A revolutionary concept: Such ethics in the Bronze Age are as rare as pomegranate bushes in the Sinai Desert – not to be found in any of literature of the times; except in our Book. It is our idea, like monotheism, we should be proud. None of the ancient writings that skeptics claim influenced our Book reflect tenderness, compassion, or a humane code of conduct.

Yes, other cultures of the day, the cynics remind us, are also abounding with creation myths and flood myths. Even heroic figures cast, as infants, upon the mercy of the river tide. (Sound familiar?) True. But their pantheons were stocked with comic strip characters with all the warm heartedness of Conan the Barbarian. Grotesquely sexual, grotesquely evil. The pagan myth-makers could not imagine a supernatural force that conjoined love and power. Why would a warrior king even glance at the powerless.

I love our no-inbetween Thunderer who abominates the evil of pagan Canaan ("and you shall utterly destroy them") but gushes over widows, orphans, and strangers. And yes, the birds of the air and beasts of the field. Unsurprisingly, He is a spirit of moods like his creation, humanity. He said He made man in his image and that might imply a reciprocal relationship – a small measure of man in G-d, so it appears in our limited vision.

5) I love the mysticism of the Chasids and their like who add a galactic dimension to the G-d of Sinai. With due reverence to tradition, they add their own story of the sparks that fuel the universe. Metaphorically, kin to the Big Bang Theory – an expanding light, a mist of matter flooding the infinite space that is the universe. Irreverent? No more than Ecclesiastes, no more than Micah, no more than the Talmudists who dared to boldly interpret the word of G-d and fabricate our Oral Law. Who says that *Etz Chayim*, our Tree of Life, doesn't flourish in time and bend with the wind and grow with the rain? Truth, like the universe, is still expanding.

I love it that in our Book there's a chapter called Song of Songs, a love story that could have been penned by a 5th Century BCE Jacqueline Suzanne. And a skeptical philosophic chapter called Ecclesiastes. How did they make the cut? There's enough theological room in Judaism for an army of *kibitzers*. They, too, may dwell in the Tent of Covenant.

I like the idea that the Prophets are critical of temple worship. They deride the notion – as would most rabbis of today – that the Almighty spirit that hung galaxies in infinity, invisible to us, is pleased by the aroma of barbecued beef or mutton. The cherished sacrifice, they say, is of the heart. They speak loudly of this – in our Book – even though over a hundred of the mitzvahs command our attention to the temple.

I like the idea that the Book of Judaism is big enough to give voice to Micah ("walk humbly with your G-d") as well as two fat chapters called Leviticus and Deuteronomy with hundreds of rules. And yet we honor Hillel who said that it all

boiled down to not poaching on your neighbor's fig tree unless you wanted him poaching on yours.

6) I like the idea that the history, narrative, and downright schmoozing of the *Humash* never neglects an opportunity to exercise the most blatant *Leshon Hora*. Truth is never subjugated to political correctness. Judah and David are castigated as skirt chasers. Solomon, too. And furthermore, he's an idolater. What do you expect from a man with a thousand pagan wives – curvy, uninhibited, acrobatic, who attend Friday night services on hilltop shrines. Our flawed ancestors are never deified. And the book doesn't hold its nose at biting criticism.

7) I like the fact that Judaism, with minor exception, waves a strong non-monastic banner. This planet, this day, is the challenge. Don't hang around the house or synagogue all day bending over Talmud – go fix something. The world cries for perfection. Deeds, not meditation. Abraham was a shepherd. Rashi was a vintner. The Rambam was a doctor like Jonas Salk. And David spent a large part of his day composing music and writing lyrics (like his kinsman, George Gershwin). Rebbe Menachim Schneerson was a physicist.

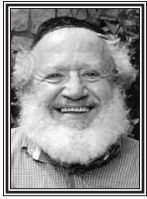
8) And most of all, I like the mystery of our survival: an ever-present conundrum of worldwide consequence; and then the linked curiosity that every nation that seriously devoted itself to our destruction has fallen, with immense suffering. Egypt, Spain, Germany and Russia. Is the Arab world, seething with Jew hatred, next?

I love the splendor of our holidays and their constant reminder that there is more than this time, this place. How our feasts and ceremonies light up our culture and history! At the Seder, brilliant with ceremony, who can forget our slavery days. *Chanukah*, *Purim*, even *Tisha B'Av* awake our ancestral – you might say tribal – memory.

The house note is due, the boss thinks you're dumber than dirt, and the 12 year old wallpaper in the dining room cries for replacement. But how trivial, compared to the travails of Esther and her people, our people. Had some Persian soldier plunged his sword into the heart of my progenitor a hundred generations ago, I would never have walked this cool, green earth. Bosses, dining rooms, a relative's pettiness, even a child's illness fade into another dimension like last year's short-lived TV sitcom. And somehow we survive – oh mystery of mysteries.

Judaism is a revolutionary creed. Our bible is studded with the "HE" and "WE" dialogue between the judge and the defendant. It's as though the U.S.

(see Roberts, page 12)



## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### Six million Jews in America – fact or fiction

You know that with statistics, you can prove anything, but anytime you see statistics about the Jewish population in the United States, you have to be on guard. It certainly is not because someone or some group is out to deceive the Jewish nation, but of course, the matter is always, who exactly are you counting?

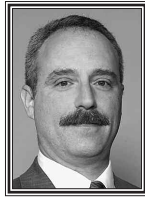
While Jews are almost always counted in the category of “Religions,” Jews require an asterisk.\* At least one. Jews are members of a historical “Peoplehood,” another category that almost no one knows how to define. The best way to think about it is that in its broadest sense, it defines everyone who descended the time of the Patriarch Jacob, who left Egypt, stood and affirmed their faith at Sinai, or came by way of conversion. The “Conversion” inclusion is one of the centers of dispute because conversion seems to always be in question. Was she or he a “righteous” convert, and what does that mean?

And then there is the position that “Once in is always in.” That is how we live in a world with “Jews for Jesus,” Buddha-Jews and descendants of Jews who still are counted often against their wishes. Hitler didn’t care about any definition other than his own. You could opt out during the Inquisition, but not in Stalin’s Russia.

Anyway that is how it is done. And for many Jews, it is also comforting. There is no one I know and respect who denies Jews their right to call themselves Jewish, even if they do not participate in any form of attachment. We just refer to them as “fallen away.” And there has always been a willingness to welcome them back, although the re-entrance rituals may be different.

In our current era, we seem plagued by intermarriage, assimilation, conversion to other faiths, and often in terms of Jews who move on to leadership. But the number seems fixed. Decade after decade, it seems that 6 million is a comfortable figure, for positing and for just comfort.

There is really nothing we could do if we accept a lower figure, perhaps 2.5 million, which represents Jews who do anything



## The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

### Adonai controls forces of nature ascribed to Egyptian gods

“Upon all the ‘gods’ of Egypt, I will execute judgments – I – *Adonai*,” declares God in Exodus 12:12. The passage promises the utter destruction of the Egyptian gods, yet curiously, the Book of Exodus seems not to describe a single judgment against a god of Egypt. Now, some might dismiss the “broken promise” as a redacting error, a careless scribe’s leaving the battle between God and gods on the cutting room floor. But if we honor the text by remembering that it was written for people steeped in Egyptian culture, we soon see that the promise is not broken. Our understanding of the context is deficient.

more than acknowledging their historic connection. There might be less than that who contribute to any Jewish organization, institution, newspaper, magazine, or who only bowl. Many more might eat Jewish foods, like Jewish humor or who feel warmed by how many Jews perform well.

It really doesn’t do us any good to become frustrated over things that we have no control over, unless we were going to make some conscious effort to do something about what we found out, and truthfully because we are a “stiff necked people,” if we did come together, it would be bedlam.

For now, it is just a big umbrella that we pull out if it meets our political needs, like support for Israel, or sometimes, trying to get someone to consider making something you’d like to eat, *kosher*; but those are even problem areas.

