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The Mosaic that is Israel!



Cover photos
by Denis Ryan Kelly, Jr.
(see p. NAT 2).



Editorial

The Indianapolis Star carries a daily column titled, "5 Things You Need to Know Today." Since these are all very short, the compiler has most likely put together excerpts from longer news stories. One of the five on Feb. 25 titled, "Looking at Loved One Eases Pain" read as follows:

If you are in pain, look at a picture of your romantic partner rather than reach for a bottle of Tylenol. Researchers at Stanford University found that looking at the image of a loved one cuts pain from 36 to 44 percent. Even "intense discomfort" can be reduced by up to 13 percent by looking at photos. Researchers found that looking at the photo dulls activity in the area of the brain that processes pain.

This is a leap year for the Jewish calendar, which means there are two Adars. In Shabbat services on Saturday, the rabbi announced that we would be reciting the Rosh Hodesh prayer for the new month, Adar II, because it starts this week, Sun., March 6 after sunset. He said we are to double our joy for this second Adar.

I have written here before about ways to increase laughter during the month of Adar. I bet if the same researchers studied the effects of laughter, they would find that it also eases pain.

In 1979, in his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, Dr. Norman Cousins described how watching Marx Brother movies helped him recover from a life-threatening tissue disease. "I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep," he reported. "When the pain-killing effect of the laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again and, not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free interval."

I had the benefit of observing this first hand when visiting a family friend at Hooverwood, a local nursing home. After services on Saturday when I walked into her room, I asked her how she was doing. She replied that she was not feeling well even though she had taken a pain pill a couple hours prior to my visit. I could see in her face, her forehead was all scrunched up.

However, after two hours of reminiscing and exchanging some funny stories, which produced some deep laughter, she had relaxed, and it showed in her face with fewer lines and a smoother look. She wasn't the only one. Although I had not been in any physical pain, I also felt much better after I left than before the visit started. And neither one of us had to cope with side effects from the laughter.

Happy Adar and Happy Purim!
Jennie Cohen, March 9, 2011. ★



About the Cover

These photos by photographer Denis Ryan Kelly, Jr. of Indianapolis were taken in Israel and are part of his Exhibition Tour, "Holy Lands, Journeys of a Pilgrim Artist." There are several other photos in this tour and others that can be viewed as slideshows on his website: www.deniskelly.com.



Denis Kelly

Cover photos (clockwise from top left): Cave of Elijah the Prophet, Mount Carmel; Discussion at the Western Wall, Jerusalem; Monastery of St. George, Jerusalem; Mount of Beatitudes, in the Galilee; and Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem.

Kelly creates expansive, deeply considered multi-media exhibitions that utilize photography and audio-recordings to ennoble and expand our awareness and connections within the web of life and Being. Among his works are two major exhibition series: "Great Forests of the Americas" and "Holy Lands, Journeys of a Pilgrim Artist." These exhibitions foster awe and commitment to stewardship of the Earth while conveying the diversity of life and notions of the sacred.

"Holy Lands, Journeys of a Pilgrim Artist" features grand-scale photographs and audio from holy sites on four continents among seven religions from the perspective of one seeking God's Presence. It has been his choice, privilege and grace to journey the world, seeking people of prayer and places of 'Holiness.' He sought 'wild' lands where nature is less ravaged and produced several exhibitions exploring great forests and native peoples. He experienced modern cities including New York right after the attacks on the World Trade Center. He has heard again and again that we must hearken to awareness and respect for the true depths of people's spiritual lives. "We must nurture one and other's call to love and peace."

Kelly has shown this exhibit in Indianapolis at several locations, and is now interested in taking it to Chicago and other places around the country. He can be reached at denis@deniskelly.com. ★

A few "new Jewish" words to double your joy in Adar II

Jewbilation (n.) Pride in finding out that one's favorite celebrity is Jewish.

Torahfied (n.) Inability to remember one's lines when called to read from the Torah at one's bar or bat mitzvah. (OR from the Haggadah at Passover.)

matzilation (v.) Smashing a piece of matzoh to bits while trying to butter it.

bubbegum (n.) Candy one's mother gives to her grandchildren that she never gave to her own children.

chutzpapa (n.) A father who wakes his wife at 4:00 a.m. so she can change the baby's diaper.

Submitted by Arnold Parris. ★

Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

**Mar. 4, 2011, Shabbat Shekalim
(Exodus 38:21-40:38) 28 Adar I 5771**

Glenn Beck recently declared on his radio show that Reform rabbis are just like Islamic radicals. (He has since apologized.) Julian Assange claims that a group of Jewish journalists was out to get him. Christian Dior designer John Galliano lost his job after a video came out of him making anti-Semitic comments. Charlie Sheen called his manager a "stupid Jew pig" and referred publicly to his boss Chuck Lorre as "Chaim Levine."

"If there's anything salutary about this parade of stories, it's the rapid, direct way bad behavior is confronted," says an editorial in The Jewish Daily Forward. Pretty much all of the offenders have suffered from their statements. "Still, I wonder," writes columnist Danny Groner, "what kind of culture do we live in when supposedly accomplished people who skillfully perform on the world stage – designing, acting, leaking information and, yes, even reporting – hold such nasty thoughts and feel free to express them? We've seemingly lost our commitment to 'good manners and civil discourse,' and we must quickly 'excise it from public discourse.'"

The question that Jews often ask themselves is, "Why us?" For two thousand years Jews have been the focus of hate, persecution, pogroms, crusades, riots and more. The culmination of this hate is certainly found in the results of the Holocaust perpetrated against the Jews. I am no expert in trying to answer this, but the accusation that Jews killed Jesus is certainly right up there with answers in trying to figure this out. Evidently the pope, in a soon to be released book, exonerates the Jews of

decide. Don't get me wrong when I say I appreciate his words, but they are about 2,000 years and millions of deaths too late. Hopefully, the pope is preparing for a better future between Christians and Jews, but, as is evident, the grassroots need some help. Hate is not innate. Hate is taught and someone taught Sheen, Galliano, and Assange to hate or blame the Jews when things go wrong. Are we responsible for all that happens in this world? There are only 14 million Jews in a world of over 7 billion people.

Disproportionately to our numbers is what we have contributed to the world. There are websites about Jewish Nobel prize winners, inventions by Israelis, Jewish contributions to the arts and humanities. Without question though, our greatest lasting contribution to the world is the *Tanach* (Hebrew Scriptures). The words of the prophets, the wisdom of psalms and proverbs, and the historical struggle that takes place from Joshua to Kings, have taught us and given us pause to think and reflect. For me the most important part of *Tanach* is Torah. I don't agree with every word or command in Torah. Sometimes I get angry with the beliefs my ancestors held, but the Torah is there for me every day and week to ponder and struggle with. It gives me guidance and a foundation for living a good life and a life filled with God.

It isn't always a struggle with the words of Torah. There are many more moments when I feel the presence of God as did our ancestors. The last line of today's *parashah* in Exodus is one such moment. It reads, "For over the Tabernacle a cloud of Adonai rested by day, and fire would appear in it by night, in the view of all the house of Israel throughout their journeys." The Torah is teaching us that God is with us and will always be with us. God will not be some far away concept, but will be right there visible in a way that we can see – cloud and fire. For me God is not about power (see Adland, page NAT 3)

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Chassidic Rabbi

By RABBI BENZION COHEN

In my last column, I wrote about asking the Lubavitcher Rebbe for advice and blessing. Here is another story.

Aaron, one of my dear nephews, grew up in Chicago. He became a lawyer, but couldn't find work in the field. He found a job in computer programming and worked for six years. Gradually he experienced a spiritual awakening. One day he asked his father if he knew any religious Jews living in his neighborhood. His father referred him to a family, and he went there for the night of the *seder*. It felt right, and soon he was going to *shul* and spending most *Shabbos* meals with local religious families. After six months he decided to quit his job, go to Israel and learn in *yeshiva*. He found himself a small flat in B'nei Brak and enrolled in a *yeshiva*. He became stronger in observance of *mitzvahs*, and spent *Shabbos* with us many times.

After learning in *yeshiva* for a year, Aaron went back to work here in Israel. Now he began searching for his soul mate. My wife is a matchmaker, and she started to work on his case. Months went by. He met girls in Israel, in France, in America. A year went by and he was still single. We were all getting frustrated. One day I suggested he sit down and write to the Rebbe for a blessing. Two days later my wife found the right girl for him.

Aaron's father had a similar story. In 1962 he packed his bags and moved to Israel. He had just finished his junior year at the University of North Carolina. For five years we didn't see each other. Then we met in Jerusalem. He had become religious and had married a religious girl.

What does all of this mean? Chassidus teaches that we have a spiritual side, our soul. We are not always aware of our soul. I grew up in Indianapolis. All year long I was involved in school, sports, reading, eating, sleeping and other mundane activities. Only once a year, on *Yom Kippur*, I remember having spiritual feelings. I fasted and went to *shul*. *Yom Kippur* is the holiest day of the year, and I too felt some holiness. Now that I live a life of Torah and *mitzvahs*, every day is holy.

What is a spiritual awakening? A small revolution. For years our mundane and material side ruled our life. Where was our soul? In exile. We were completely devoted to the material and physical aspects of life, and we just pushed any spiritual feelings aside. Finally, one day, we wake up. Maybe we spent *Shabbos* with a religious family. We experienced some awesome holiness. All of a sudden, all of our mundane pleasures pale in comparison.

Look around. The entire world is going through a revolution. You may still be

ADLAND

(continued from page NAT 2)

or anger or might, but about closeness, kindness, mercy, comfort and love. The cloud and fire and immediacy of God say to me that God is right there and if God had arms then God could reach out and embrace me.

All of these people who use hate-filled rhetoric need to reread their Bibles and be reminded of the warmth of God's presence and that this presence was brought into the world by the Jews a long time ago. It might just make a difference. Maybe instead of hate and blame, they would see what we Jews see in the world as an opportunity to bring the world to a better place.

When you light your Shabbat candles this week, light one for the warmth of God's presence that this candle holds like the fire that could be seen in the Tabernacle long ago. Light the other with a prayer that those who hate and whose speech is injurious and spiteful will someday understand that hate and intolerance are just wrong. May the cloud of the tabernacle embrace them. Let's bring blessings and peace and caring and love into this world in such massive ways that there is no more room for these evil thoughts and words.

Rabbi Adland has been leading Reform congregations for more than 25 years in Lexington, Ky., and Indianapolis, Ind. He can be reached at j.adland@gmail.com. Mishnah Avot 2:19: Rabbi Elazar used to say: "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it." ☆

living a secular life, but you know many people who are not. At one point they went through a spiritual revolution.

In 1990 Russia went through a spiritual revolution. For 70 years the communist dictatorship spread fear throughout the world. They did all that they could to suppress all forms of spirituality. They were thrown out. Under the new government, there are freedoms and people can practice religion. Today, many millions in the former Soviet Union are living religious lives.

Now we are witnessing similar revolutions, in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen. Cruel dictatorships are falling right and left. New governments are being established, based on morality, righteousness and belief in our Creator.

The world is rapidly becoming a better place to live for many millions of people. The Lubavitcher Rebbe told us that our generation is the last generation of exile, and the first generation of redemption. Every day we are coming closer to the idyll life that we will live with the coming of our complete and final redemption. It is up to us to learn more Torah and do more *mitzvahs* to bring *Moshiach* now.

Rabbi Cohen lives in K'far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at bzcohen@orange.net.il. ☆

Jews' News

Natalie Portman speaks out against anti-Semitism

NEW YORK – Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, salutes Academy Award-winning actress Natalie Portman for speaking out publicly against John Galliano, Christian Dior's recently dismissed head designer. Portman, who endorses Dior's Miss Dior Cherie perfume, recently used her spotlight from winning this year's Academy Award for Best Actress for her role in *Black Swan* to denounce Galliano's remarks.

Hadassah National President Nancy Falchuk released the following statement: "Natalie Portman has had quite a week; she won the Academy Award for Best Actress, and she proved herself to be a leader in the Jewish community by condemning anti-Semitic comments made by designer John Galliano. We are proud to have Natalie as a passionate advocate and supporter of Hadassah's work in the fields of health, medical advancement and Jewish education, advocacy and volunteerism. We congratulate her not just for her Academy Award but for her willingness to be a leader and role model for those around her." (Photo above property of www.natalieportman.com.) ☆



MAZON welcomes Abby J. Leibman as president and CEO

Leading advocate for social justice to direct leading anti-hunger organization

LOS ANGELES, CA (March 1, 2011) – MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, a leader in the national anti-hunger community, announced the appointment of Abby J. Leibman as its new president & CEO.

Ms. Leibman brings to MAZON an extensive background in advocacy in nonprofit and state government arenas and a distinguished record of leadership at prominent nonprofit organizations, including Jewish World Watch, Jewish Family Service, California Women Lawyers, American Jewish Congress, the West Hollywood Human Services Commission, the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, and the Progressive Jewish Alliance.

Ms. Leibman co-founded the California Women's Law Center, which she directed for 12 years, and has been a leading advocate for women's rights and social justice. She teaches courses

on advocacy, justice and civil rights as adjunct faculty at UCLA and American Jewish University.

"It is my great honor to join MAZON as president & CEO," says Leibman. "The need for MAZON – its advocacy, its policy work and its grantmaking – is more critical than ever before in our lifetime. I look forward to building on MAZON's remarkable achievements and bringing my passion for advocacy and justice to the struggle to end hunger."

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national nonprofit organization working to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds in the United States, Israel and selected developing nations. MAZON seeks to embody twin Jewish ideals, practicing justice (*tzedakah*) by ensuring that food reaches those who are hungry today and working to repair the world (*tikkun olam*) by fighting to ensure that no one goes hungry tomorrow. ☆

Holocaust Siddur

By RABBI BERNARD ROSENBERG

The Rosenberg Holocaust Siddur is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Jacob and Rachel Rosenberg, survivors of the Holocaust. The *Siddur* will be completed in several weeks. It will contain: Holocaust essays for discussion, Holocaust programs, several candle lighting ceremonies dedicated to the six million, and original art work. In the *Siddur* are special memorial prayers in memory of the six million including special *Yizkor*, *Kel Maleh*, and *Kaddish* prayers. The *Maariv* service in Hebrew and English is interspersed with poems written by college students I teach at Yeshiva (see News, page NAT 15)

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Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

My visit to Ben-Gurion University

My uncle Richard Ribner, of blessed memory, was a generous man. Though he could have afforded a beautiful more luxurious apartment, he lived most of his life simply in a one-bedroom apartment with a living room that served more as an office than an entertainment center. Though trained as a psychiatrist, he expanded upon his skills and knowledge base into the study and application of homeopathy, natural medicine, nutrition, hypnosis, chelation and ozone therapy, and so much more. He was adventurous in his exploration of new modalities to help his patients.