We are divided about our feeling for Israel, except that we want it to exist, and there are now hundreds of “kosher symbols”. As you would imagine, there is absolutely no consensus about which ones to honor. It is in fact, just a Jewish way to look at the world.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc., and can be reached at [hkarsh@gmail.com](mailto:hkarsh@gmail.com). He has recently been named as a community columnist for the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel.★

In that regard, Egyptians personified the forces of nature important to the well being of the people and worshipped those forces as gods. Over 2,000 years, Egyptian gods’ names and functions sometimes changed, but the correlation of natural forces with gods was a constant of Egyptian theology. With that context, the wondrous events of the Book of Exodus are transformed from mere parlor tricks to demonstrations that God controls the force of nature the Egyptians ascribed to gods. And as events unfold and the gods crumble, Egyptians become progressively disheartened and the Israelites grow ever more hopeful that God can and will free them. Three examples demonstrate this proposition.

Aaron and Moses appear before Pharaoh, and Aaron’s staff becomes a *tannin* when thrown to the floor. “*Tannin*” means “crocodile” in Hebrew, though it is usually mistranslated as “serpent.” Egyptians and Israelites knew that the god Sobek, depicted as a man with the head of a crocodile, was Pharaoh’s personal god who symbolized Pharaoh’s power of life and death over his subjects. By transforming Aaron’s staff into a crocodile that swallowed the staffs of Pharaoh’s courtiers, God demonstrated that Pharaoh’s days were numbered; Sobek could not help him. Sobek had been judged.

The Egyptian fertility goddess, Heqat, was depicted as a frog. Indeed, the name Heqat meant “frog.” In the second plague, frogs proliferated, became an unbearable nuisance, died and stank until the Egyptians begged Moses to remove “Heqat” – goddess and frog. Thus, Heqat was adjudged a mere human creation, not a controller of fertility.

The meaning of the fourth plague, *arov*, became obscure centuries ago. Some commentators translated it as “insects” while others as “a mixture of wild beasts.” In early Hebrew, *arov* was pronounced “*gharab*,” a cognate of the Egyptian word “*khpr*” (and its variant “*khpr*”), which meant “scarab beetle” and also Scarab-god. A scarab lays eggs in dung, which it forms into a ball and rolls into a hole in the riverbank. Eventually, the eggs hatch and scarabs emerge from the mud. By analogy, Egyptians believed that Scarab-god rolled the sun across the sky by day like a dung ball, pushed it into a hole in the west at sunset, rolled it inside the earth at night, and pushed it out in the east at dawn to repeat the cycle. In contrast to other gods, Scarab dwelt in the interior of the earth, not on or above it. And Exodus alludes to Scarab-god’s dwelling place, stating: “Egypt’s buildings and even the ground they are on will fill up with scarabs...so that [Pharaoh] will know that I, God, am in the interior of the Earth.” (Exodus 12:17–19.)

(see Ben-Mordecai, page 13)





## Addictions Counselor

By RABBI STEVEN M. LEAPMAN

### Blame "The Serenity Prayer"

Words have tremendous power! Even more powerful is "how" words are used. "How" we speak, "how" we hear, "how" we repeat, "how" we react to words leaves an impact and an echo. Within the addictions treatment culture, "The Serenity Prayer" is often recited: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference!* What of these words?

One might legitimately call these words a mantra of "recovery." Yet, like any oft-repeated phrase, it is easy to mutter and race through these words, leaving the sounds stated but hollow in their reception and weakly penetrating a needy spirit.

One exciting exercise is to have a group of people write out the Serenity Prayer, one word per line, then after each individual term, write or state what the word means that day, at that time and place. Thus, when speaking "God" one could state, "You know, despite myself, I kind of need to believe in that old man in the sky, at least today!" For "accept" one might note how in Hebrew the concept of "receive" is very similar and thus, one might be asking God to help him or her literally receive situations and certain folks whose actions are not readily contained or controlled.

That insight is very useful as we come to realize that what prompts fear and frustration "yesterday" may prove itself a lesson "today." The fact is that very few incidents and adventures can or will leave us "the same." In fact, "change" continually presents in our lives.

Given this perspective, what about the words "I" and "me" found in our Serenity Prayer? "How" is my "I" different as I type these words between clients on a late Wednesday afternoon, and the "I" who will sit down later tonight or tomorrow to continue constructing this article; if I am aware of what I am writing, "who" is really at the keyboard? And "me" is defined by which "we," the other therapists I work with, my family, or other congregants at the synagogue we attend?

I sometimes refer to Lancaster, Pa., as the town where I can still be called "Stevie!" During my year at the first

student pulpit I served in Texas, I recall a very decent gentleman who called me "Rabbi." I was in my second year of a five-six year program and surely felt I was not yet a rabbi, but he wanted or needed or chose to call me that. I was honored and hopefully a bit wiser in hearing his intention, his respect, and mostly, his human need to have a person to call "rabbi." Some of the sailors in the Navy or Marine Corps called me "Chaps" or "L.T." Yet, despite all this, I sometimes labor under the presumption I'm "still" the same guy who went to high school in Millersville, Pa., later, seminary in Cincinnati, and later yet, graduate school in Indiana. Where is that "guy" or those "guys" now? What do I see when I subject my "I" to the Serenity Prayer in this manner?

So, it seems that individual essence is more fluid than we thought; it appears that whatever, or whoever, it is that makes us consistent, makes us solid, makes us cohesive, could be in question or at least be found somewhat equivocal. Suddenly, the very personality we thought was steady and certain is a bit harder to ascertain. Not only must we confront what changes us, but do we even remain the same across life stages and phases? This quandary might cause a great deal of anxiety without a spiritual foundation to sustain us. Historical Judaism has ideas and concepts that have been the hallmarks of our legacy and can be fruitfully plumbed to avail us in a post-modern age. Contemporary Judaism is compelled to ask such questions or risk the peril of irrelevancy. Relevancy beckons!

What I have been discussing is our dualities – as if our "self" was tattered and broken into (at the very least) opposites and extremes, "eithers" vs. "ors." This memory confronts us, that recollection disturbs us, another incident arises and appears to cast a shadow of sarcasm on our worth and merit. It is as we were viewing a photo album which arranged painfully selected, solitary, isolated examples of woe, worry and blatant waywardness. We look in the mirror and our mind's eye sees fissures and cracks. Religion and psychology can provide healing to the degree which we are attentive to our personal evolution. Issues of "now," not "nostalgia" compel us!

Aren't we the people who proclaim that God is One, that in Judaism, What is Sacred has Unity, Wholeness, Completeness, Peace and Peacefulness? Our *siddur* holds instances where Unity is not only a lesson, but an idea which might bring comfort. God as One teaches us to seek our own wholeness, our "one-ness." Examine our Saturday night *Havdalah*

blessings, specifically "Ha'Mav'deel" which bespeaks a dynamic of combinations within Creation that seek resolution and gather in harmony. It is not a contest between "this" or "that" but an appreciation of each aspect's necessity in the unified whole.

Consider "Yotzer Or" in the morning service or "Ma'areev Aa'raveem" in the evening liturgy. Again, the blending of apparent differences and outright diversities is precisely what mirrors the non-duality of the Jewish God and is The Image in which we are created. Yes, I am aware our ancient sages taught that the notion of "being created in God's Image" is a reference to humanity's moral attributes, but we must do more with our Judaism that enshrine its past poignancy, we must claim it and apply it today!

And so, I "blame" the Serenity Prayer for it is a modern document, composed by a Lutheran pastor, which is beloved by the recovery-community and others I am honored to serve and learn from as a therapist. I cherish this prayer for it challenges and directs me as a contemporary Jew and rabbi, looking to tools and teachings modernity affords to build a Judaism that does not reside in the past.

Today's struggles require more than a pining for old countries and old ways. Applying the Serenity Prayer to my Jewish identity in this fashion is a dialectic; an interaction and exchange characterizes and completes varying episodes of my life. Judaism reminds each person that her individuality matters, that his life holds the significance of Creation in its very fabric and fiber. We are part of something beyond our years, yet to disregard and misunderstand these days and decades will diminish ourselves and our legacy. Such is our challenge, such is our opportunity. *Shalom!*

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. ✨

### On this date in Jewish history

On March 28, 1917

Turkish authorities expelled Jews from Jaffa and Tel Aviv.

~ From *The Jewish Book of Days* published by Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., New York.



## Confidentially Yours

BY AVI & ADELE

### Dating your Friend's Ex

Dear Avi and Adele:

*What's the best way to handle dating a friend's ex-boyfriend? My friend and her boyfriend broke up a few months ago after dating for about a year. He and I enjoyed a few coffee dates together recently. I'm surprised to find myself really enjoying his company. I think it could go somewhere, but how do I preserve my friendship while seeing where this leads? ~ Think He's Cute*

Dear Think:

Why is it that so many of you love your friends' former loves? What is the appeal of this once-discarded beau or belle? Why would you risk the double impact that this would have on the significant other, and perhaps more significantly, your friendship?

Because we, as humans, are designed to believe in this thing called "love." We know you've already spent time plucking daisy petals while dreaming of a time ten years from now when you, your special *motek* (honey or sweet), and your friend who did all sorts of unmentionables with said *motek*, will all look back on this awkward time of hidden romance and endearing deceit and laugh and laugh and laugh.

Put down that flower right now and step away from your future memory lane. Dating a friend's ex is dangerous territory and your highest priority should most definitely be preserving your friendship. (Alternatively, if it's a friend who you've been trying to oust from your life, go ahead and plow forward with abandon.)

How does one proactively manage a friendship whilst pursuing a romance that said friend has rejected in a very personal way? Communicate. Perhaps it's a test-the-waters comment like, "I ran into Yaakov the other night at the *Purim* Carnival and realized that he's a darn funny guy!" or, for the more brave of heart, "I know that you didn't care for Rebekah, but when I saw her a couple weeks back I just had to ask her out. And you know what? We've really been enjoying each other's company." Your friend need not know the intimate details of what you do together and likely doesn't want to hear it. Your friend will also appreciate you opening the door to conversation and it's up to him or her to share if there is any discomfort in the early days.

Once you've begun all this communicative give and take, you will likely want to give a little deeper thought to what you're hoping your friend's response will be. Are you seeking to just inform your friend of your new love or do you seek your friend's approval? Be clear to avoid heartache and hurt feelings.

When you've been officially dating your friend's ex for a meaningful time of, say, two to three months, a deeper conversation with your friend is in order, explaining that you are now exclusively dating this person. If properly primed, your friend will not sit *shiva* in mourning of your friendship, but will become comfortable with the idea of your relationship happiness.

Red flag alert: If your friend was dumped by the ex, or if the ex cheated on your friend, think twice about dating the ex at all, even if casually. Your friend will undoubtedly feel that you are siding with the ex and it cannot under any circumstances end well. Consider yourself warned!

### Googling Loved Ones

Dear Avi and Adele

*I've enjoyed hanging out with the really awesome woman I met at synagogue a few months ago. Trouble is, I'm a little uncomfortable that I found a google search she did of me open on her computer screen while I was hanging out at her house, by myself while she went for a run. There's really nothing scathing or sordid about me that she would find on the internet (or anywhere else). Should I say something to her? ~ Nothing to Hide*

Dear Nothing to Hide:

To search or not to search? That is the question.

Back in the *shtetl* days, all a girl had to do to learn more about a guy was ask the locals. A *yenta* or two would surely step forward with all sorts of background information, probably to a depth that exceeds what Google or Bing could ever offer. But today, we hang our dirty *shmattas* out on the internet and then wonder who knows what about us.

Your question is particularly intriguing in that you were using her computer while she was away. We'll assume that you had permission, that this is a regular occurrence for the two of you and that she trusts you enough to use it unsupervised. With all that said, we can understand why you were bothered to discover her research.

You may not need to jump to conclusions: she could have merely forgotten when your birthday was or

### ROBERTS

(continued from page 9)

Constitution began with the dictum that "We the people shall eternally question, debate, argue, and *kibbitz* with the concept and character of this constitution". Patriarchs, priests, prophets, and even commoners like Teyve the dairyman bedevil their creator, from Genesis to Malachi with criticism and comments. And this besieged creator, like the CEO at the shareholders meeting, is so busy answering complaints that you wonder how he has time to run his business — the universe.

The creator, himself, with divine irritation repeatedly calls us a stiff necked people. What a theology! Formally bound by a maze of laws — written and oral, implicit and explicit, carved in stone and whispered — yet the holiest of our books is one long debate of our covenant; flaring with discussion, disagreement, disobedience, and dissonance. A human/divine marriage in a bizarre divorce court, in which the Judge promises his love forever. And a happy, kiss and make-up ending.

*Ted Roberts, a Rockower Award winner, is a syndicated Jewish columnist who looks at Jewish life with rare wit and insight. Check out his Web site: [www.wonderwordworks.com](http://www.wonderwordworks.com). Blogsite: [www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com](http://www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com). His collected works The Scribbler on The Roof can be bought at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [lulu.com/content/127641](http://lulu.com/content/127641). ★*



was checking your official mailing address so as to send you a surprise gift from JewishLovePresents.com. Perhaps you mentioned that you wrote a really fascinating senior thesis on the role of gender in ancient *shtetl* life and she wanted to see if it was available online. Maybe she's trying to get in good with your mom and can't admit that she's long since forgotten your mother's name.

On the other hand, conclusions may be running amuck as we typically think it a faux pas to do the research in the shadows of the internet, sneaking about in the depths of someone else's closet. You say you have nothing to hide, but one man's treasured life may be a girl's trashy gossip playground. If your girlfriend is of the clever sort, she could easily find out real estate holdings and mortgages you hold, any past legal issues you've had in your county (like divorce, domestic violence, foreclosure, petty theft, and so forth), some employment and volunteer history, and a host of random other tidbits.

You seem to really be asking the question, "Why? Why would she do that?" And that, our friend, is best asked of her. We support you in asking her straight up (see Avi&Adele, page 13)





## Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

### The Threepenny Opera on New York stage

How did *The Threepenny Opera*, written in 1928, move from its status as a protest piece to worldwide fame, from an intriguing little show to a classic? Certainly it captured the mood and spirit of pre-Nazi Germany. Certainly later it would be banned by the Nazis, as were many lesser works. And certainly its composer Kurt Weill (a Jew) and writer Bertolt Brecht (an anti-Nazi) would ultimately flee the country.

Brecht and Weill would set their piece in 1837, at the time of Queen Victoria's coronation, but this corrupt world of thieves and whores could indeed be applicable 100 years later. But earlier history indicates that *The Threepenny Opera* was based on a 1728 piece, John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, a satirical ballad opera complete with a shocking, gritty atmosphere that would wear well.

And now, once again, *The Threepenny Opera* makes its appearance on a New York stage. This off-Broadway version presented by the Marvell Rep is appropriately housed on a tiny third floor stage. Much of the spirit is captured with its tattered curtains, awkwardly-lettered scene announcements, and ragged costumes. The piece opens with a character seated on the toilet, performing (both his bodily functions and his rendition of "Mac the Knife"). A memorable moment indeed.

The story – which has remained intact through the years – deals with Macheath (aka: Mac the Knife) captain of a gang of thieves and his amorous adventures. Polly Peachum, whose father is king of the beggars, runs off to marry (or thinks she



L-R: Joy Franz as Mrs. Peachum and Emma Rosenthal as Polly in *The Threepenny Opera*. Photo credit: Jill Usdan.

#### RIBNER

(continued from 4)

to share this bread with others. We need to become like matzah, simple and humble.