Though not given the public acknowledgement as such, he was a pioneer and leader in the movement of holistic healing and alternative medicine in the 1970s, long before the field became popular and sprouted younger doctors with fancy offices and more financially lucrative practices in alternative or holistic medicine. My uncle would charge people's insurance if they had insurance, but he would not deny people treatment if they could not pay. He would insist however that they pay something, it could be five or ten dollars, and then he would sometimes give them a hundred dollars as a gift. He kept a drawer of hundred dollar bills to give out to needy patients. There were times his office was so filled with poor Hasidim that I thought they could have a minyan while they waited to see him.

My uncle was always giving to institutions and to individuals, but he was particularly joyful in his decision to become a founder at Ben-Gurion University. He was excited by the potential of the contribution this university could make to Israel and to the world. In the late 1980s, he created a perpetual trust that funds scholarships to five students each year. Though he never met the students who received his scholarships, while he was alive, he kept in touch with them, by sending them monetary gifts for Chanukah, Passover and even Rosh Hashanah each year. They were part of his extended family.

In honor of my aunt's upcoming birthday celebration, at her request, I made an effort to visit Ben-Gurion University. On my own accord, I do not think I would have gone, but then I would have missed something that might have been the most powerful and profound experience of my most recent trip to Israel. When I arrived in Be'er Sheva, I was greeted by a young beautiful 20-something woman

named Rachel who made aliyah to Be'er Sheva as a graduate student and stayed on to work at Ben-Gurion.

We toured the beautiful and impressive campus a bit, as she touted all the wonderful accomplishments of Ben-Gurion. We even visited an adjacent unaffiliated workshop/storefront for elderly women from Ethiopia to make and sell the pottery native to them that she thought I would be interested in seeing. It was a pleasant visit so far chatting, and getting to know each other. Then it was time to do what I came down to Be'er Sheva to do. We walked to the walls where the names are written of all those who gave a substantial amount of money to Ben-Gurion and began to search for the names of my uncle and grandparents as my uncle had given money in their memory as well.

All of a sudden, even as the students scurried by me, I felt that I had entered an inter-dimensional space-time warp, an energetic field of the souls of these holy givers. It felt like I was walking through a cemetery, but it was much more powerful. I even began to weep and shake a little bit. I never expected that this visit would impact me emotionally and spiritually. Somehow, as I walked by these holy walls, it was revealed to me that the souls of these people were alive and were blessed because they had given to Ben-Gurion. "The soul lives on through its good deeds." I had heard that before, but I never took these words literally, before now. It is truly a privilege and blessing to give tzedekah in honor or memory of a loved one. A part of my uncle's holy neshama (soul) was more present here in Be'er Sheva than in Ellenville, NY, where he is physically buried. I felt that he knew that, and he waited a long time to be found by me on that day. I was happy to say hello to him, yet also so sad because I was reminded again about how much I still miss him, even after all these years.

Now, with tissues in my hand from wiping my tears, it was time to meet one of the scholarship students that my uncle's fund has supported, a young woman from Arad who had immigrated to Israel from Russia with her mother and grandparents when she was two years old. She had never seen her biological father after that separation. After initial introductions to each other, I became aware that this was not a social visit. I was not here on my own, but I was my uncle's physical representative. I had a mission to accomplish. I knew that I had something to convey to her that would further honor the memory of my uncle and would also help her. I did not know what that would be, but I knew I would be guided.

Because she was deprived of a loving father, I wanted her to form a spiritual energetic connection with my uncle, so I told her about my uncle. Several times during the visit, I inwardly asked myself, "What would my uncle say or do for her?" I told her that my uncle would



Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Words of wisdom never grow old

I grew up in a house where words were the currency by which my brother and I gained recognition. Unlike most of our peers, where parental approval was dished out for things like making the varsity team or getting straight A's, my dad's highest form of praise came as a result of the words we used and how we used them. It's no surprise, I suppose, that my brother got his doctorate in English linguistics and I make my living as a wordsmith by writing and teaching.

But I'm not complaining. I absolutely loved the form and sound of words as they rolled around in my mouth. Gargantuan, entropy, neophyte, sophomoric. Each word offered worlds of possibilities, in phrases and sentences I could casually throw out like confetti at a parade.

I waited for the chance to put my expanding lexicon into action. When my brother would relentlessly tease me, I would retort with childish indignation: "What a gargantuan oral cavity you have!" His response – a silent slug in the arm – was predictable, but it was my father's approving nod from behind the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that made the sting worthwhile.

In *You Can't Go Home Again*, Thomas Wolfe wrote these powerful words: "You can't go back home to your family, back

be so happy to know that she received the scholarship. She did not believe me at first, so I repeated it to her a few times. I asked her to work hard to make my uncle proud of her. Perhaps I overstepped a bit, but I even told her to not eat French fries, because my uncle had worked as a holistic doctor and a healthy diet was part of treatment. I said these things for her, but quite selfishly, I want her to do well because that would be her gift to my uncle. His money would be used well.

I couldn't help but weep a bit when I spoke to her from the heart. I was relieved when she left the table to get some tissues for me and for her. And we both cried a little bit together. I always find crying with someone to be very bonding. As we ended our visit together, we took pictures. I then had an idea that both Rachel and the student could say a few words to my Aunt Bernice for her birthday. The student proclaimed, "I love you." And those words felt real and beautiful. It was an Am Israel moment.

Melinda Ribner, L.C.S.W. is a spiritual psychotherapist and healer in private (see Ribner, page NAT 18)

home to your childhood...back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time – back home to the escapes of time and memory." While it's true that we can't go back to the time and places of our childhood, we can recapture a part of our youth if we remember the words of wisdom that our parents shared with us as we were growing up.

In my home, an abundance of wisdom was served along with the four food groups at the dinner table. When things were going well for my dad at work, when our family was happy and healthy, he would look at us wistfully and say: "If I could only stop the clock right now..."

When I came home from school crying because my glasses were stolen, or years later, when my luggage was lost on a trip overseas, he would calmly remark: "Just remember, if you have a problem that money can fix, it's the best type of problem to have."

My mother offered another type of wisdom that often sounded more like admonitions than aphorisms. Walking through Loehman's she would counsel me quietly: "You can never be too rich, too thin or own too many silk blouses," a maxim that was lost on a girl who rejected the establishment and loved tie-dyed t-shirts. But there were also extremely insightful truisms that I think of to this day, such as the time my mom looked at me knowingly when I came home from college and said: "Everyone has a public life, a private life and a secret life. You will too."

Jewish tradition is replete with wisdom teachings, the most famous of which is contained in *Pirkei Avot*, or Ethics of the Fathers. The sayings found in this final book of the *Mishna* offer moral advice and insights that are spiritual, practical and timeless. Over 2,000 years ago, people needed the same kind of guidance to navigate the seas of uncertainty as we do today, which is why Ben Zoma taught: "Who is wise? He who learns from every man...Who is a hero? He who controls his passions." And why Rabbi Hillel cautioned: "Don't judge your fellowman until you are in his place..." and reminded us "Don't say I will study when I have time, for you may never find the time."

I love the wisdom of our sages that has expanded from generation to generation and been passed down to us. From Rashi to Maimonides to the Baal Shem Tov and Rav Kook, from Abraham Joshua Heschel to Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, wisdom teachings have informed and guided Jewish living and enhanced our ability to see beyond the immediacy of our daily lives.

And whenever I feel upset or frustrated with what's going on in my own life, I remember my father's words and am comforted. "This too shall pass," he would tell me with an assuring voice. And in time, it always does.

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



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Goodbye dear brother

It was as though I had traveled through time and relived the moments of my youth when I heard, after no contact for almost three decades, that my brother had died. Over the years I had tried to locate him using several websites and contacts only to reach a dead-end.

He was career military. So, I contacted the Veterans Administration, and their response indicated that without a serial number they could not be of any assistance. Time and again I encountered erroneous leads. I spent money joining websites such as "People Search" and was given information that went nowhere. Constantly I was asked if I wanted to upgrade my membership and then perhaps new information would be available. It was an exercise in futility.

Finally, through an accident, I learned of a website that could direct me to a search for deceased members of the military, and it was there that I learned of my brother's death some 20 years earlier. It was devastating, to say the least, to learn that a younger sibling had died so young and without any family involved in his burial or that prayers were not recited to officially send him on his way for his return trip to the Creator who breathed life into him as described in Genesis: "God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *neshamah* of life; and Adam thus became a living creature" (Genesis 2:7).

This experience made me think about the writings of our ancestors who understood the meaning of life, and the messages we receive, and the thoughts we encounter as we lose someone we love. There is a marvelous book, *Does the Soul Survive*, in which various aspects of afterlife are studied and described, and the survival of the soul – that aspect of our existence that is housed in the shell we call the body – is considered. There is one particular story that seemed relevant to me because of my revelation of my loss. The story can be found in the book *Life After Life* (1975) by Dr. Raymond Moody and describes the following life review, which I've changed slightly and taken some liberties with to fit my recollections:

When the light appeared, the first thing he said to me was, "What do you have to show me that you've done with your life?" or something to this effect. And that's when these flashbacks started. I thought, "Gee, what is going on?" because all of a

sudden I was back in my childhood. And from then on, it was like I was walking from the time of my very early life, right up to the present.

I pause here in the story to mention that this story describes my feelings and musings upon hearing the sad news of a brother who was 47 years old when he died and is a true expression of my encounter with his memory.

It was really strange where it started, too, when I was a little boy, playing down the street in our neighborhood, and there were other scenes from about that time – experiences I had with my brother, and things about the neighborhood people, and actual places I had been. And then I was in kindergarten, and I remembered the time when I had this one toy I really liked, and I broke it and cried for a long time...I remembered when I was in the Boy Scouts and went camping, and remembered many things about all the years of grammar school (actually yeshiva)....

The things that flashed back came in order of my life, and they were so vivid. The scenes were just like if you walked outside and saw them, completely three dimensional, and in color. And they moved. For instance, when I saw myself breaking the toy, I could see all the movements. It wasn't like I was watching it all from my perspective at the time. It was like the little boy was somebody else, in a movie....

Now, I didn't actually see the light as I was going through the flashbacks. He disappeared as soon as he asked me what I had done, and the flashbacks started, and yet I knew that he was there with me the whole time, that he carried me back through the flashbacks, because I felt his presence, and because he made comments here and there. He was trying to show me something in each of these flashbacks....

All through this, he kept stressing the importance of love. The places where he showed it best involved my sister (I have a sister); I have always been close to her....

He seemed very interested in things concerning knowledge, too. He kept pointing out things that had to do with learning, and he said that I was going to continue learning.

How strange. The author could have been writing about me and my brother and sister. It is as though he were sitting with me and writing my biography. I could not put the book down. The flashbacks were so real and the description of them so authentic. It reminded me of the Talmudic interpretation of the meaning of the soul when they described that just as God fills the whole world so does the soul fill the whole body. We are nothing without the soul for it is the essence of who we are. God contributes to the beauty of the world through continuous creation and the soul is eternal as well.

The eternal question is whether there is life after death and how we get there. Needless to say, faith plays an important role in determining our understanding of eternal life. More than that, however,

is our perception of continuity. What exactly constitutes continuity? The dictionary describes this as perpetuation and that refers to everlastingness. We go full circle in determining the never-ending cycle of birth and death. And it leads to the question: "What is the purpose of creation if it ends?"

From time immemorial, we have yearned to learn about the continuation of our being. Judaism does not concentrate on this because our emphasis is life and not death. The prophets attempted to explain the "world to come" by explaining that the results are determined by God. Isaiah tells us that God alone knows what He prepared for him that waits for them because "no eye has seen and no ear has heard, O God, beside you."

Our tradition teaches that the soul, upon leaving the body, encounters various conditions as it prepares itself for its ultimate destination – the return to its Creator. Our tradition of shiva – sitting for seven days – is designed to allow us the opportunity to absorb the loss, endure the pain and the as the Psalmist tells us: "Walk through the Valley of Death." We don't dwell on death – we mourn – we remember – and we continue with life.

Our custom is to say *Kaddish* (prayers of sanctification) – not prayers of death, but utterances of gratitude for the life that was shared – for 11 months. This is the time, the mystics tell us, it takes for the soul to wind its way toward its ultimate destination. We should look at the *Kaddish* prayer as a "booster shot" – giving the soul the ability to make the journey. And in the end the soul rests in its Heavenly repose waiting to be born again.

We are taught that when the soul is called to make the journey back, it is touched by an angel below the nose, removing the light of understanding, and sending it on its way. In that split second the soul forgets all that it has experienced and enters the world crying, having lost the place of redemption it fought so hard to achieve.

My brother is now remembered for what he was to us. We will miss him now because the search is over. We mourn his passing and are grateful to God for having given us (my sister and I) the ability to close an unfinished chapter in the story of our lives.

We say *Kaddish* now because, even though his journey ended quite some time ago, for us it has just begun. The memories will flow, the reminiscences will continue, the guilt has been assuaged and he now rests in peace. Somehow I know that he waited for us to find him and say goodbye. Goodbye sweet brother.

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



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

We're all together again

A translator's tool-kit should include a book of cultural references as well as a dictionary and grammar. "Generalissimo Franco is *still dead*" makes people laugh who were at least 20 years old in 1975. Saturday Night Live coined the phrase to poke fun at news anchors who, for weeks that autumn, began broadcasts with the words "Generalissimo Franco is still clinging to life." Contemporary readers for whom the words are puzzling, might incorrectly assume that *still dead* is another way of saying *in rigor mortis*, reasoning that still can mean *immobile*. Not knowing a cultural reference can lead to a mistranslation.