When you go to the Seder and it becomes time to eat matzah, eat it without talking. Hashem is feeding you all that you need at this time. Do not waste this precious time with idle talk. During the Seder, I heard that some people even kiss the maror. Wow! That takes faith, love and humility to be grateful for all the hardship because it brought us to where we are in this moment. Try kissing the maror this Pesach. It feels liberating and expansive just to think about doing it. May this holiday be beautiful, healing, transforming for you and all of Israel.

Melinda (Mindy) Ribner, L.C.S.W. is a spiritual psychotherapist and healer in private practice ([www.kabbalahoftheheart.com](http://www.kabbalahoftheheart.com)). She is a teacher of Jewish meditation and Kabbalah for over 25 years. Author of *Kabbalah Month by Month*, *New Age Judaism*, and *Everyday Kabbalah*, she is also the founder and director of Beit Miriam ([www.Beitmiriam.org](http://www.Beitmiriam.org)). She can be reached by email at [Beitmiriam@msn.com](mailto:Beitmiriam@msn.com) or [Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com](mailto:Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com). Kabbalah Month by Month offers guidelines, meditations, strategies, stories to promote personal growth and healing each month. ★

marries) Macheath. This impels Peachum into betraying Macheath, leading to his capture and hanging (or does he hang?).

Alas, the Marvell Rep show does not live up to its strong beginnings. Many of the performers are rank amateurs, lacking solid singing voices and believable stage movements. Though the leads move with assurance, larger scenes with more cast members lead one to believe that this is a student acting class. But Angus Hepburn and Joy Franz (as Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, respectively) are thoroughly professional, always in character, whether singing, pontificating, or interacting with others. Matt Faucher interprets Macheath as a likeable scoundrel, always popular with the ladies, but one would have liked to see more bite and menace in the portrayal. As to Mac's many women, Ariela Morgenstern stands out as Jennie Diver. She is stunning, and it is only in her solo number that she stumbles, twisting her mouth awkwardly. Emma Rosenthal is credible as Polly Peachum, but falters in her songs, tending to screech on the high notes, as do others in the cast. But she has an effective scene with Kelly Pekar, as the two vie for Macheath's love. And finally, a note of praise to Chad Jennings who never falters as Macheath's buddy, Tiger Brown, the police official.

#### BEN-MORDECAI

(continued from page 10)

As discussed in *The Exodus Haggadah*, Israelites and Egyptians would readily have understood each plague, as well as the killing and eating of lambs and the drowning in the sea, as judgments against the gods of Egypt – demonstrations that Adonai controls the forces of nature ascribed to those gods, who control nothing and are nothing. Yet uttering the gods' names would honor them. (Cf. obliterating Haman's name at *Purim*.) Thus, with one exception, the Book of Exodus mentions the gods obliquely, by their symbols or Hebrew names for the natural forces ascribed to those gods. The exception is the fourth plague, scarabs. Because scarabs do not occur in Canaan, Hebrew had no native word for scarab and the Book of Exodus used the actual name and address of the Egyptian Scarab-god, properly modified to fit Hebrew phonology.

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. When not lawyering or writing, he enjoys feeding "his" raccoon Ranger, and Ranger's two cubs. Email: [Seth@VayomerPublishing.com](mailto:Seth@VayomerPublishing.com). ★

#### AVI&ADELE

(continued from page 12)

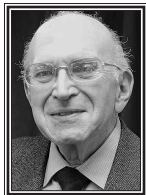
what she was looking for. You can ask her what she found. And then ask her what you might find if you googled her. Be ready for anything and, as always, keep communicating!

Livin' and Lovin', Avi and Adele

To submit questions to *Confidentially Yours: Avi and Adele*, please email [aa@letmypeoplegrow.org](mailto:aa@letmypeoplegrow.org). For additional Jewish content, please go to [www.letmypeoplegrow.org](http://www.letmypeoplegrow.org). ★

All told, this is not the strong *Threepenny Opera* one would love to see on the New York stage, but it is nonetheless heartening to see Mackie and his pals back in town.

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](mailto:IreneBack@sbcglobal.net) and invites you to visit her website: [nytheater.scene.com](http://nytheater.scene.com) or at: [jewish-theatre.com](http://jewish-theatre.com). ★



## As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

### Longing for traditional music at synagogue

I had planned on reviewing a newly released CD, but alas I have not yet received it so "no can do."

It has occurred to me that in a recent column I vented on this and that and may well have been too hard on some of our "spiritual leaders." Without commenting on the merits of my discomforts, our rabbis are subject to many conflicting congregational pressures and being human tend to react to a variety of squeaky wheels. Since my area of concern is music, this is a sore subject for me.

When I was a lad, not too many years ago, most Jews "went to temple" as much to listen to a good *hazzan* interpreting the prayers – usually with the assistance of an organist and a mixed choir – as much as to pray. Next in the order of importance was the rabbi's sermon, and last were the chanting of the Torah and *Haftarah* portions. While there was some responsive reading (in English) as well as congregational singing, these last two items did not occupy a significant amount of time.

Probably last in importance as well as in the time consumed was the preliminary service which was usually led by the *shammes* or *hazzan sheni*, as he was often later referred to. While there were fewer worshippers on Saturday morning as contrasted to the late Friday evening service, in general attendance was good and did not have to depend on a *bar* or *bat mitzvah* to fill the worship space. That was then.

Then a funny thing happened; over time, Jews stopped "going" to services, just like their non-Jewish neighbors. Late Friday evening services gave way to pot luck communal suppers with the rabbi literally teaching folks to sing *Kiddish* and such, and it became a kind of teaching seminar for young parents that had children in Hebrew school. Oft times the services that followed were for folks who hardly ever set foot in temple since their own bar or bat mitzvah! Why or how did this transformation occur? Well, forgive me please, I want to look at what I see, or better put, *hear* now.

The longest part of the actual worship

occurs with the preliminary service. Unlike their non-Jewish friends where the service actually begins at a stated time, *Yiddn* (like everybody else) tend to vote with their feet. In order words, they come when it is convenient for them, usually at least a half hour after the official starting time. For those who actually are present for the *p'kudei v'zimra*, the individual serving as reader usually stitches together the few prayers leading to a variety of communal singing.

While commenting on the quality of the tunes employed may be a matter of taste, what is observable fact is that they are all sung at a snappy pace for the benefit of the few who can actually get the words out. After the brief section where the Torah is taken out is the time for the rabbi to be heard. The rabbi's sermon has been replaced with some observations relating to the Torah portion and is usually followed by a "discussion." From my perspective these discussions are frequently pointless and give the folks who are there an opportunity to be heard, and heard and heard.

Then the real movers and shakers take over. These are the "few, the proud," the readers of the Torah and Haftarah. The preliminary and service proper services take about 40 minutes or so, the rabbi's comments and discussion, about another 40 minutes. *Musaf*, (the additional service) where it still done, along with "announcements" take another 20 minutes. (The length of all these are only approximate and are oft times longer!)

In smaller and rural congregations there is no longer a professional *hazzan*. Appropriate *Nusach* for the various parts of the service is another casualty. This would have been scandalous 50 years ago. Not today. Attendance at Saturday morning services is generally poor when there is no bar or bat mitzvah.

Since there is no *hazzan*, there is also no accompanying organist and since the congregation does all the singing, no need for a choir either. I am etwas a musician and I have to confess that I "go" to *shul* on *Shabbos* in spite of the music I know I will hear there. I do not fault the rabbis for the quality or quantity of the music used for congregational singing as they are responding to the desires of people in their congregations.