The *Tanakh* includes Egyptian iconography familiar to ancient Jews but not to us, such as the legend of Osiris. Egyptians believed that each Pharaoh was a vessel inhabited by Osiris, the preeminent god, the source of all water in the Nile, and the god of resurrection. Per legend, Osiris' mean old uncle Seth (no relation) killed him, set the body in a wooden coffin, and floated it down the Nile. To keep Seth's sister Isis, goddess of healing, from giving Osiris a proper burial, Seth pulled the body out of the coffin, hacked it into 14 pieces, and scattered them across the desert. Isis searched all Egypt, *gathered* the parts, and replaced the phallus that fish had eaten with a golden phallus. She then *reassembled* the pieces and resurrected Osiris.

In Ezekiel 29:2-6, the prophet turns the legend on its head: "I am going to deal with you, Pharaoh..., mighty monster sprawling in your channels, who says, 'My Nile is my own; I made myself...'...I will haul you up...with...fish...clinging to your scales...and I will fling you into the desert...You shall be left lying in the open, ungathered and *unassembled*: I have made you food for the beasts of the Earth and the birds of the sky." Clearly, pharaoh is warned that he will be dismembered like his patron Osiris. But unlike Osiris, his pieces will not be gathered, reassembled and resurrected. He will be entirely eaten, by birds and beasts as well as fish. Ancient Jews understood the allusion very well; modern Jews not so much.

The words at issue are *lo tiqqabetz*. In Hebrew, they always mean *unassembled* (i.e., *not joined together*). But the new JPS *Tanakh* translates them as *unburied*. Although the word *tiqqabetz*, ending in the letter *resh*, can mean *buried*, the word *tiqqabetz*, ending in the letter *tzadi*, cannot. Unfamiliar with the legend, the (see Ben-Mordecai, page NAT 15)



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

A chance for peace in Israel?

MILWAUKEE, WISC. FRI., FEB. 11, 2011. In the midst of this historic moment, the peaceful overturn of the government of Egypt and President Hosni Mubarak, the developments are only hours old, and it remains unclear what will evolve and how. There is no present structure in Egypt for a transition to a Democratic model, perhaps a parliamentary government. For now, the highest echelon of the Egyptian military will be in charge, beyond that, all of the future is undetermined. We must remember that bureaucracies, secular or military do "not go quietly into the night."

There will be new opportunities, doors that have been opened by the developments in Tunisia, Yemen and now Egypt. As American Jews interested in the future of Israel, perhaps this is an opportunity for a dramatic new movement for peace. It depends on what the Palestinians may have learned from the experiences in Tunisia, Yemen and Egypt. It depends on the ability of every strata of Palestinian leadership to seize the moment for a peaceful resolution of all the outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians.

It calls for the Palestinians to lay down their arms, give up their anger, and to demonstrate for peace and a solution to the issues they face. If they can do that, they will create an opportunity and a demand within Israel for negotiations leading to a settlement. Can these two historic enemies face the prospect of peace?

If they succeed, these changes will continue to change the Middle East. If they fail, hatred and opposition are always there for the taking. Peace talks would call on plans and actions that have never been on the table, but the opportunities are dreams that the State of Israel and its supporters have never dared to dream. It would demand that both sides give up decades-long arguments for the sake of the future. It would change the hope for peace into an active effort to make it happen.

It is not easy to give up righteous arguments. It is not easy to forget lives lost. But if it was possible, think about what this small nation could achieve in peace.

It will take courage to allow peace to happen.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc., and can be reached at hkarsh@gmail.com. ★



An uprising of biblical proportions

BY RABBI DENNIS C. SASSO



Recent political developments in modern Egypt help to shed light on the biblical Exodus. Stripped of its mythological and supernatural elements, the biblical account of the freedom of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage might have resulted from a similar broad-based uprising that challenged a pharaoh's hardened heart and forced him into conceding their liberation.

In biblical times the slogan was "Let my people go!" In modern Egypt it is, "Mubarak must go!" Both events account for the fate of an oppressor, the hardening of whose heart leads to his own undoing. Mubarak's continued refusal to step down and his paternalistic hubris are reminiscent of Pharaonic entitlement.

In the biblical narrative, as in the contemporary unfolding, the oppression and exploitation are multifaceted – but primarily economic. The ruling elites hoard the wealth and suppress the masses with blatant abuses of human rights. As in the biblical account, the embattled Mubarak, after seemingly agreeing to let go (on his terms), regrets his own decision and sends his troops (counter demonstrators) on the attack. Blood flows, with untold plagues yet to be counted.

In a prophetic voice, an Egyptian mother proclaimed on the TV news, "We are not doing this just for ourselves but for the generations that come after us – that they may taste freedom." And so, in the biblical narrative and its yearly recounting during the Passover Seder, the moral imperative is "You shall tell your children!"

Despite his continual denial, Mubarak finally resigned after renewed pressure.

There is no question that Egyptian politics needed to change. The great concern is, of course, who will fill the power vacuum in a setting that has not been able to develop a civil society, where an honorable contract between the government and the governed does not exist, where democracy is an unrealized ideal. Egypt suffers from many other systemic problems, including inequality in women's rights, religious fundamentalism

On this date in Jewish history

On March 9, 1244

Pope Innocent IV ordered that the Talmud be burned.

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

Beware of Arab "democracy"

BY ELLIOT BARTKY, PhD, & ALLON FRIEDMAN, MD

All people of good will wish for the successful establishment of a liberal democracy in Egypt. Yet not all democratic revolutions are liberal, and history is replete with examples of such revolutions ultimately yielding the bitter fruit of tyranny.

Egyptians have unquestionably suffered under the despotism of the Mubarak regime, and it is entirely natural that Americans should sympathize with their calls for freedom and democracy. After all, our founding documents describe "certain unalienable rights," including liberty, which our Creator endowed all men with. Yet our concept of a liberal democracy includes not simply free elections but also the core freedoms of conscience, religion, and speech, in addition to the separation of church and state and equal protection and rights under the law. Despite calls for democracy in the streets of Cairo, data from rigorously conducted polls suggest that liberal democratic values fundamentally conflict with those held by the vast majority of Egyptians. While a 2007 University of Maryland/World Public Opinion face-to-face poll did find that 82% of Egyptians viewed democracy as a good way of governing their country, 74% also favored the strict application of Sharia law, 91% favored keeping Western values out of Islamic nations, and 67% supported unifying all Islamic nations under a single religious Islamic caliphate. Moreover, a 2010 Pew Research Center Poll documented that 82% of Egyptians support stoning people who commit adultery, 77% support whipping or cutting off the hands of thieves, and 84% support the death penalty for persons who exercise their freedom of conscience and leave the Islamic faith. These views, in

and inter- and intra-religious conflicts.

The greatest challenge to the Egyptian people and to other Arab countries is to ensure that the transitions do not devolve into militant, autocratic regimes, whether secular or religious. The specter of the Muslim Brotherhood emerging, either to power or as a power broker, is ominous.

The time is ripe for the Arab world to outgrow the dictatorships that have choked it, and to transform revolutions by the power of the Internet into covenants of social responsibility sealed in the hearts and minds of the people, shattering idolatries of servitude and renewing spirits that yearn for a better future.

The purposes of the biblical Exodus were not completed until Sinai, when the liberated tribes entered into a

combination with Egypt's relentless historical persecution of its religious minorities and women (recent UNICEF data report that 96% of Egyptian women aged 19–49 were forced to undergo female genital mutilation) and the fact that Egypt remains one of the world's foremost disseminators of anti-Semitic speech, imagery, and propaganda, should leave any thoughtful observer of recent events with serious doubts about where the revolution is headed.

Unfortunately, the antidemocratic viewpoints so prevalent in Egypt are held by huge swathes of the Arab and Muslim world. In fact, the only society in the entire region that embraces the moral and civic concepts Americans hold dear is Israel, located on Egypt's northern border. Despite facing constant existential threats from surrounding countries that would offer most nations more than sufficient reason to limit citizens' rights, Israel has steadfastly held to a standard equal to that of any Western nation, including the U.S. And when it comes to protecting the rights of citizens (both Jewish and Arab) who openly criticize it and even at times actively work against it, Israel arguably leads the world. It is the only country in the Middle East that has ever been graded as free by the Freedom House survey, a ranking it receives year after year.

Let us all pray that liberal democracy will one day flourish in Egypt and other Arab and Muslim nations. But Americans should not delude themselves into believing that recent events will inevitably lead to the establishment of an enlightened and tolerant Egypt. Given Egypt's history and the mindset of its citizens, odds favor an opposite outcome. Regardless, what Americans can find comfort in is that Israel will continue to remain an enduring and reliable friend and ally in this violent and unstable region of the globe.

Bartky is president and Friedman is a Board member of the Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana, www.JAACI.org. ★

covenant of law and mutual obligation. The Exodus signaled freedom from bondage. Sinai meant the freedom to serve the purposes of liberation. Similarly, the unrest and uprising in Egypt today should be but the prelude to a new era of law, a social compact grounded in justice, human dignity, national and regional peace. If that can be achieved, then the efforts will not have been in vain.

Sasso is senior rabbi at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis. Reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star Feb. 12, 2011. ★





Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

On the quality of the blog

Anybody can do it. All you need is a computer, access to the Internet and time. You don't have to go to journalism school – hell, you don't even have to know how to spell – spell check will take care of that for you.

And so, we are now overwhelmed by “bloggers.” A descriptive and effective term. When you read the *New York Times* and see bylines by Tom Friedman or Bob Herbert, you may safely deduct that mostly if not all of the other writers are at least almost as proficient. But the World Wide Web? Welcome one, welcome all. I recently got a blog/post from some wing nut who seemed to be quoting an Israeli general lambasting President Obama.

Well, first of all, the general in question is a well known moderate, even somewhat to the left of center. Second of all, no Israeli general is going to go public with a racist diatribe on the president of the United States. This guy gave himself a number of credits and titles at the end of his “blog,” somewhat like the vaudeville magicians giving themselves medals after each successful sleight of hand.

The problem? Well, it's two fold. First, that in today's world anyone can get printed electronically. Secondly, how do you determine that Blogger “A” is a qualified expert in his field, capable of parsing the subject and Blogger “B” is a frothy mouthed wing nut?

If you're watching television, generally a host of a given program will draw the line when these guys go well off the deep end. But then again, not always. Not if it suits the political agenda of the program or the network.

Look, for a few bucks you can get a video camera, sit behind a desk and run a streamer under the picture of your fictitious titles and accomplishments. In today's world, whatever your political leaning or personal prejudices, there is something electronically for everybody.

Political discourse has become downright rude. In many parliamentary systems, that rudeness and boisterousness is built into the system. The Israeli parliament has had some dustups, one or two ending in fisticuffs. Arab states have not had that problem up until now. But – after Tunisia and Egypt, that may well be coming. Ever since dueling went out of style, our government has been a bit more restrained. In today's environment, a politician can go on Fox News and accuse someone of anti-American

activity and then go on another network and refer to the same person as “My very good friend.”

And speaking of Fox; why would any Jew make that their preferred news channel? A network that allows the word Nazi to be banded about until it becomes almost meaningless. The head of that network is Roger Alles. A savvy political animal, he “produced” politicians on the right for years before moving into Rupert Murdoch's orbit.

Hosts such as Glen Beck have taken the role of “news commentator” to new lows. Roger Alles, when first asked by a group of rabbis to stop Beck from trivializing the Holocaust and the word Nazi, replied that “they are a bunch of left wing rabbis who don't want anybody to use the word Holocaust on the air.”

Yes, I am a conspiracy theorist, but like the guy said, just because you are paranoid, does not mean there's nobody out to get you. I watch these guys and some of the wing nuts of the right, and I remember that in the 1930s there was a Catholic priest by the name of Father Coughlin who had a widely syndicated radio program. He echoed Adolph Hitler's words and literally thousands of listeners would not miss a program.

While the government takes the axe to a number of worthwhile programs like Holocaust studies in school, ignoring 84 percent of the budget, we are producing politicians and political celebrities like Sara Palin and Michelle Bachman who apparently have never read a book.

Ms. Bachman, in her reply to the president's State of the Union address, talked about the nation's founders as abolishing slavery, she seemed not to know that the founders deemed black people to be “3/5ths of a person.” She identified John Quincy Adams as a founder. Hey, Michelle – it was his daddy!

The dumbing down of America is a threat to Jews. Goebbels said if you lie long enough and loud enough, the big lie becomes the truth. So far, we have been lucky. More WASPS and Irishmen have been at the top of major companies that looted our financial system in the past decade. Few if any Jewish names involved, thank God. Bernie Madoff? Well, yeah. But his take was chump change next to the J.P. Morgans and Citibank.

This generation is into instant communication as no other before it. The 24-hour news cycle and the appetite for stuff that appears on screen is voracious. It allows the bad apples to taint the bushel. Careful what you read, what you hear. And keep your hate antenna up and tuned. You can't stop it, but you can rebut it. Let us not be silent. Never again.

Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommunications. He began his working life in radio in Philadelphia. He has written his JPO column for 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. ★

New nonprofit helps make Judaism more accessible

Light of the Nations:

Healing the World through Experiential Education

BY BRUCE DAVID



It is often the things that we do not want to say (or hear), which are the hardest to voice. Yet, undeniably, our world, as a whole, is in need of healing. Beyond political differences, we see our air, water, and earth being polluted, our natural resources being squandered for personal profit, violence serving to create both physical and ideological walls, and scarcity, ignorance, and intolerance only making our situation worse.

Through the years, religion has worked to help repair the world by instilling positive values from generation to generation. Modern religious leaders are aware of our deteriorating situation, and are desperately searching for healing, not only for themselves and their communities, but also for the structure of their religions and the world. People are becoming disenchanted with the idea that attending services makes you a “good” or “bad” person.

In our changing times of technology and instant feedback, students of all ages are desperately searching for a connection that goes beyond the typical stand-up, sit-down game of religious observance. People want to know the “why” behind the commanded actions, and the “how,” to better understand the applicability and modern relevance of their religion. In recent generations, technology has rewarded its users with instant gratification and shortened attention spans. Religion is struggling to keep up.

One of Judaism's most renowned ideas comes from the prophet Isaiah, who recognizes the Jewish people as a light of the nations, placing responsibility on the Jewish people to serve as spiritual and moral role-models for the world as a whole. This overwhelming challenge, however, also creates much hostility around the idea of a “chosen people.” How does such a small, historically discriminated upon group uphold this universal responsibility?

The answer is through education and the perpetuation of our Jewish ideological heritage. But as one of our most notable song-writers once said, “the times, they are a'changing.” Jews, like many others, are craving a new means of connection. And that is exactly what Light of the Nations (LOTNexperience.org), a new organization for experiential Jewish education, provides.

Light of the Nations (LOTN) is a non-profit organization that provides communities around the country with contemporary educational programming, through art, music, and uniquely crafted interactive experiences, allowing participants to experience *Judaism through the senses*. Their experiential art, headlined by Bloomington, Ind.m artist Bruce David, is being paired with all-original music by Max Einsohn, as well as guided-meditation, discussion, social action projects, and other hands-on “interactives,” specifically designed to offer uniquely experiential opportunities for individuals to reconnect with their Jewish identity and culture.

When asked about the nature of their organization, LOTN Vice-President Josh David responded that, “we are an organization for the people, by the people, and to the people, meaning that we are doing this for universal well-being, as members of the current generations that feel the demand for change, with goals of helping not only our current society, but also our future generations. We do not see this as a temporary fix, but rather as a transitory shift into a much-needed time of experiential growth and observance.” David continued, “We are just beginning to see the effects of an educational system that has needed alternative supplemental education for at least the past 30 years. We no longer have that time to afford. Our world needs reform *now*.”

“People are distancing themselves from the positive values of religion because it is not as accessible as the new app on their smartphone. We are moving to make Judaism more user-friendly and both personally and globally beneficial. Our success is not something you will be able to measure with numbers. When we accomplish our goals, you will feel the difference.”

Bruce David (DavidArt.com), President of LOTN, has understood for the past 40+ years that there is a need for more engaging and experiential forms of learning. Even in his years of Jewish day-school, he understood that religion, Judaism in particular, is invaluable, even relevant and applicable, especially to modern society. The more contemporary issue, however, is engaging a generation, raised on instant feedback and technological distraction. What can these students learn from a book? Not nearly as much as they learn from an experience, researchers have shown.

Regardless of the fact that he has never received any formal artistic training, Bruce David has been creating colorful and dynamic, unique, storytelling pictures, filled with hidden multi-dimensional symbolism, for over 30 years. And his efforts have proven successful. Receiving numerous honors and awards and both domestic and international acclaim, Bruce David's art has found its way into the hearts and homes of communities around the world, as one of the leading Jewish artists of our time.

(see David, page NAT 18)



Jewish Theater

By HENRIK EGER

Doyenne of Jewish theater critics (Part 1 of 2)

Editor's Note: While the readers of The Jewish Post & Opinion have become accustomed to finding the unique critiques of Irene Backalenick under this banner, instead, in this and the next issue, we are pleased to present a special interview of Ms. Backalenick, reprinted with permission from the website All About Jewish Theatre. Her work has been invaluable to our pages for more than 30 years.

Irene Backalenick, one of the most prolific critics of Jewish theatre in New York City and Connecticut for many years, recently wrote her 100th review for All About Jewish Theatre (AAJT). In honor of that event and to celebrate her 89th birthday on August 12, 2010, AAJT presents this interview with deep gratitude.

Discovering one's own creativity: A critic's background

When first did you notice your creativity?

When I was three years old, or less, I recall reciting poems before a large audience. In those days, you made certain that your children took lessons of some sort – tap-dancing, singing, and reciting of poems. It was the Shirley Temple syndrome, although that child actress had not yet appeared in film. A neighbor who had artistic aspirations, taught me to memorize and act out lengthy poems.

Soon she was booking me into various halls. I recall one such place – a home for “wayward girls” it was called. When they showed me the large room with many cribs, filled with babies, I puzzled over why they were there. I stood on stage in the large hall, reciting poems, complete with exaggerated voice and gestures, enjoying the attention I received. Shyness would come later.

As we had no radio, and there was, as yet, no television, we would listen to my grandfather's crackling radio, once even hearing a distant thin-voiced Enrico Caruso sing an aria.

When first did you experience drama?

Indirectly, through my mother, who told us the story about her brother Frank – known as “the Dummy.” He played the violin, and, at one point, hit a wrong note. My hot-tempered grandfather rushed into the room and smashed the violin over his head – breaking that instrument, but not Frank's head.

What was your family's relationship with theatre?

No relationship whatsoever. My parents were not intellectuals. They were not interested in the arts.

I am sorry to hear it. Did you get to

see any live performances as a child?

No, but there were the weekly movies at the Liberty Theatre on Broad Street in Providence, Rhode Island. Every Saturday morning, I was given a dime, and off I would go – to view a feature film, a second film, usually a cowboy movie with Tom Mix or Hoot Gibson, a cartoon, and the RKO news from one of the Big Five Hollywood studios. I would sit through it enthralled, as did every other neighborhood kid.

In the warm weather we were a gang of kids, with endless street games. One girl had an abandoned backyard hen coop, which we turned into a theatre for plays.

That sounds like fun. When did you actually see your first play and what was your reaction?

I can hardly remember the first play – probably at age 12, in eighth grade, when I was allowed to direct a class play, God knows what play.

However, more to the point, the earliest professionally performed play I remember vividly in my career was *Ivanov* at the Jewish Repertory Theatre in New York. I had been assigned to cover it for *Show Business*, a little New York paper for which I was reviewing at the time. That Chekhov play and that little theatre itself made an enormous impact on me, causing me to choose a thesis for my doctorate – *The history of the Jewish Repertory Theatre*.

Feeling torn: Family “failures” and education

How supportive of your creativity and your self-esteem were your parents, or were they puzzled by it all?

My father was seen as the family failure. Though he was devoted to my maternal grandfather, serving as his chauffeur and gofer, he was disdained – more servant than heir-apparent. The message of inferiority, the lack of self-esteem, was etched into him – a legacy I inherited. My mother often confirmed this legacy, saying, “You're just like your father!” in moments of exasperation.

Thus began my life-long dichotomy – my longing for adventure and my need for security, the yin and yang of life, at least of my life. These two conflicting drives would mark every important phase of life as I grew older. I longed to be exactly like my peers. On the other hand, I was driven toward different goals, always, somehow, out of sync.

You said that your “father was seen as the family failure.” Did this perception have any effect on your family's expectations of you, growing up and going to school?

Not my parents, but my grandfather inspired me in a way that they did not. Since I was an earnest little pupil, there being no distractions, I brought home perfect test scores. I remember showing one marked “100%” to my grandfather. “Only one hundred percent?” he asked. “Is that the best you can do?” After relating this to my teacher, she gave me “125%” on the next test, and “200%” following that.



Irene Backalenick.

Looking back, where did your education begin?

I was saved by my grandfather's bookcase, located in the family's downstairs hall. Two of my uncles had gone to college briefly. Uncle Paul, the eldest, was enrolled at Harvard, but he ran away after a few months, joining the circus as a musician.

Thus their schoolbooks languished in the front hall bookcase, awaiting my perusal. It led me to a new love which later paid off at Brown University. There were also Shakespeare's plays, which I hardly understood, but loved all the same. Later, when I began to get around on my own, I discovered the small neighborhood public library. I would stand gazing at the shelves, wondering with despair how I would ever manage to read every book.

When theatre arts lead to the love of one's life

Decisions we make early in our childhood and adolescence can have a tremendous impact, especially our experiences at school.

True. In those years, Providence, Rhode Island, had introduced the junior high school system with numerous extra-curricular activities. I hardly knew which to choose – the school newspaper, the drama group, or the art club. Finally, drama won out, where I joyously wrote plays, acted, and directed.

I did act in little plays and skits for the eighth grade class in junior high school – but later, in high school, I was not given any opportunities. Central High's only claim to the arts was one school play a year, and, on auditioning for a role, I was told I was “too short.” I was just five feet tall. No matter. I concentrated on Cultural French, Business English, and, most importantly, Shorthand and Typing. I mastered shorthand and typing, skills which, it turned out, served me remarkably well all my life.

Sometimes educational impulses can come from people other than parents and teachers. Was there anyone who awakened in you the desire for more than just the regular school subjects?

Yes, Tony Lutrario, who would become my high school sweetheart. He was of a

different caliber, different from any boy I had known. It was Tony, the school's brightest, most promising student, the class president, the yearbook editor, who would introduce me to the world of culture and the arts, history and civilization, the city's museums, galleries, and libraries. Where did this boy get this drive, this knowledge? Certainly not from Central High.

Growing up Jewish in the United States between World Wars I and II

What was it like growing up Jewish?

Among my best childhood friends were Ruth and Bernice who lived with their grandparents. They regarded me skeptically, and one day, on reflection, said, “She's a nice little girl, even though she's Jewish.” I got the message. Being Jewish meant being sub-standard, below par, somehow shameful. I longed to be part of the pack, exactly like every one else.

You went to school during the time that Hitler came to power, and you experienced those dangerous times shortly before the outbreak of World War II.

That is correct. The summer following our senior year, Mr. Brownsword, one of our English teachers and the yearbook advisor, wanted to take us all on a biking/hotel trip to Europe. But it was 1938, and none of us had the necessary \$125. Again, I have wondered what turn my life might have taken, had we made that trip! Would we have been trapped in Europe? Would we have been caught up in the War? Would I have had a direct encounter with the Holocaust?

During racially sensitive times in Europe and the U.S., the Jewish community, too, seemed to impose strict apartheid rules on young people who were reaching out across cultural, ethnic, and religious lines.

True. Let me give an example. June 1938 marked an ending—my formal education and my parting with Tony. Once out of school, I dared not continue to see him. “You will break your mother's heart,” my father warned me sternly, but never mentioning names or specifics. This was not only a parental view, and a Jewish view, but a widespread community view. In those rigid times, one did not cross the line from one ethnic or religious group to another. Though I continued to write to Tony, occasionally to see him, the halcyon days of high school were over.

Recurrent nightmares

Those formative years before World War II must have been challenging, to say the least.

They were. Much as I longed to be like every one else, fitting the norm and marrying at 19, I was always out of sync, it seemed to me – always the wrong age, place, time, sex, or ethnic background.

That sounds like a lot of turmoil for a young person.

It was. Add to that the hurricane of September 1938. With the hurricane, a

great tidal wave came in from the Atlantic, moved into Narragansett Bay and swept up the Providence River, engulfing downtown Providence. Only later did we learn that all of downtown Providence was flooded. People in those buildings had climbed on desks and tables to escape the water, but drowned nevertheless. For years, I had recurrent nightmares of running from a tidal wave. Each time, as I watched the wall of water sweep in, I would debate whether to climb to the top of a tall building or run further inland to higher ground. The dream always ended indecisively.

It seems that you persevered, in spite of those challenging circumstances.

Well, I was hired by the Providence School Department to work at Nathan Bishop Junior High School. The school, located on Providence's East Side, had a strangely-mixed population – both the city's wealthiest Jews and the near-destitute "Bravas" – Portuguese Blacks from the Azores. It was not a happy mix, though animosities never exploded, but simmered below the surface.

An explosive racial mix. Did the administration know that you were Jewish?

Very much so. I learned that I had been hired because it was politic to have one Jewish secretary. Why not a Portuguese secretary, I would wonder in later years. But such thinking, of course, was far down the road.

My best friend in that period was Martha Berstein – and, in fact, the whole Berstein family. Martha, too, was a secretary, working for Rosenberg Jewelers. Martha and I laughed at the restrictive Providence rules, the Jewish values, but lived by them nevertheless.

You seem to have built some interesting friendships.

True, but there were problems that I did not foresee. For example, in those days, I was also friends with one Dorothy S. She was very bright. Only later would I discover that she was suffering from mental illness. In the 1970s, when I was in my '50s, married with four children, living in Westport, Connecticut, Dorothy S. was in her '60s. She would be in and out of mental hospitals, and would track me down and send me a series of threatening letters, blaming me for her disastrous life. She would feel I had stolen everything from her – that I would go on to college, marriage, children, while she was left with nothing. Those letters were indeed scary, ominous, but police officers told me no action could be taken against her unless she attempted to kill me.

Jews and the ethnic hierarchy

Those experiences must have been frightening. On the other hand, you lived in Providence, Rhode Island, a culturally and ethnically rich part of America.

Yes, those were years of intellectual growth, following the introduction to the arts that my high school boyfriend Tony had given me. I was avidly reading

classic literature, visiting the Providence Art Museum and the large downtown Public Library, discovering whatever cultural outlets Providence had to offer. This was long before the post-war cultural explosion that would affect Providence as well as the rest of the country. It was also the years of dating boys – Jewish, of course.

How integrated were the various ethnic groups in those days?

Providence was a city of separate communities, each ethnic group confined to its own location and its own identity. The Italians lived in one part of town, the Jews in another, the Blacks in still another. Other ethnic groups also had their places. There was a hierarchical structure.

How did Jews fit into that ethnic hierarchy?

In my parents' view, the Jews occupied the top level; the WASPs, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, next; then the Irish; the Italians; and the unfortunate Blacks at the bottom. Though I was vaguely uncomfortable with these values, I never really questioned them – outwardly or inwardly. That would come later, as my world view and life experiences broadened.

Though my parents had severed all connections with their ancestral past, as had many Jews of that generation, they maintained those prejudices. Examined in later life, I saw it as a defensive measure. Jews had had a long history of shabby, unfair treatment, official and unofficial anti-Semitism, and they paid it back in kind. Yet, at the same time, my mother looked down on Yiddish accents, carefully seeking out an accent-free husband. My handsome father spoke English as if American-born, although he had come to America from Lithuania as a ten-year-old. He filled the bill.

From a socially restrictive environment for Jewish women to the freedom of Brown University

How does a young Jewish woman find partners in what sounds like a socially restrictive environment?