I confess that the pastiche of tunes used for *ka-ka-tuv* (second paragraph of *Aleinu*) I find to be particularly offensive. I conclude with a question: Is there any causal relationship between attendance at *Shabbos* services these days and the insipid, childish, as well as quasi Chassidic melodies used at these services which have no relationship to the words, and

## Matzah, Marror, & Dishes

BY RABBI DAVID ZELLER, z"l



*Matzah* is called the bread of affliction and it is also called the bread of faith. Faith isn't blind belief. For example, "Tell me this and I'll believe it, give me new information and I won't believe it." Belief is probably the lowest level of knowing. Most of our perception is a belief type of perception. An example of faith is: "I don't know if I'll ever be able to see you for who you are, but I know who you are. It doesn't matter what I see or hear or what anybody says. It doesn't matter what I do or say, what you do or what you say. I don't know you, I don't understand you, I don't believe you, I faith you." *Matzah* is the bread of faith, the way to reach into that level of vision. It is not based on our merit or on our understanding or how good we are, just based on our faith.

I learned from Shlomo Carlebach that when we break the matzah, we cover half of it up, conceal it and hide it. There's a whole part of me I don't know, it's hidden. I lost it. In the Gemora it is said this matzah breaking is done to keep the attention of the children so they don't leave the table. Carlebach says the *afikomen*, the half of the matzah that is covered up represents the part of you that is lost and the only ones that can bring it back to you are your children. What our children can reveal to us about ourselves is precious.

Another teaching from Carlebach is about *marror* (bitter herb). What is the reason we say a bracha (blessing) over

(see Zeller, page 15)

do not lend any sense of the sacred to the proceedings?

My opinion for whatever it is worth is that there is. One will not be moved by the "concord of sweet sounds" at many services given at a Conservative temple these days. Change is not always progress. This is how I feel. If you feel the same way, be your own squeaky wheel! Then perhaps we may "go back to the future!"

*Dr. Gold is a composer/conductor and a music and drama critic. He may be reached at: drmortongold@yahoo.com. ★*





## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### Tower Heist and New Year's Eve

There was a time when films and TV shows about New York felt some obligation to feature Jewish characters or at least to mention Jews or use Jewish expressions. After all, there are a lot of Jews in New York.

Yet *Tower Heist* doesn't mention Jews at all. Judd Hirsch plays an efficient, smart manager of a post high rise with no specific Jewish references. The capable, devoted, sympathetic secretary, Rose (Marcia Jean Kurtz) is identified as Italian.

I can understand and appreciate why the villain of the film, the viciously exploitative Mr. Shaw (Alan Alda), a Pyramid scheme monster, is not identified as Jewish. Thankfully, though the name could be a Jewish one, director Brett Ratner and writers Ted Griffin and Jeff Nathanson are careful to depict a horrid personality type, best described by M. Scott Peck in *People of the Lie*, in generic terms. This showed merciful restraint, considering that the world's most infamous convicted Pyramid schemer is Jewish, was identified as such, and financially and morally damaged many Jewish causes.

In this beautifully filmed and nicely acted and amusing enough fare, a loyal and capable concierge staff member, Josh Kovacs, played by Ben Stiller, who has trusted Mr. Shaw and urged investment of the employees pensions with him, and who now understands the extent of the

man's evil and avarice, enlists other employees and friends in a plan to steal back their money from Shaw. The caper's conspirators of color, Eddie Murphy and Gabourey Sidibe, actually get to spoof some of the stereotypes associated with American and Caribbean blacks, but the writers and producers are reluctant to have a Jewish hero, though Kovacs could be a Jewish name, as was true of the legendary Ernie Kovacs.

Ironically, Stiller has never been so admirable and likable in a film. This is, happily, a far cry from the self-serving and sneaky rabbi he played in *Keeping the Faith*, or the self-indulgent passive and aggressive fool of "Focker" franchise fame. The Stiller character here is idealistic, generous and self-sacrificing. Why is there resistance to identifying such a character as – a Jew?

The word, "Jew," is also not used in the film, *New Year's Eve*, a sweet and well-intentioned, but rather unimpressive melodrama directed by Garry Marshall and written by Katherine Fugate, with a weak attempt at mystery. It comes across as a cluster of old TV movie and sitcom concepts. Though filled with top name stars, they are all eclipsed by the breathtaking shots of New York City.

A possible Jewish character is a dying man, Stan Harris (Robert DeNiro) who has declined cancer treatments but wants to see the ball drop in Times Square. The suggestion is made a few times that at one point he abandoned parental or marital responsibilities or both. He says, "The only people I ever cared about I pissed off long ago."

Why should I assume that he is a Jewish character? My precedent is television shows of the 1980s and 1990s, like *St. Elsewhere* and *Thirtysomething*, which depicted Jewish fathers in this way. But then again, the hero of this picture is the electrical whiz who saves the day by figuring out which of many possible mechanical failings is balling up the famous New Year's ball. This fellow is a Russian named Kominsky (Hector Elizando) who, we learn, had been fired for asking the probing questions that anticipated such a possible malfunction. He does, of course, have a name that could be Jewish or generically Russian.

The only reason I raise the question that he might be Jewish is that I am still of the generation when films and TV shows extolled Jewish brains (*yiddisher kopf*), culminating in *Independence Day* (1996). But that may reflect nostalgia for an image of Jews no longer prominent in the American media, though I recently read that many families in South Korea now study the Talmud in translation because

## ZELLER

(continued from page 14)

something so bitter and why do we want to remind ourselves of it now that we are free? We are not trying to remind ourselves. The reason we eat it and taste its bitterness is because we are saying to ourselves, "Thank God, that it tasted bitter when we were in Egypt because if it hadn't I would have never left." Sometimes we need to feel the pain and if we don't, we don't know how much of a slave we are.

The reason we get rid of all our dishes for Pesach is that all new dishes are exactly that what we need. "The vessels I've had up until now can't possibly receive the vision. I have to have new vessels that have never touched chametz. Chametz puffs us up and fill us with pride. I have to get rid of those slavery vessels. I need matzah dishes."

Rabbi David Zeller, z"l, teaching about Passover at Temple Beth Abraham, Oakland, Calif., March 22, 1987. ★



they believe that it is the source of the intelligence, achievement and family values that they associate with Jews. Few, if any, Jewish filmmakers desire to seek out such a source nowadays, though such pursuit would make for a rather novel film.

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



Ben Stiller (L) and Eddie Murphy (R) lead an all-star cast in this hilarious comedy caper about a staff of workers seeking payback on the Wall Street swindler (Alan Alda, not pictured) who defrauded them. Also includes (middle L-R) Matthew Broderick, Michael Peña, and Casy Affleck, and Gabourey Sidibe and Téa Leoni (not pictured). Photo © www.towerheist.com.



## Book Review

By RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

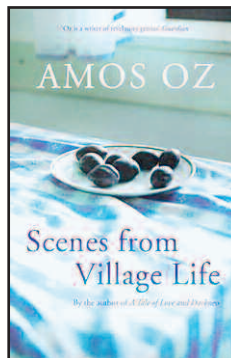
### Eight new stories by admired Israeli author

*Scenes from Village Life.* By Amos Oz. Translated by Nicholas de Lange. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. 182 pages. \$22.00.

Amos Oz is the best known and admired Israeli author world-wide whose books have been translated into 37 languages. His latest work of exquisite art reflects both his literary talent, which is of Nobel Prize stature, and a faithful commitment to placing the individual Israeli in the larger context of a demanding society, with its unique dilemmas and tensions. There is high-overlapping between individual concerns and the collective agenda though with some erosion in recent years due to Israel becoming more of a capitalistic society, along with moving away in time from its 1948 founding which was socialist based.

The interaction among the book's characters takes place in the fictional village of Tel Ilan, which would fit common Israeli villages in its landscape and peoples lives. Once agriculturally supported they have given way to providing nearby city folks with local made cheeses, wines and Far East furnishings. Secular Israelis, Israel's majority, flock there driving on the Sabbath.

From among the book's eight stories, "Digging," which is my favorite, best captures the author's inner struggles concerning Israel's challenges. Elderly Pesach Kedem, a former Knesset member whose Labor party was Israel's dominant political power until 1977, bemoans its loss of clout while critical of his party's internal squabbles and his not being listened to. He's also in pain over a bygone past when relationships were more genuine and trustworthy. Yet, he is suspicious of Adel, the Arab student who temporarily lives in the backyard of Pesach's daughter, Rachel Franco, with whom Pesach now shares the house.