Among the Jewish boys I dated, one emerged as front runner – namely, Jerry Clamon. He was a decent, kindly fellow, with a good sense of humor which I appreciated, though I still longed for Tony, my Italian high school sweetheart. But Jerry, a successful young businessman who controlled his working hours, picked me up in his car every day after my workday ended. It was pleasant to have a car ride home and not resort to the interminable trolley rides, transferring downtown from one trolley to another. However, my relationship with Jerry dragged on, with his urgency topped by my indecision.

What became of that relationship?

Jerry would later die in the War, killed in the Normandy invasion...

I am sorry to hear that.

...an event giving me a posthumous appreciation of the fine human being he had been.

What other kind of life-changing shifts did you experience as a result of those traumatic experiences?

When I was 20 years old, I became restless, ready for a change, after four years at Nathan Bishop. One day, I attended the graduation of my old friend Bea Schwartz. Despite her Central High background, she had managed to enter the "Normal School" in town, which later became the Rhode Island College of Education, and acquired her degree after a four-year program. Suddenly, sitting in the audience, I had an epiphany. Why shouldn't I go to college, even now? If Bea could do it, perhaps I could do it.

But it was 1941. The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, and war had broken out. In my restlessness and confusion, I applied to Brown University. They put me through pre-college exams. I easily passed the English and History, based on my own years of reading, and the College accepted the recommendations of my tutors for math and language. I was on my way.

All's well that ends well?

Not quite. Even with my jubilation, I felt a kind of shame. I was too old. Why hadn't I entered college, like every one else, right out of high school? Fortunately, I looked younger than my 22 years, easily passing for eighteen, and I told few people my true age. Was I, once more, in the right place at the wrong age?

I entered Pembroke College at Brown University in September 1943 – conditionally. Tuition per semester was \$225. However, my parents were surprisingly cooperative – and indeed proud of me and my aspirations. A twenty-year insurance policy they had purchased for me at birth had just matured for \$500 – money which they gave me. And I was no longer expected to give part of my earnings to the household. I had my waitress earnings plus a \$200 per semester Brown scholarship. Amazing! Suddenly I had enough for the first year of Brown for both tuition and expenses. Why hadn't somebody told me years earlier that this was possible!

Major breakthroughs: There is nothing like rage to fuel one's determination and drive

Great. How did your family and friends respond to your having made a major breakthrough?

Mixed. For example, our family doctor, Dr. Kenniston, whose two daughters had gone to Pembroke, remarked, "I understand you're going to Pembroke, and they took you in conditionally." Apparently my mother had shared this information during a visit to the good doctor. Trying to console me in case I didn't do well, he added, "That's nice that you're going there, but don't worry, you don't have to be a top student." This evaluation of my capacity, apparently, was based on my "conditional" status. Although I was fuming after this exchange, I smiled, thanked him, more determined than ever that I would

indeed become a "top student."

Good for you. I understand that you did so well in your studies at Brown University that you became an English Honors student.

Yes, and this is how it happened. Based on both an essay I had written and my English exam, I was put into an advanced English class, skipping the usual introductory course, with four other students – Don Parks, Barbara Whipple, Dorothy Hiller, and Connie Coulter. Though these four were years younger than I, we found ourselves operating on the same wave length, and they became my best friends. We would all go on to become English Honors students – becoming part of the small, elite program – and cementing our friendship. It was fortunate that I connected with them, since I was conscious of being an outsider, a freak.

English, as it turned out, and specifically the English Honors program, became my choice. The Honors program consisted of very small classes – with discussions instead of lectures, with written papers instead of exams. Just before graduation, we would be called upon to take lengthy comprehensive exams, spewing back, in essay form, the knowledge we had acquired in eight semesters.

The highlight of my Honors program was a summer class in Shakespeare, even though it would be years before I would have the astounding experience of seeing Shakespeare on stage.

How did you handle your academic success?

Well, everything went fine until my "B" grade in a creative writing class which spoiled my all-A record. I recall bursting into tears in Dr. Israel Kapstein's office. "What's wrong with a 'B'?" he asked, puzzled, but I viewed it as a failing grade. I was also convinced that I would never be a creative writer – at least not a writer of fiction.

Apparently you survived your one "B" among all your "A's" and moved on.

Yes, literally. Even though I had had little direct experience with New York City, I viewed it as the center of the universe – offering a dazzling, glamorous life style. My life – my real life – would begin when I moved there.

(To be continued in the next P&O issue.)

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Seen on the Israel Scene

By SYBIL KAPLAN

The Hullegeb Ethiopian-Israeli Theater goes English

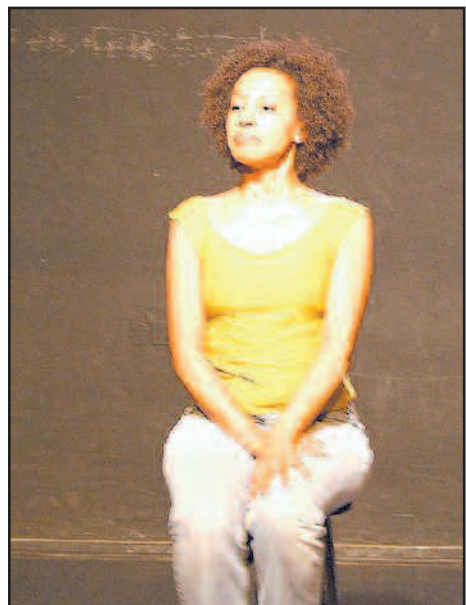
Last year, the enthusiastic public relations person for the Ethiopian National Project (see description in "Background") invited us to attend an evening highlighting Ethiopian music, song, dance and theater. The performances were in Hebrew or Amharic.

In early February, she invited us to the dress rehearsal of the theater troupe in its first English-language performance.

The Hullegeb Theater, which was established in 2004 to provide a framework for literary, musical and theatrical talents of members of the Ethiopian community in Israel, is sponsored by the Confederation House, a cultural institution in Jerusalem.

First we were treated to an outstanding monologue, "On Her Own," by the leading female actress of the company, Tehila Yeshayahu-Adgeh, a graduate of the Visual Theater School in Jerusalem. Portraying a single mother, she has flashbacks to her failed marriage to an abusive man, her son, and her childhood, as well as to contemporary issues such as her matchmaking attempts on the internet and an encounter with prejudice with an Israeli in the supermarket.

In the second half, Tehila was joined by Benny Gehtahoun, a graduate of the Haifa University Theater Department who was chosen best actor in the 2009 Acre International Fringe Theater Festival; and Ayechew Behava, dancer and choreographer, who appears on the



Tehila Yeshayahu-Adgeh performing the monologue, "On Her Own." All photos by Barry A. Kaplan/Jerusalem.



(L-R) Ayechew Behava, Benny Gehtahoun, and Tehila Yeshayahu-Adgeh performing six Ethiopian folk stories.

Ethiopian educational TV channel. Accompanying the actors and actress was Abate Berihon, Ethiopian Israeli musician and first-prize winner in the 2009 International Jazz Festival in Eilat.

The group performed six humorous Ethiopian folk stories portrayed by three immigrants who connect through their culture and stories. An English narrative accompanied each story when Amharic was spoken.

Background

The Beta Israel lived in north and northwestern Ethiopia. Operation Moses (1984) and Operation Solomon (1991) brought most of the community to Israel. Of the 120,000 now living in Israel, 67.5% were born in Ethiopia and 32% are now Israeli born. Today, a member of the community, Shlomo Mula, is a member of the Knesset.

The Ethiopian National Project was established in 2001 by the government of Israel as a partnership with the Jews of the Diaspora through Federations. It provides educational and social opportunities to Ethiopian teens 13 to 18 with scholastic assistance, youth outreach centers, Army preparation programs, school mediators, parent workshops, drug and alcohol prevention programs, leadership development programs and university scholarships.

For more information about performances of this troupe in English, contact Tracey Shipley, marketing coordinator, Tracey shipley55@gmail.com.

Elazar Memorial Lecture: Dr. Daniel Gordis – Do Jewish People Still Believe in Jewish Peoplehood?

Professor Daniel J. Elazar (1934–1999) was a leading political scientist and specialist in the study of federalism, political culture, the Jewish political tradition, Israel and the world Jewish community.

Daniel Elazar was professor of political science at Temple University in Philadelphia, where he founded and directed the Center for the Study of Federalism, a leading federalism research institute. Professor Elazar was the author or editor of more than 60 books and many other publications. He was recognized as an expert on Jewish community organization worldwide, on the Jewish political tradition, and on Israel's government and politics.

Elazar was born in Minneapolis in 1934 and received his M.A. and Ph.D. from the

University of Chicago. He maintained residences in Philadelphia and Jerusalem and died in 1999.

As founder and president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, he headed the major independent Jewish "think tank" concerned with analyzing and solving the key problems facing Israel and world Jewry. Each year, a memorial lecture is held in his honor by the JCPA and this year the speaker was Dr. Daniel Gordis, senior vice president of the Shalem Center, formerly a research center and now Israel's first liberal arts college offering a BA modeled on the American liberal arts degree. He is also a senior fellow there.

In his introductory remarks, Dr. Dore Gold, president of Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (JCPA), mentioned that Jewish peoplehood was the central axis of Professor Elazar's thinking and asked if there was still a belief in Jewish peoplehood.

Dr. Gordis began by saying peoplehood has long been a dominant feature of how the Jewish people think about themselves and how others think about us. But peoplehood is a rapidly diminishing vector.

In the *Tanach*, the Jews thought of themselves as a people, and people thought of them as a people. Pharaoh calls them *am yisrael* (people of Israel). Haman speaks to King Ahashuerus about "the people."

In North America today, the Christian concept of religious life influences Jews and in the non-Orthodox community the idea of personal autonomy has become axiomatic. There is a shift in the concept of peoplehood. The Balfour Declaration talked about the national home for the Jewish people. Israel's Declaration of Independence refers to Eretz Yisrael as the birthplace of the Jewish people.

Just as Zionism has given birth to Arab nationalism, part of the erosion for support of the Jewish state is because it is dependent on the idea of the Jewish people.

Dr. Gordis then cited the "Beyond Distancing" survey, which asked if Israel were to be destroyed would you consider it a personal tragedy? For those over the age of 60, 80% said yes. For those under the age of 30, 50% said no. Unfortunately, there has been no sociological study of American Jews that studies peoplehood.

If it is a diminishing concept, is there anything that can be done? Is it an inevitable result of intermarriage that is such a common phenomenon? To what extent is peoplehood an issue addressed? Only 30% of American Jews have been to Israel. One example where profound changes happen upon visiting Israel are Birthright participants. They encounter 3-D Judaism.

Food for Body and Soul at the 25th Jerusalem International Book Fair

Publicity releases said there were 200 stands with 70 Israeli publishing

houses and more than 600 publishers from more than 30 countries at the biennial international book fair, held at the international convention center, Binyanei Hauma, Feb. 20–25.

In addition to the Jerusalem Prize being award to Ian McEwan, each day provided authors at many exhibits plus the "Literary Café," where Israeli and foreign writers met for panels discussions, seven or eight times each day.

We chose to attend the panel on "The Changing Jewish Kitchen – Is Jewish Food Still Jewish Food and What Is It?" Moderator was Washington, D.C., baker and chef, Mark Furstenberg. Panelists were Joan Nathan, author of 10 cookbooks focusing on Jewish food, "the voice of Jewish cooking in America"; Israel Aharoni, "Mr. Cooking School," chef, author and best known for his Israel TV show; and Ezra Kedem, chef/owner of Jerusalem's restaurant, Arcadia, and "committed to an ingredient-based cuisine."



(L-R) Ezra Kedem, Israel Aharoni, Joan Nathan, and Mark Furstenberg.

The panel set out to explore Israeli culinary traditions with Mr. Furstenberg commenting that if America was the melting pot of the late 19th century and early 20th century, Israel is the melting pot of the last half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

Mrs. Nathan cited an eating day she and Mr. Furstenberg had had the day before – breakfast of Tunisian *shakshouka* (a poached egg and tomato sauce dish) with Yemenite bread; lunch of Kurdish *kubeh* (dumpling soup) with five salads; snack of *focaccia* and eggplant with *tchina* at the Cinamateque restaurant; and an Eastern European dinner of *kreplach* soup, chopped liver, *tzimmes*, potato *kugel* and compote in the home of former restaurant owner and caterer, Shmil.

She also said that she saw Jewish food as "religion and region."

Aharoni said that until 20 years ago, nine out of ten people defined Jewish food as Eastern European food, which was "absolutely not true."

"Nowhere on Earth do we have so many ethnic cuisines so different from each other. What they have in common is they are all Jewish. As chefs, we started a revolution in Israel." He said the chefs started with foreign cuisines and ignored local cuisines and neglected to take a look at the "backyard of our culinary lives."

Aharoni also felt they were just beginning to develop a new modern Israeli cuisine.

(see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 19)



Holocaust Educator

BY MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN

L'Dor V'Dor

No one mentioned Aunt Esther's legendary *pushke* at her funeral. In her Indianapolis Congregation Beth-El Zedek, it had a reputation as a direct pipeline to G-d. Esther's friends knew they could call her and request, "Put a dollar in your *pushke* for me" and get results. Their prayers would be answered.

Aunt Esther explained to me, years ago, that *pushke* was another word for a *tzedakah box*, the content of which is regularly emptied and donated to charity. The word *pushke* comes from the Polish word for "can," according to an article in *The Forward* online, "When Pushke Came to Shove" by Jenna Weissman Joselit.

Funerals are always last-minute affairs. We decided spontaneously to attend the funeral of my husband's Aunt Esther Davis, widow of Oscar Davis, z"l, necessitating taking flights during unpredictable wintry conditions.

At her funeral service, various speakers praised Aunt Esther as a woman of valor. Her grandchildren Robert and Rochelle Greenwald and Adam Weinstein spoke beautifully. Her eldest granddaughter, Shelly Malmon, eloquently connected the life of the decedent to the shards of light from creation. Son-in-law Rick Weinstein, representing Aunt Esther's three daughters, Sheila Greenwald, Sharon Davis, and Rita Weinstein, detailed Esther's involvement in the Jewish community and beyond.

Everything Rick said about his mother-in-law could also apply to Esther's daughter, Sheila. Sheila was the 2010 recipient of the 30th annual Ivan M. Chalfie award for distinguished volunteer service to the Jewish family and community. Given by the Indianapolis Jewish Community Center, Mr. Chalfie himself picked out the gift, a beautiful Israeli menorah, which enjoys a place of honor in Sheila's living room.

As her niece-in-law, I would have mentioned Aunt Esther's *pushke*, her conduit to G-d. I would also highlight her gracious hospitality to us over the years, as Richard and I landed in Indianapolis on our way to Lafayette and Terre Haute, our respective home towns. Both Aunt Esther and her sister-in-law, Ruth Steinkeler, welcomed us and our three children with warm hospitality and delicious food (everything homemade) during our annual pilgrimage to Indiana.

I wrote the above on our return trip to California, while we impatiently waited for our weather-delayed flight from Indianapolis to Chicago. As we sprinted from Concourse B to Concourse C at O'Hare, I thought of the *pushke* and wished I could have Aunt Esther put a

dollar in it to ensure our safe return. After we lifted off, all flights in and out of Chicago were canceled. Perhaps my thinking about the *pushke* became a little prayer, releasing its resources on our behalf. Miraculously, we (and our luggage) made it back to San Francisco on schedule.

Twice in two months, Richard and I risked winter weather to visit family in frigid climates. In December, we flew to Munich to visit our daughter Leah, on track to complete her doctorate in theoretical chemistry this spring. Speaking to a friend about Leah at a social gathering, I later overheard her regarding "other people's overachieving children." I thought of the attitude of my own mother, may she rest in peace, toward childrearing.

How many times did I hear her pronounce, "Every child is gifted. The role of the parent is to create an environment in which the gift can thrive, then get out of the way." I internalized her philosophy, always treating my children as if they were gifted. They each lived up to the expectation.

Richard took Leah to Germany four years ago and helped her settle in. Even though our other two children and their spouses had visited, neither of us had. I did not want it on my Mom Résumé that my daughter was in Germany for four years and I did not visit once. Since our mediation practice slows down in December, we decided it would be the best time to visit.

Richard always cites two reasons when asked why he left Indiana: "summer and winter." We are a Midwest couple who thrive in our transplantation to the California sunshine. "Layers," I was told; "dress in layers." Munich in December became a dress rehearsal for our January trip to Indiana, enabling us to survive the cold in both locations.

We spent two jam-packed weekends with Leah and her husband, Ian, in the Bavarian capital. We walked everywhere, negating the effects of the delicious fresh rolls from the corner bakery that constituted our daily breakfasts.



Glockenspiel of New Town Hall, Munich. All photos by Richard Zimmerman.



Miriam Zimmerman (right) with daughter, Leah (left) at the Leaflets of the White Rose Resistance movement, ceramic reproductions etched in the stones of the Hans and Sophie Scholl Plaza, a permanent memorial at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

First on our short list of must-see was the Jewish Museum, community center and synagogue in St. Jacob's Platz near the city center. I noticed that it was "Saint" Jacob's Platz in the official literature, and simply "Jacob's Platz" in the Jewish literature. "It's a Catholic country, Mom," Leah admonished me; "Get over it."

We viewed both the permanent exhibit about Jewish identity in Munich and the traveling exhibit, entitled, "typical! Clichés of Jews and Others." The latter exhibit documented prejudice and stereotyping not just of Jews but also of other ethnicities. For such a small space, the art made a powerful impact. For more information, the museum's website is: www.juedisches-museum-muenchen.de.

In the museum store, I picked up a guidebook titled *Munich: 1933-1945: Past Traces of German History*. It was a concise guide to all the buildings and places in Munich and its environs that had significance under National Socialism (the Nazi era). Complete with map and index, the book helped us discover that this bank building, such as the State Bank of Bavaria, was the Gestapo Headquarters or that square, the Königsplatz, was the site of the infamous book burnings.

The book expanded my appreciation of Munich not only as the birthplace of the Nazi movement but also as the subsequent center of Nazi party administration. So many buildings in the city center had significance during the Third Reich. We accidentally came across a monument erected in memory of all the victims of National Socialism. Looking it up in the guidebook, we learned that it is topped by an "eternal flame of freedom [that] burns inside a symbolic prison cell."

Since both Ian and Leah work (very hard) during the week, we decided to

spend the intervening weekdays in another European capital. Prague beat out Budapest and Vienna for our tourist dollars.

On Monday morning, we took the ICE (Intercity Express) train to Nuremberg, where later in the afternoon we would catch the express bus to Prague. We allowed enough hours in Nuremberg to visit the new Documentation Centre and Courtroom 600 in the Palace of Justice, just opened to the public in Nov. 2010. The Allies took over the entire Palace of Justice at the end of the war because of its 530 offices and 80 courtrooms and because the Palace was largely undamaged by Allied bombing. As the city of the national Nazi Party rallies and the Nuremberg racial laws, Nuremberg was chosen for the trials of high-ranking Nazi officials because of its symbolic and propaganda value.

Both the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 and the Nazi Doctors' Trial of 1946 took place in Courtroom 600. Still a working courtroom, no visitors are admitted if court is in session. We sat in the visitor's gallery in the room where for the first time anywhere, the charge of crimes against humanity was invoked, since the courtroom was not currently needed.



Monument in Munich dedicated to all the Victims of National Socialism – (L-R) Leah and Miriam.

Awed by its wood-paneled elegance and marble sculptures that adorned the entryway into the room where so many crimes came to be documented, we breathed in lessons from history that should guide countries and their leaders in the future. Unfortunately, the wall-sized world map of post-Holocaust genocides in the Documentation Centre proved that the slogan "Never again!" remains a theory; lessons from the Holocaust have not been learned by world leaders.

In my Holocaust class, I emphasize the Nuremberg Trials and the resulting Nuremberg Code of Ethics. Every student should know that current ethical restraints on research using human subjects evolved from the Judgment of this Court of the Nazi Doctors' Trial.

(see Zimmerman, page NAT 12)



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Stranger than fiction

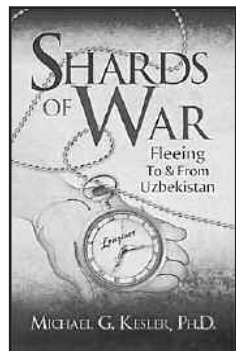
It has been my custom to write about musical/religious ideas or to review CDs that have some relationship to these ideas. I am going to make an exception this time. I was asked to review a book by Michael Kesler titled *Shards of War*. It is published by Strategic Book Group. "Truth" is said to be "stranger than fiction." This story, as incredible as it is, is a thousand or more times stranger than any yarn of fiction.

The story is about two teenagers (the author, aged 16, and his sister, 19, at the start of the story) who stayed one step ahead of the advancing German army in 1941 as they fled their home in Dubno, Poland, now Ukraine, deep into the Soviet Union. Often near starvation, they survived by their wits and by the skin of their teeth in a variety of situations that should have killed other less resourceful folk. Mr. Kesler relates that his father gave him his gold watch prior to leaving home, telling him that it might save his life. Waiting in line to purchase a ticket to leave Stalingrad by boat (a city under siege by the Germans), he dozed off in the hot sun, and a young thief stole his watch. In the ensuing chase, he lost his place in line and his chance of escape. But shortly thereafter, the boat struck a mine and all aboard perished. The watch did indeed save his life.

Another episode that stands out (among many others) is that he eventually was conscripted into the Soviet Army and separated from his beloved sister Luba. Losing all contact with him, Luba began a desperate search and was able to track him down and arrange for him to go AWOL. It turns out that many units like his were being deployed by the Soviets to march through (and thus clear) mine fields left by the retreating Germans.

This tale is chock full of incredulous episodes, none of which is more arresting than their return to their devastated hometown after the war, witnessing the mass graves of all its 8,000 Jews, and subsequent travel to a displaced persons camp in West Germany, where the author enrolls as a student and is awarded a B'nai Brith Hillel scholarship to Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He eventually earned advanced degrees in engineering from MIT and New York University.

This book was copyrighted in 2010 and deserves to be included in any study of



ZIMMERMAN

(continued from page NAT 11)

To this day, institutional review boards of universities and hospitals enforce such ethical codes. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has a powerful exhibit to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Doctors' Trial: www.ushmm.org/research/doctors. For more information on Courtroom 600 and its Documentation Centre, see <http://museums.nuremberg.de/courtroom600/>.

The express bus from Nuremberg to Prague lasted about four hours during which I mercifully slept. En route, no one requested to see either of my passports (I enjoy both U.S. and German citizenship). We arrived on a snowy Monday night; no surprise, as the snow rarely stopped during our four-day visit.

On Tuesday, we took the highly recommended Wittmann tour of Terezin (Theresienstadt), Hitler's "model" concentration camp. Now I can tell students what it was like to be in the camp in the dead of winter, though I was dressed warmly. On Wednesday, we hired the same tour guide, whose father and uncle were survivors of Terezin, to show us the old Jewish Quarter of Prague.

We walked through the tiny Jewish cemetery, the oldest in Europe, dating back to the 1439 burial of Rabbi and poet Avigdor Kara, and home of up to 200,000 graves (estimate). Our guide explained that stacked graves, from four to twelve layers each, permitted such a high density. The graveyard had room for only 12,000 tombstones, literally packed in, wall to wall. We visited four synagogues, most of which were museums, and only one of which is still in use as a working synagogue. That the Quarter is largely empty of Jews reminded us of what was lost in the Holocaust.

On Thursday, we took a self-guided tour of the castle of Prague. With no guide to help us, we figured everything out for ourselves with much effort. Maps did not help us ask for directions because of the unpronounceable Czech language. In frustration, Richard observed that the Czech language needed more vowels.

Somewhere on the way back to the hotel, I was pick-pocketed and lost both

the Holocaust. It is compelling reading, and I put the book down only reluctantly until I finished reading it. In this case, God truly helped those who helped themselves. There may be some who might come to the conclusion that Dr. Kesler's book is a work of fiction, that it stretches one's imagination a bit too far. To them I would state that should the author have had one heck of an imagination, if the episodes related in this book did not happen to him, it does not strain incredulity to believe that they may surely have happened to others.

From the many details written as part of this narrative, each incident becomes (see Gold, page NAT 19)

my passports. Instead of enjoying a Pilsner and traditional Czech food in what had become our favorite Prague restaurant, the Kolkovna, we spent our last night in the police station filling out a theft report. Time well-spent; having an official police report surely expedited my obtaining an emergency replacement passport at the U.S. Consulate in Munich the following Monday.

On Friday, because of the extreme cold (rumors circulated that a track in the north had cracked causing a domino effect), trains were late all over Germany, delaying our return ICE train to Munich. Instead, we were rerouted on three local legs, necessitating waiting on outdoor platforms in the freezing snow, for trains with uncertain arrival times. Without my passports, I felt stateless and anxious, hoping that no authority would want to see my papers. Fortunately, no one asked.

The same weather conditions that affected our return to Munich wreaked havoc for Anke Luhr who had to delay her trip from Hannover to Munich to see us. Anke was our last *au pair*, chosen over 30 years ago in part so she could speak German to me and my children. A colleague put me in touch with Anke just after my trip to Germany in the early 1980s. That pilgrimage to Germany with my father, z"l, motivated me to embrace my German heritage. Dad wanted to show my sister and me his roots near Essen and to say *Kaddish* over the graves of his grandparents. Since that trip, Germany has mysteriously captured my imagination and energies, culminating in my becoming a German citizen and helping my three children to do the same. That my daughter has become fluent in German is a source of enormous pride to me.

Although I was not good about responding to Anke's letters back then, the closeness of living for five months with a family of three small children remained. Google helped me find Dr. Anke Luhr of Hannover who responded to my letter with pictures and eager enthusiasm. She wanted to bring her husband and almost nine-year-old daughter Olivia to Munich to visit us.

Truncated by the weather, her short visit was none the less enjoyably intense. Thirty years melted away like the snow as the weather improved. We reminisced and inquired about each other's family and learned about her medical practice as an eye doctor in Hannover and as a medical researcher.

Her adorable daughter Olivia had so much personality and warmed up to us considerably. Despite initial shyness, she held Richard's hand as we walked through the *Marienplatz*, magically arriving at the right time to see the *Glockenspiel* of the New Town Hall perform the *Schäffertanz* (Cooper's Dance). Olivia and Richard competed to see who could find and eat the biggest icicles, hanging everywhere from eaves and trees.

We watched Olivia and her mom skate at the open-air rink at Karlsplatz,

consummately circling the ice like pros. With expressive eyes, Olivia eloquently begged Leah to join them. "How can you say 'no' to that face?" Richard asked rhetorically. I wondered if Anke retained any parenting insights from her months with us, then decided that having such a wonderful daughter so many years later was all on her and her husband's parenting skills. We could claim no credit. Anke was just out of *gymnasium* (high school) when she was with us, a mere girl of 18 or 19. Here she was, a mature mother and physician, skating on the ice with her charming daughter.

Leah declined to skate, pleading wobbly ankles. I, too, wobbled the few times I tackled the ice in the early years of my mothering career, usually at some child's birthday party where moms were invited to stay. I hope Leah has inherited my best traits as well as my lack of proficiency on the ice. Her math and science skills must have come from her dad. How can a mother ensure the best for her children?

We sipped hot mulled wine, available everywhere at this time of the year, and watched from the top of the temporary bleachers as mother and daughter enjoyed the ice. Nothing is purer or more direct than the laugh of a soon to be nine-year-old, expressing sheer delight.

We returned to California in late December, outracing weather that threatened once again to close the airports of Europe and the East Coast. Our son Joshua and his wife Erin joined our daughter Rebecca and her husband Jason for a family dinner with us. Belatedly, we celebrated Chanukah, two December birthdays, and our anniversary, all on one night, resulting in an obscene amount of wrapping paper.

My annual lament: What this family needs is a summer birthday to celebrate. In 2011, my wish will come true. Erin's due date for our first grandchild is in July. It's a girl! Of course, we are thrilled and look forward to being grandparents.