### Why is this children's book different from all other children's books?

By TAMI LEHMAN-WILZIG

One could argue that the *Haggadah* is the first Jewish children's book. Its aim is to educate. It deals with four different types of children and how they behave. It contains supernatural elements that wow the reader, and even includes some fun songs at the back of the book. Still, despite all these wonderful elements it doesn't manage to keep our children's attention until the very end. That's because it



Adel, is the only Arab living in that Jewish village given his father's friendly relations with Rachel's late husband who died suddenly at age 50. Interestingly, Adel is engaged in writing a book comparing the Arab village with its Jewish counterpart. However, the Jewish residents are antagonistic to Adel's presence with Pesach believing that he is digging (the story's title) at night underneath Rachel's house, hoping to prove that it once belonged to his Palestinian family. The title "Digging" is suggestive also of long-standing Israeli pursuit to reconnect to its roots in the Land of Israel through archeological excavations. Both Israelis and Palestinians, who are competing for the same land, view with suspicion each other's digging.

Pesach is convinced that the Arabs will never give up what they regard as their own land and, moreover, he would have done the same were he in their shoes. Pesach resents though his own peoples conduct – referring particularly to the political right – toward the Palestinians. Oz's political left orientation is loud and clear. Pessimistic and conflicted Pesach, representing the old generation with its European background, cannot give up his ingrained childhood fear of anti-Semites and Gentiles in general. He thus sees in Adel a potential enemy.

Throughout this revealing book we find the author's special touch of delicate humor soothing thorny issues lacking clear resolution. The last story, "In a Far Away Place at Another Time", which stands on its own, seems to be a satire on a world gone mad. Perhaps it reflects the human potential everywhere for low descent.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach. He grew up in Haifa, Israel. ★

never had a red-pen editor, striking out sentences and axing paragraphs. To the contrary. Through the centuries our rabbis went the add-on route. And so, yawn, it really is hard to keep young ones awake and engaged.

That's where you – parents and grandparents – step in. And I don't mean with ready-made props from local or online Judaica stores. More to the point, I mean some good, wholesome, home-made fun, which sadly is missing in our increasingly virtual universe.

If you're Ashkenazi, you might be wondering what I'm talking about, but if you're Sephardi you're probably smiling, knowing exactly what I mean. As an Ashkenazi Jew living in Israel, I have learned lots from my Sephardi cohorts on how to make Passover a fun-filled children's events and I'm here to share the tricks of the trade with you – even expand upon them.

Let's start at the very beginning. Call it the Sephardi prologue – a short, one-act play that draws children in. It goes like this: A designated participant leaves the table while the *Seder* leader breaks the middle *matzah* in half. A behind the scenes transformation takes place with the participant emerging dressed up as one of the Children of Israel (home-made costume, of course). S/he then knocks on the door, signaling the beginning of a brief dialog with the *Seder* leader who starts by asking "Who are you?" Answer: "I'm one of the Children of Israel." Next question: "But I thought you're a slave in Egypt." Reply: "I was. Now I am free." Question: "Where are you going?" Answer: "To *Eretz Yisrael* – The Land of Israel." The leader then wraps it up by saying "Welcome. Come sit at our table before you continue your journey." Applause. End of play.

Adults smile, children laugh and the reading of the *Haggadah* begins. Must the theatrical production end here? I don't think so. Let's expand upon it. How about the section dealing with the five rabbis who stay up all night? It has the makings of another act, all you have to do is write a more contemporary dialog. What about the four sons? Let's not be gender specific. Have a configuration of boys and girls dress up as the four different types of children, each doing a dramatic rendition of his/her part. This leads nicely into a home-made 10 plagues bag, which can then segue into a wonderful Persian custom – hitting your neighbor with the long hollow leaves of a scallion at each repetition of the word *Dayenu*. The reason behind this "madness"? To remind us of the whips that hit our ancestors when they were slaves.

(see Lehman-Wilzig, page 18)



# Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

## Memoir by a Navy Seal – a man to watch

*The Heart and the Fist.* By Eric Greitens. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. 309 Pages. \$27.

This exciting memoir describes the author's experiences as a student at Duke and Oxford; as a volunteer in countries throughout the world; as a trainee to become a Navy Seal; and as a member of the American armed forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, southeast Asia, and Kenya. It concludes with an explanation of the organization he founded, The Mission Continues, which initially supported wounded and disabled veterans to serve in non-profit organizations, helping both their clients and themselves. The Mission Continues has now extended its activities to help all veterans since 9/11 to continue using their skills to provide needed services.

At the age of 38, Greitens is back in his home town, St. Louis, acting as the unpaid executive of The Mission Continues. His unusual experiences as a student, volunteer, and member of the armed forces provide a solid base for whatever he wants to do. Recently, he was interviewed on the Charlie Rose show in connection with the killing of Afghan civilians by an American soldier. His wise expertise was demonstrated as he responded thoughtfully to a number of questions. He appears to be attaining celebrity status as he looks for new opportunities to be of service.

Greitens tells us little about his family, mentioning almost in passing that his mother is Jewish and his father is Catholic. The family observed both Jewish and Christian holidays but he says, "my parents weren't too bothered by theology." There are no other references to religious preferences although, according to Jewish law, he is a Jew, depending, of course, on his mother's antecedents. These considerations do not figure at all in his description of a brief visit to Gaza which he made in 1996. He writes that he "was just passing through" and that

he "could never fully understand Gaza." Greitens says nothing about stopping in Israel.

After earning his doctorate at Oxford with a dissertation on serving war-affected children, Greitens considered offers to remain there as a faculty member or to join some fellow graduates in a business venture. However, his experiences as a volunteer throughout the world led him to the conviction that without warriors, humanitarians cannot flourish. Accordingly, he decided to enlist in the armed forces, specifically the Navy Seals. He was 26 years old, only two years younger than the minimum starting age to become a Seal. The rest of the book describes his rigorous training as a Seal and his subsequent military service.

By far, the most rousing part of Greitens's narrative is the stirring account of his tough training. He presents this in considerable detail, especially the final days, known as Hell Week. His blow-by-blow description of the harrowing tests to which he and his colleagues were subjected will inevitably arouse in readers profound respect for Greitens and all his fellow Seals. The success in killing Ben Laden by a Seal team with no loss of American life becomes understandable to all those who read Greitens's comprehensive chronicle of Seal training.

This well-written book makes readers eager to follow Greitens's career. He is clearly a man to watch.

## The Jewish mail-order bride

*The Little Bride.* By Anna Solomon. New York: Riverhead Books, 2011. 314 Pages. \$15.

This remarkable novel highlights two little known aspects of American Jewish history. One is the "mail-order bride," a unique custom especially prevalent during the early years of the 1880–1920 mass immigration to the United States of East European Jews. Unmarried men who had already settled in the United States, sometimes in places where there were few or no Jewish women, arranged with agents in Eastern Europe to select brides for them with the men paying the transportation costs to America.

The second custom developed out of the desire of earlier immigrants, the German

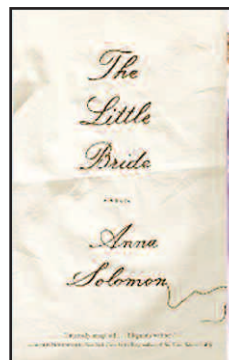
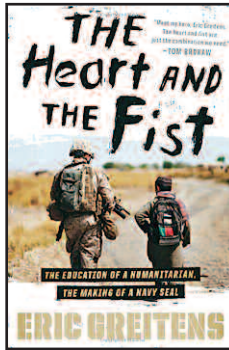
Jews, to move the newcomers outside of New York and other metropolitan areas where they were a source of awkward discomfort to the often wealthy and well-established German Jews. Agricultural colonies were precariously established in various parts of the United States, including the future state of South Dakota, called "Sodokota," as the setting for this story. The "Galveston Plan" also steered immigrants away from the East Coast, sending them, via Galveston, to less populous places, especially in the Southern states.