From Aunt Esther's generation to Erin's unborn daughter, all mothers hope and pray for the best for their children, with or without a *pushke*. My heartfelt prayer as my children were growing up follows: "Please, dear G-d, these are German-Jewish children, an endangered species. Help them achieve the potential of the gifts You have given them. On behalf of the interrupted lives of their forbears, make their lives all the more joyful and successful. Help me teach them faith in You, O G-d, so they will know they will always have You even when I can no longer mother them.

"Let them not become hardened by the punishments of life, but may they forever be guided by Your Love and Wisdom. I ask for these blessings for these beautiful children, so vulnerable and open. May they always be open to You."

Dr. Miriam L. Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, Calif. She can be reached at mzimmerman@ndnu.edu. ★



Media Watch

By Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel

Casino Jack and Little Fockers

Casino Jack may well be the only film in which a worldly Jew who is not a rabbi insists upon eating kosher food. The problem is that the film's main character, Jack Abramoff (Kevin Spacey in a wonderfully energetic performance), a high-powered Washington lobbyist, makes the request for kosher food, and for a private cell, while being carted off to prison.

According to this "reality-based" film, Abramoff received large payoffs from the Chippewa Native American tribe by guaranteeing that he would block other tribes from establishing rival casinos. Abramoff is depicted as requesting that Ralph Reed, the conservative religious leader, organize Congressional opposition to the other tribes. He reassures the American Indians that he knows what it is like to be a "persecuted minority." Worse yet, he seeks legislation to abet the sweatshops in which his partner is deeply invested.

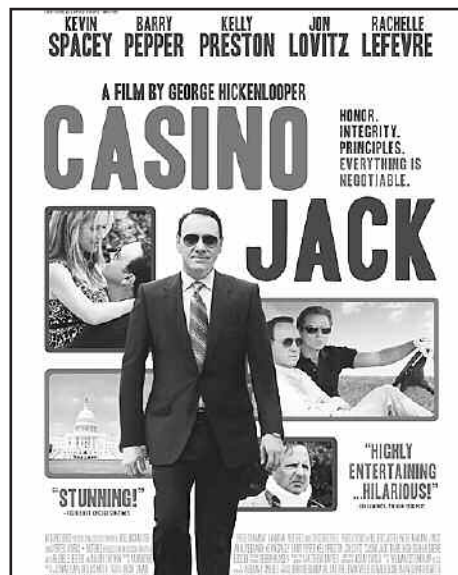
In this film, Abramoff lives the flamboyant life of the super rich, justifying his excesses, one must suppose, with the need to have money to raise five children and to send them all to day schools, and even to build a new, more progressive day school. He does daring things, such as buying night goggles from the Russians to send off to Israel to help the Jewish State in its struggle.

Despite his community involvements, however, he manages to be totally self-centered: "You should have been thinking of me. I'm your priority."

Abramoff is depicted as cynical about government: "Washington is Hollywood with ugly faces." He is not very loyal to the conservatives whom he has been courting. He takes an opportunity – or rather director George Hickenlooper and screenwriter Norman Snider do – to express regrets about "getting George W. Bush re-elected." The film credits him with bringing down Senator DeLay and other conservative politicians.

Though "religious" and dedicated to the religious upbringing of his children and of the other children in his Jewish community, this film's Abramoff lacks grace and self-control and caters to clients who peddle smut. His ethical credo is that "God wants us to be financially liquid." Often when he introduces himself to new people he adds more information than most people want to hear: "I work out every single day."

In *Casino Jack*, Abramoff's selfish and bombastic behavior does provoke anti-Semitic comments. DeLay is depicted as



lamenting his coming fate: "to be brought down by a no good ugly Jew." A conscientious Native American leader, whose vociferous opposition to Abramoff leads the Jewish lobbyist to get him fired, phones Abramoff at one point and makes a crack about being the "rabbi of the synagogue board," implying that Abramoff will answer to moral forces that the Jewish community has obviously not brought to bear upon him.

Yet, as this film does point out, Abramoff has been as immoral as his clients and enablers within the Native American and political communities have allowed him to be. The former conspired against other Indian tribes, unwilling to share the wealth, thus enabling Abramoff to play up to other tribes. And the politicians considered only the money and the public relations coups, not to mention the votes that Abramoff brought them.

Though *Casino Jack* suggests that Abramoff's erstwhile supporters may have their ambivalences toward Jews, it does not depict Abramoff as a religious hypocrite or as a greedy guy per se. He comes across here as a self-centered, self-promoting, pushing-the-envelope, high-stakes personality, a gambler, who happens to observe Judaism in a traditional manner. The suggestion is even made that Abramoff, who quotes bits and pieces of motion picture dialogue at every term, is incapable of any religious (or other) depth beyond the content of the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof* which, he says at one point in this movie, "made me a real Jew."

Abramoff is treated as a fool here, and not as a hypocrite. His wife (Kelly Preston) is depicted as a hypocrite of sorts, in that she enables him to spend and does ask about the source of the money even though she is smart enough to express concerns about these and other issues. She is also depicted as not strong in her religious commitment. When their financial and social world comes crashing down, she responds by smoking on the Sabbath in a bathtub, as though taking a Sabbath rest from the Sabbath and its rituals will provide a safe and comfortable zone of escape.

The ugliest portrayal of a Jew is reserved for a mattress salesman named Adam Kidan (Jon Lovitz), whom Abramoff enlists as a money bags but who turns out to be devoid of both funds and of any moral scruples. According to the film, Kidan resorted to gangland murder in order to eliminate a casino owner who opposed him and beat him up (while shouting anti-Semitic epithets at him), and in order to help Abramoff, who was shocked at his antics but does not report him. The only philo-Semitism in the film is the sincere, affectionate declaration of the Italian mobster behind the killing, "I had an uncle who was half Jewish." By then, however, one wonders whether the Jews in this film are worthy of affection, let alone respect.

But the writers and producers don't seem to care. Their Abramoff is no more and no less than the Jewish buffoon, an in-vogue film commodity perceived by the filmmakers as unthreatening and not to be taken seriously. Nowadays, when it comes to Jewish characters in film and TV, not-to-be-taken-seriously is confused with comedy or with "ethnic humor." In such a climate, how will the real Jewish community come to be regarded?

Little Fockers

If there is a "moral" or a message to *Little Fockers*, it is that sons-in-law should not joke about their fathers-in-law during speaking gigs posted on the internet, especially if said son-in-law is Jewish and has the Gentile father-in-law from Hell. The current film "builds" upon the characters in the previous movies in the series, *Meet the Parents* (2000) and *Meet the Fockers* (2004).

The current Focker farce has spawned a new generation, five-year-old twins, and a self-aborted heart-attack has only served to strengthen Grandpa Jack Byrnes obsession with the purity of his genealogical line. For some reason, perhaps because he is played by Robert DeNiro, Byrnes comes across as a self-styled Italian mob don. The stars (some of them replacements the third time around) are poster people for graceful aging from the forties and up: DeNiro, Ben Stiller as Greg Focker, Teri Polo as Pam Byrnes Focker, Blythe Danner as Deena Byrnes, and Dustin Hoffman and Barbra Streisand as Bernie and Roz Focker.

Greg, a male nurse, is living in Chicago and preparing to move into a house with his wife and twin children. He is being stalked by a shapely but unhinged pharmaceutical representative (Jessica Alba) who brings him speaking gigs with hopes of seducing him. His wife's wealthy, New Age ex-boyfriend, Kevin (Owen Wilson), who still holds a torch for her and bears a tattoo portrait of her, further complicates things, especially when he offers his estate for an ostentatious birthday party for the twins.

Greg has matured somewhat, and is a bit less bumbling than he used to be, but only a bit. Writers John Hamburg and Larry Stuckey and director Paul Weitz

still regard him as fodder for slapstick. His parents come across as a little less coarse. (Maybe they have matured, too.) But they are still rather vulgar. Roz now has her own talk show on sex, and speaks all too freely about her son's waning sex interest. When she first appears, she says she has sent musical condoms as an "early Chanukah present."

Hamburg, Stuckey and Weitz go out of their way to focus on the young children's ignorance of Jewish words and concepts. When Grandma Focker tries to explain to them that men are soft on the inside while hard on the outside, she uses the example of a *knish*, but, seeing no recognition of the term or the food, switches to a peanut butter and jelly on burnt toast metaphor. Yet the filmmakers find it (equally?) amusing to have Kevin use Jewish terms and expressions. When Roslyn appears at the birthday party he has thrown for her grandchildren, he gushes, "Roslyn, what a *mitzvah* that you could make it to the party." Kevin also tells the grandchildren, "Henry and Samantha, today you are five," echoing the old bar mitzvah charge, "Today you are a man."

His daughters' husbands are disappointing to Jack. His other son-in-law has abandoned the family, so he dubs Greg the heir apparent even though the latter's (Jewish) ancestors were "only peasants and peddlers."

At one point, Greg, a nurse, actually engages in fisticuffs with his recovering-from-a-heart-attack father-in-law, who has hit him first. The filmmakers regard this as fair, I suppose, because the older man was once a CIA operative. Also, they want to contrast fathers. Though a medical professional, he ignores his own father's advice to "smother" his father-in-law "with kisses" so that "he will be putty in your hands." Bernie advises: "Love, love, love."

Greg demonstrates fidelity and moral restraint even though he is, we are told ad nauseam, sexually frustrated by the time-constraints on new parents. When he ends up in compromising positions, it is due to slapstick circumstances. Kevin, in contrast, will lock lips with anyone if the opportunity comes along. Greg's parents are moral, faithful but vulgar. Though liberal and "liberated," they would sooner use vulgarisms in Yiddish for sexual acts with each other than indulge in illicit sex with others. Is there some suggestion here that Jews are more sexually faithful as a group? If so, how account for Jack's straight-laced policing of alleged infidelities in the family? Or is Gentile morality simply a comical obsession?

The film culminates in a "Christmakah" celebration. The senior Fockers give Jack a *yarmulke* so that his wife can disingenuously call it "one of those little Jewish hats." Jack's real present is learning that he is 1/23 "Israelite." But how explain that he still does not want to see the family any more "Fockerized" (read: Judaized) than (see Gertel, page NAT 15)

Letters to the Editor

Freedom of the Press – The Post & Opinion encourages readers to send letters. All letters to the editor should be addressed to The Jewish Post & Opinion, 1111 East 54th Street, Suite 119, Indianapolis, IN 46220, or by e-mail: jpostopinion@gmail.com.

Dear Editor,

I visited your newspaper office in 1997 while attending the collegiate basketball championship called the Final 4, which was in Indianapolis that year. The team of which I am a fan, Arizona, actually won the championship, so it was a great weekend for me. I visited your offices because I had read *The Jewish Post & Opinion* for many years. I do not remember how I got started, so I decided to visit. I met an older gentleman in the office, who I now know was Gabriel Cohen, z"l, your father, and we had a nice visit during which he told me he ran track at the University of North Carolina so he was an athlete and interested in the Final 4 as well.

I'm writing you as I want you to know that there is a Jewish presence in Southern Arizona, which I think you would be interested in hearing about. I was born and have lived all my life in Nogales, Ariz., except for four years attending UCLA and then two years as a draftee into the Army after graduating college. Nogales is right on the border of Mexico, 60 miles south of Tucson.

The history of Nogales, at least the Jewish aspect, should be interesting to your readership because the founder of Nogales, Jacob Isaacson, was Jewish and there has always been a Jewish presence in Nogales right from the beginning. Isaacson realized there was a business opportunity when the railroad from Mexico met with the railroad from the U.S. at what is now Nogales, even though there was no community or anything except a railroad depot at that spot in the desert. He set up a large tent, which is now believed to have been on both sides of the border, but there was no fence so who knew or cared. Most Jews who followed in the coming years were merchants, but of course there were other professions as well.

When I look back at our history, it makes me proud to realize that the Jews of Nogales never developed an enclave unto themselves but participated in every important facet of life in the community be it economic, political, social, in education or health. For example, other than Isaacson, we have had two Jewish mayors, and my brother, Robert (Bob), was a city councilman for 12 years. Economically it is obvious, in education we have had three members on the local public school board (my father in 1938, Zellie Capin, and myself). Socially we have participated in all community social events and in health,

my brother kept the only local hospital open when things were difficult, and this hospital is now functioning well. Because we were always active within the community, we have always been considered an important part of Nogales and there is no anti-Semitism or at least none prevalent.

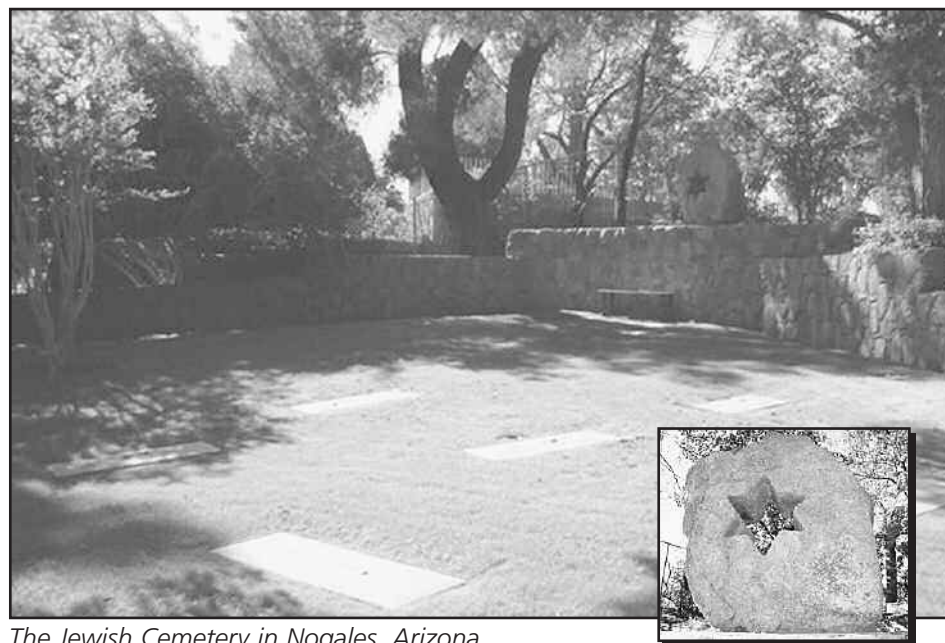
There are many examples of how well we are accepted as friends and members of the community, but I will mention only one. My brother, Bob, passed away at age 64 in 1994. The morning of his funeral a conservative Mexican Catholic priest called Bob's wife, Roberta, and asked for permission to pray at his gravesite in our lovely Jewish cemetery. She immediately called me and I told her that it was okay as far as I was concerned. I told her I would tell the rabbis that were coming from Tucson that the priest was coming to pray and I would have the rabbis tell me when it would be appropriate for the priest to pray so I could tell him.