We first meet Minna, the 16-year old "mail-order bride," when she is subjected to a humiliating physical examination before boarding a boat in Odessa for the trip to America. The rigors of the harsh and arduous journey are described in relentless detail. At Castle Garden, she is met by Jacob, the 15-year old son of Max, her prospective husband who has another son, 18-year old Samuel, and who was deserted by his first wife. After a burdensome train ride of several days, Jacob and Minna arrive at the destination. Max's tiny, poorly furnished, one-room home is "more of a cave than a house" and the fields are filled with rocks.

After Max's divorce is finalized in accordance with Jewish law, Minna, Max, and his two sons go five miles to the home of Ruth and Leo Friedman where Max and Minna are married without a rabbi. They return home; Minna is unable to conceive; and an accident occurs that destroys the house. A new house is erected but life continues to be harsh, especially during the severe winter when there is little food and much cold. Through all this hardship, Minna experiences another problem when she finds herself attracted to Samuel, her step-son, who is close to her age. She uses all her strength to cope with her craving and to survive. The final developments of her grim experiences proceed to an inexorable ending.

Aside from the compelling story that Anna Solomon tells, her superlative writing skills enable her to portray the fascinating characters and the desolate environment of her book so that readers will be caught up in the narrative. It is somewhat surprising to learn that this is her first attempt at writing a novel. Her complete success makes us eager to see her second book.

Dr. Morton I. Teicher is the Founding Dean, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University (home of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine) and Dean Emeritus, School of Social Work, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. ★





## My Kosher Kitchen

By SYBIL KAPLAN

### New Passover cookbook and recipes

*The No-Potato Passover.* By Aviva Kanoff. BRIO Publishing. \$29.99 available from amazon.com or nopotatopassover.com. 2012.

This cookbook is "a journey of food, travel and color," as the eclectic author demonstrates in writing it to "change the way we think about Passover food and to put an end to the cooking rut." Writing this as a challenge, she decided to have her cookbook be "an expression of artistic sensibilities."

She introduces readers to spaghetti squash and quinoa as potential substitutes for potatoes and offers a wide variety of recipes using foods for Passover. There are 17 soups and salads, 18 side dishes, 11 meats, 15 poultry, 10 dairy, and *pareve* entrees, and 12 desserts – 83 recipes in all.

There are colorful photographs on every page; the ingredients are clearly written and the instructions are numbered. Kanoff does not indicate whether a recipe is dairy, meat or *pareve*; but a bigger deletion is there is no indication for how many people the recipes are made.

Among the recipes that caught my eye to give a different approach to Passover were: cabbage soup with *matzoh* meatballs, quinoa *taboule*, eggplant lasagna, honey-mustard *schnitzel* and chocolate chip biscotti.

One time saver for one-third of the desserts is her use of Passover cake mixes.

Kanoff is an artist who gives painting lessons, a personal chef and a children's author and illustrator. Her artistic ability shows in her interspersing of beautiful color photographs of the food with photographs from Havana, Prague, Jamaica, Italy, Croatia, England, Arizona, Israel, and more.

It's especially nice to know there is a new Passover cookbook on the market and hostesses will surely appreciate this as a *seder* gift for an "international culinary experience" with exotic cuisines. Here are

a few recipes from the cookbook.

#### Cabbage Soup with Matzoh Meatballs

- 1 large diced onion
- 4 chopped garlic cloves
- 5 Tbsp. canola oil
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 4 diced tomatoes
- 1 large chopped green cabbage
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 2 cups tomato sauce

Sauté onion and garlic in canola oil until brown. Add sugar and caramelize. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Let boil for 30 minutes then simmer.

#### Matzoh Meatballs

- 1/2 cup matzoh meal
- 1/2 lb. ground beef
- 3 eggs
- Salt and pepper
- 1 Tbsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. cumin

While the soup is boiling, mix all ingredients for the matzoh meatballs. Form into balls, then add the matzoh meatballs to the soup. Cook for 20 minutes. (Reviewer's note: this should be 6-8 servings)

#### Coq au vin with saffron quinoa

- 1 cup dry quinoa
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup water
- Pinch of saffron
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced mushrooms
- 4 chicken leg quarters
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Paprika

Preheat oven to 400°F. Pour quinoa into a 9x13-inch pan. Season with salt, pepper and saffron. Pour water on top of quinoa and stir. Sprinkle mushrooms on top of quinoa. Rub chicken with paprika, salt, pepper and olive oil, place over quinoa in the pan. Pour wine on top of chicken. Cover and bake for 1 hour, then uncover and bake for an additional 15 minutes (or until chicken is cooked through). (Reviewer's note: This should be 4 servings)

#### Viennese Crunch

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. instant coffee
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup matzoh cake meal
- 1/4 tsp. salt

#### LEHMAN-WILZIG

(continued from page 16)

More than a custom, green onions are a wonderful example of the kinds of props you can use. Here are two more suggestions. One is even based on an Ashkenazi custom, originating in Hungary. Jews coming from this Central European country decorate their seder table with gold and silver jewelry as a way of recalling the precious metals Egyptians gave the Israelites before the 10th plague. What about furniture? No theatrical presentation is complete without it, so try these two options out for size. Forget about your gorgeous dining room set. Bring out the mattresses instead. That's what Jews in Tunisia do. They create an authentic experience by "comfortably" sitting on the floor. Not your style? Stick with your dining room set and follow the lead of Jews in Casablanca who place a large ornamented chair with brocade pillows next to the table. This is the seat for the Prophet Elijah. Does that mean you have to get rid of Elijah's cup? Certainly not. After all, it's another prop.

Do these Passover scenarios feel like *Purim*? Are you getting the picture? Like all good playwrights you decide how much drama your audience can take. The authors of the Haggadah have already supplied you with the cast of characters and the backdrop. Now it's your turn to get a handle on how to make it fun, relevant and compelling – the reason why this children's book is different from all other children's books.

*Tami Lehman-Wilzig is an award-winning children's book author of ten published books and one children's book app. Her book, Passover Around the World (Kar-Ben, 2007), is a compilation of eight stories revolving around Passover customs from across the globe. Visit Tami's website: [www.tlwkidsbooks.com](http://www.tlwkidsbooks.com). ★*



- 12 ounces chocolate chips
- 1 cup chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 350°F. Put margarine in a bowl and beat on medium speed, adding sugar slowly until the mixture has a creamy texture. Add egg, coffee, cake meal, and salt. Spread mixture onto a cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle the chocolate chips on top, spreading them as they melt. Sprinkle nuts on top of chocolate. Cut into squares while warm.

*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. ★*



## KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page 20)

of material, told them the day and time and place we wished to cross into Bethlehem and gave them the license plate and name of our good friend, the Baptist Minister, Al Nucciarone who was acting as our driver and guide. Accompanying us was his wife, Billie, and a visiting Pastor from Mumbai, India, Manoj Magar, on his first visit to Israel. The Pastor in India operates an orphanage for HIV and other homeless children; the Jerusalem minister and his family volunteered there last summer.

Bethlehem is five miles south of Jerusalem, only a few minutes drive. It feels like a small, European town. The narrow streets and many hills are filled with hotels, restaurants and souvenir shops which feature their three main products – embroidery, olive wood and mother of pearl. Somehow one does not feel it is touristy.



Barry and Sybil Kaplan at Manger Square with Church of Nativity in background.

Today, 15% of the population is Christians and 85% are Muslims. Fifty years ago, the Christian population accounted for 70%.

Baptist Minister Nucciarone, who comes here weekly, drove us through town; we stopped to chat with a man who runs a guest house; we drove past the terminal for tour buses and then stopped at the Catholic Action Center. This \$2 million dollar structure opened in 2007 although sports and teams used its previous building since 1952. The Baptist Minister uses its facilities for basketball camps and sports clinics.

Bethlehem-born Issa Hazbound, its director, showed us the fitness center and pointed out the sauna, the multi-purpose room and the board room. In the summer, there is an outdoor pool, and there are plans to build an indoor pool in the future. For 120 NIS (\$32.17) for monthly membership, one can use the facilities on times set aside for women alone, men alone, families or senior men.

On Star Street, we bumped into the Minister's barber; had hot tea with mint in an embroidery shop with a Muslim and met his 90-year-old grandfather, who is known as the "peacemaker" of Bethlehem.

We parked the van and walked down a hill into and across Manger Square. There sits the Church of the Nativity, where one must bend very low to get through the entrance (built to keep out horses and donkeys). Inside are marble floors and a multitude of incense burners hanging from the ceiling like chandeliers.

We descended the steps to the grotto where there are more incense burners overhead. To the left is a star on a marble floor, alleged site of the birth of Jesus; one after another persons came to lie down to kiss the floor. In another area to the right, other people laid down to kiss the floor where the manger was said to be. Out of this area is a large side room, where mass is said on Christmas Eve; priests were leading a service in Italian.

After this is the room where Jerome a 4th–5th century Roman Christian priest, theologian, and historian, best known for his revisions and translations of the Bible, lived in the last years of his life. In the courtyard was a life-size manger scene constructed by Friends of Christians of Trentino, Italy which had been on display since December 18 and is to close February 12.

In the nearby neighborhood of Beit Sahour, Barry saw the shepherds' fields which the Roman Catholics identify. The low cave has been enclosed to make a chapel. A church is above this. Legend says this is the place where shepherds saw angels who told them a baby had been born in Bethlehem. (It is said that these were the fields where Ruth gleaned for Boaz.) He also spoke with the Franciscan monks who live there.

Before leaving Bethlehem, we stopped to visit with a Christian shopkeeper and were served hot tea with mint by his wife. It was a very special visit, especially guided by Pastor Nucciarone, and we hope to go again with him.

### A Travesty Hits Close

A few years ago, Barry chanced to strike up a friendship with a personable man in his *Ulpan* (Hebrew language classes) from New Jersey. After a few coffee chats, he learned that Italian Al Nucciarone was the



Pastor Al Nucciarone.



Anti-Christian graffiti spray painted on the outside walls of the Jerusalem Baptist Church.

Baptist minister of the Jerusalem Baptist Church. The friendship grew as the wives met and soon we were sharing dinners; they came to our synagogue for Purim and Simchat Torah; we went to the church for their Christmas program and other events.

Monday morning, Feb. 20, a phone call came to Pastor Nucciarone that vandals had scrawled "Death to Christians," "We will crucify you," and "Jesus son of Mary the whore" on the outside walls of the church, on a window and on a shed.

Three cars, two belonging to Israeli neighbors, parked in the parking lot, were spray painted and had their tires slashed.

Barry spent most of the day, just showing support for Al; our rabbi who has met the Pastor on numerous occasions, went with Barry to show support and alerted the Mayor's office. The Reform synagogue behind them, which shares the parking lot, sent flowers to show support.

Later in the day, we drove Al to the Israel Broadcasting building and I accompanied him to the building and studio in case he needed Hebrew translated, where he was interviewed on the 5 p.m. English news about the incident.

Two weeks ago, similar sentences were spray painted on the Valley of the Cross monastery and an Arab-Jewish school had anti-Arab graffiti spray painted on its walls.

Watching the IBA news producer and three production assistants sitting before the formidable wall of 11 large TV screens and 10 mini-screens with boards of lights and buttons, or looking through the window to watch the studio anchormen broadcast, ordinarily would have been very exciting for me.

In this case, watching the interview of our friend was disturbing, knowing that Al is so very strongly supportive of Israel. As someone said, Baptists have been in Israel since 1911; they, like Pastor Nucciarone, who has been here 4 years, love Israel. And we share in his hurt from this despicable, thoughtless, hateful act.

*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. ★*



## Seen on the Israel Scene

By SYBIL KAPLAN

## The Jewish Post & Opinion

1427 W. 86th St. #228  
Indianapolis, IN 46260

### Ice City in Jerusalem

Imagine 16,146 feet (the size of four basketball courts!) filled with ice sculptures. In Alaska? In Iceland? In Switzerland? No, in the railroad yard behind the old train station in Jerusalem.

In November, Zion Turgeman, CEO of the Ariel Company, a city-government affiliated event production company, approached the Mayor's office to create the first international ice festival in Israel. Feb. 28, hundreds of journalists, photographers and cameramen were invited to the opening.



Wall of Jerusalem carved from ice. Photos on p. 19 & 20 by Barry A. Kaplan/Jerusalem.

Heavy jackets were handed out to those who were unprepared to walk through the -10°C (14°F) to see the work of 35 ice sculptors from Harbin, China and five pieces created by Israelis. This is a version of the northern China's annual Harbin International Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival which also exports these exhibitions all over the world. It took 2500 emails in Chinese, Hebrew and English to accomplish this exhibit in Jerusalem.

And what a show! Entering through an ice Jaffa Gate, one walks through the Old City, and the Western Wall, to see iced carriage and windmill of Mishkenot Sha'ananim; past a section with iced animals, a Noah's ark, and characters from children's stories; an iced merry-



Ice elephants and pandas.



Ice bar.

go-round, Cinderella's pumpkin carriage, and iced slides to slide down; a famous "monster" slide known in Jerusalem is all ice and an ice bar where vodka drinks were handed out to guard against the cold. Finally there is a selection of Chinese sculptures. Colored lights continually change colors as backgrounds for the ice sculptures.

The 7,000 blocks of ice were made in Ashdod and transported by special freezer trucks to Jerusalem. A number of the Chinese sculptors from Harbin (where the average temperature is -20°C (-4°F) were relaxing by playing cards and just sitting around, in a large glassed-in tent where refreshments, and later lunch, were served to the press.

The festival, which will become an annual event, is part of a larger vision, said Mayor Nir Barkat, to "develop Jerusalem and exploit the potential for culture and tourism for the benefit of Jerusalemites, Israelis and tourists from all over the world."

The ice festival is just the beginning of an ongoing renovation project for the entire old train station area which will have 16 movie theatres, shops and restaurants. A building for ice skating and a hockey rink are also part of the area.

The festival will open to the public March 8 and was scheduled to close April 30 but it has been decided to extend this another month. Isracard, Israel's credit card company, and one of the sponsors, announced those holding their cards will be able to purchase tickets for 35 NIS

(\$9.21); residents of Jerusalem with the Jerusalem card will pay 40 NIS (\$10.52) and others will pay 55 NIS (\$14.47) with special group rates and rates for students and children. (Conversion rates are as of this writing.) Visitors are asked to bring hats and gloves and dress warmly for the 30-minute fixed loop tour.

#### "O Little Town of Bethlehem:"

In the 1993 Oslo Accords, the final status of Judea/Samaria was to be a subject between Israel and the Palestinian leadership. When Israel withdrew military rule from some parts of Judea/Samaria, the area was divided into three administrative areas.

"Area A" comprises Palestinian towns and some rural areas in the north between Jenin, Nablus, Tibas and Tulkarm; the south around Hebron; and Salfit in the center; it was to be under Palestinian control and administration.

"Area B" adds other populated rural areas, many closer to the center of Judea/Samaria and was to be under Israeli control, but Palestinian administration.

"Area C" contains all the Israeli communities, roads to access them, buffer zones and almost all of the Jordan Valley and the Judean Desert and was to be under Israeli control and administration.

Bethlehem is governed by the Palestinian National Authority so for us, as American-Israelis and journalists, we had to request permission to enter from the Israel Defense Forces. We filled out seven pages (see Kaplan/Israel, page 19)



Manger scene from Italy.