This priest was in charge of the religious part of the Girl's Orphanage in Nogales, Sonora Mexico. With the help of the Lion's Club, my brother had completely reconstructed and refurbished it. My family has always supported this orphanage since my mother started helping in the 1920s and they loved Bobby. So not only did the priest come but all the nuns came as well. Can you picture a Jewish funeral at a Jewish cemetery where a Catholic priest and many nuns attended and prayed? As I have said many times "only in Nogales." At least half of those at the cemetery were Catholic because they had been friends all our lives and were comfortable with the priest praying. The other half were Jewish from Nogales and Jewish friends from Tucson. The funeral service was held at our high school auditorium because of the crowd of an estimated 750, of which most were not Jewish, but there were only 200 to 250 at the cemetery afterward. I mention this to give you the idea of how we are considered a part of the community.

How do you participate in all community events, teach your children to enjoy and respect the Mexican culture as they too live in this Mexican environment, but yet maintain a Jewish Identity? That is the problem facing Jewish parents all these years because our children's friends and their first dates were non-Jews. As an example, most of us living in Nogales are Reform but my family knew that Friday



(L-R) Paul Bracker, his son's Lee and Keith, and his daughter Debbie Senday.



The Jewish Cemetery in Nogales, Arizona.

night was special and we gathered as a family for dinner where my mom lit candles, and prayers were recited over the wine and challah. We went to our Temple in Tucson for the holidays and celebrated Passover with over 40 family members gathering for seder. We were schlepped to Temple and had Sunday classes in Nogales as well. My two eldest siblings were confirmed in Temple, but the younger three of us could not get to Tucson because of rationing of gas and tires during World War II.

Seventeen of the children in my offspring's generation were bar and bat mitzvah, including my two sons. Six were from my family in Nogales, and the others were mostly my cousin's children and a few other Jewish families. We were told Jewish tales and in turn told them ourselves. All the time, the children are reminded that they are Jewish, and this is how we do our best to maintain Jewish identity.

I mentioned belonging to our Temple in Tucson. My parents joined Temple Emanu-El right after moving to Nogales in 1924. This Temple is the first Jewish congregation established in the Arizona territory before it became a state. This was 87 years ago and we belong to this day. My daughter, Deborah (Debbie), takes her 4-year-old daughter to Sunday school in Tucson every Sunday. It is a 130-mile round trip, but Cydni loves going. Although she is only 4, she can recite the Hebrew prayers for the Sabbath and is learning the Hebrew alphabet. She will answer you in Spanish or English, whichever language you speak to her.

I also mentioned our lovely Jewish cemetery, which we have because my father refused to be buried in the Tucson's Jewish cemetery. He said he had lived in Nogales 50 years, not Tucson, and he wanted his grandchildren or great-grandchildren to walk by his grave and ask who was this Charlie Bracker? So what were we to do but buy a section of the Nogales cemetery that had never been used, and we built a lovely cemetery,

which we love as it is beautiful, peaceful and it is just nice to be able to visit when we choose. I could tell you many stories about this cemetery that was built in the 1970s, but I'll only mention one. The whole Nogales City Cemetery, including the land of our cemetery, was a gift to the city by a Jew, Leopold Efraim, who lived in Nogales before 1900.

I haven't mentioned much about my family except that we were five siblings, and I was the baby so although everyone was loved. I being the baby, I believed I was loved the most. Both my parents were born in the U.S., children born to East European Jewish parents who came to the USA in the 1880s. We had a very close and interesting upbringing on the Border of Mexico where education, maturing and responsibility were instilled at an early age.

We learned Spanish at the same time we learned English. Four of us went to Mexico City to perfect our Spanish early on – Harvey in 1937 at age 13, Adele also at 13 along with Bob at 11, and me at 14. Whereas the other three went to a Boarding School, I arrived at Mexico City's airport with pesos in my pocket in 1950, but had to find a family to live with and a school to go to. I was smarter at 14 then I am now at 75, and I immediately contacted the Jewish Community and they found me a Jewish family to live with and a wonderful Jewish school to go to, Colegio Israelita. It is not a Hebrew Day school as all classes were in Spanish except one in Yiddish. There were 1,000 Jewish kids in this school, boys and girls from kindergarten to *secundario* (high school). It was wonderful.

My siblings and I all went to college. I attended UCLA, my siblings attended University of Southern California, University of California in Berkeley, University of Michigan, Columbia University in New York, and Kings College in England.

So there you have it. I could mention too many stories like my Dad working on the Panama Canal while it was being (see Letter, page NAT 19)

BY HAROLD JACOBSON AND ROSE KLEINER

The Great Hotels of Israel: The Inbal Jerusalem and Rimonim Galei Kinnereth

It is rare in the history of hotel construction that the opposition mounted by local residents results in the creation of something more beautiful than that originally envisaged by its architect.

Yet that is precisely what happened in early 1980 when a famous and much-honored Israeli architect drew up the design for what was to become a high-rise hotel adjacent to Jerusalem's Liberty Bell Garden and Independence Park.

The land on which the Laromme Hotel was to be built was owned by one of the churches in Jerusalem and was leased by the Jerusalem municipality. Residents in the area, one of the most prestigious in Jerusalem, lodged an official protest against the construction of a 20-story structure on the grounds that it would adversely affect the Jerusalem skyline.

In 1982 when the Laromme welcomed its first guests, the projected high-rise had been reconfigured into a gracious and highly original low-rise, which not only pleased the residents of the area but has attracted the plaudits of hotel designers and the international guests who have been visiting the hotel, in its new incarnation, the Inbal, for almost 30 years.

Those guests have included Bill Clinton, Henry Kissinger, Condoleezza Rice, Mikhail Gorbachev, Madeleine Albright, Dennis Ross, Al Gore, George Mitchell and half a hundred other distinguished Israeli and international political figures.

The Inbal is unique among Israel's 5-star hostels because, despite its 287 guestrooms and suites, it manages to convey an intimacy through its triangular pyramidal configuration and the way it blends in perfectly with its environment.

The white Jerusalem stone structure reflects that special Jerusalem light



The Inbal Hotel Jerusalem.

during the day and at night, a special iridescence. The foyer and reception area leads to a magnificent inner courtyard, used during warm weather as a supplemental dining area and during *Sukkot* as a canopied communal *Sukka*.

The Inbal's guest rooms, appointed with every modern amenity, are located on three sides of the courtyard, and room windows there offer a view either of the courtyard or vistas of the old city and the Jerusalem hills.

Walkers will find it easy to access all the main historical sites in Jerusalem from the Inbal because of its central location. For more distant attractions, cabs are readily available outside the hotel.

For obvious reasons, the Inbal is a favorite venue for weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, international conferences and Jewish holiday and festival observances. On Shabbat it offers in-house services.

The Inbal's famed kosher breakfasts, a cornucopia of at least 30 different items, may be taken inside its spacious dining room, in the adjacent courtyard or on an outdoor terrace that encircles part of the side of the hotel.

Tiberias's Rimonim Galei Kinnereth

Tiberias, Israel — The Hebrew name for one of Israel's best kept secrets in the hotel world is Rimonim Galei Kinnereth, which can only be imperfectly rendered in English as "Pomegranates Waves of the Sea of Galilee."

Nestled on the southwest border of Tiberias (top right in the above picture), the hotel with the euphonious Hebrew name, backs on to Israel's majestic Sea of Galilee (*Kinnereth* in Hebrew) with an awe-inspiring view of both the water and the looming Golan Heights rising from the eastern edge of the *Kinnereth*.

Tiberias and its charms have become a year-round resort area drawing thousands of tourists not merely because of its fishing, boating, swimming, hiking and alpinist activities but also because of its historical resonance to Jews, Muslims and Christians whose attachment to the city and its environs dates back to Biblical times.

The Rimonim Hotel and Spa has 120 ultra modern and spacious rooms with spectacular yet calming views of the water. The spa features 11 treatment rooms and a glass-dome-enclosed circular thermal mineral water pool that juts out onto the verdant back

lawn of the hotel. In addition to a fitness center, the Rimonim also offers Shiatsu, reflexology and assorted mud therapies all administered by a team of expert practitioners.

The hotel's outdoor dining area, where a traditional Israeli breakfast is served (35 different hot and cold varieties of eggs, cereals, cheese, salads and coffees) looks out on the Sea of Galilee, a private beach and a swimming pool complex. Morning coffee served on this outdoor terrace is a serendipitous experience.

It is possible to circumnavigate on foot the whole city of Tiberias (population 43,000) from the Rimonim, as this visiting writer did, in 40 minutes and absorb the terrain and history of the city and its encrustations of Jewish, Muslim and Christian architecture and culture.



Rimonim Galei Kinnereth Hotel in Tiberias, Israel on the Sea of Galilee.

Founded in the year 20 of the Common Era and named by Herod after the Roman Emperor Tiberius, the city, which had a Jewish majority in the Middle Ages, is considered one of the four main holy cities of Israel along with Jerusalem, Safed and Hebron. Christian sites such as the vestiges of crusader fortresses, ancient churches and mosques abound in the city. References to the Galilee area are often featured in Christian scriptures.

Tiberias, or *Tyverya* as it is known in Hebrew, was also the center of Jewish scholarship in antiquity and was the area in which the great compilations of Jewish law and lore, *Mishna* and the Jerusalem *Talmud*, it is said, were first redacted.

The city had a very chequered and fragile existence after the rise of Christianity and the invasion of Palestine by successive waves of conquerors. Despite this, Jewish scholarship flourished intermittently in Tiberias and was the home of the famous Massoretes, the scribes who definitively fixed the Hebrew text of the Bible.

Christian and Muslim chroniclers were united in describing the beauties of Tiberias, its hot springs, dazzling mosques and churches – and its hot and humid summer temperatures – which explains why it remains today the ideal resort location even as late as late November when bathers plunge freely into the waters of the Sea of Galilee. In 1934 the city was hit by a violent earthquake, and engineers employed by the British Mandatory officials reconfigured the western shoreline of Tiberias. Today the resulting promenade with its boutique hotels, boat slips and recreational centers still remain the principle walkway for tourists. ★



News

(continued from page NAT 3)

University and former high school students I taught at the Moshe Aaron Yeshiva High School of South River, N.J. The high school students were 17 at the time; they are now 28 years old. I developed the course and the curriculum for the school. In addition, the *Siddur* includes poems written by survivors, Jewish educators and rabbis. Themes within the *Siddur* include survival, where was G-d where was man, the Hell endured and the search for hope. Also included are Yiddish and Hebrew songs.

Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg, *chaimdov@aol.com*. ★



BEN-MORDECAI

(continued from page NAT 5)

modern translators assumed the ancient scribes confused one word for the other. But the modern "correction" is the error.

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. His 20-year-old *ocicat* has, sadly, gone to her reward. Email: *Seth@Vayomer Publishing.com*. ★



GERTEL

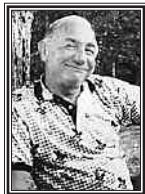
(continued from page NAT 13)

it is. What are the filmmakers projecting (in more ways than one) here?

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of 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 written for *The National Jewish Post & Opinion* since 1979. ★



The majestic, inner courtyard of the Inbal Hotel Jerusalem.



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

Was G-d a Libertarian?

There's no question that mountains of research have been directed to our bible. Every chapter, every verse. Lo, every word has been examined. Whole libraries have been devoted say to Leviticus or even a minor league prophet like Habbakuk. His mother, by the way, made a huge mistake in naming him. With a name like Habbakuk, who's gonna take him seriously? Amos, Jeremiah, even Hosiah – those are thundering names, well chosen to keep us on the paths of righteousness.

But I digress. The point is you can hardly come up with an ambiguity, a translated word, a cloudy situation that has not been addressed by rooms full of biblical scholars. The books alone would form a rainbow of mysteries from here to Jerusalem. Like: Why didn't Joseph write his papa as he thrived in Egypt? Why did David, G-d's chosen, behave so badly? Why did our creator zap Sodom and Gomorrah? There must have been ten innocents in the city limits! Did he not agree with Abraham that he would spare the Las Vegas of old if he found ten innocents? Why does Jacob marry the daughters of Lot, who seem to be idol worshipers? (Did not Rebecca steal her father's household idols – remember? Concealed in her saddlebags.) And the greatest mystery of all: Why did G-d try to kill Moses on the road from Midian to Egypt?

And on and on and on. Mysteries galore of translation, intent, and consistency, but always the truth. Never propaganda. And tons of commentaries from the Rashis, Maimonides, Ben Ezras, and similar seekers who over many centuries gave us the guide we call the Talmud.

But I think even a scribbler like me sees a puzzle that no one has addressed. Not even Rashi – and strangely enough it was brought to my attention by my cat. Don't smirk yet. The question: Why is it a free will world? Rashi even Maimonides would not touch that with a ten-foot yad! Why not more boundaries to make humankind perfect? Why not more hardwiring of the human heart?

Yes, my cat prompts the question. Just this morning it occurred. This common tabby cat, totally without mammalian distinction and in accordance with G-d's natural laws, delivered – unaided by gynecologist, midwife, or even a hospital sterile environment – three perfect miniature replicas of herself (and I suppose her anonymous lover, though I never met him).

So what, you say? Happens every day, you say? Big deal! Well, let's go back to Genesis. Every kindergarten kid knows the mechanics of pushing Eve unto the world's stage – one small rib. And we continue the chain of humanity with poor, short-lived Abel, murderous Cain, and Seth – who gets the briefest biography in history – basically, a replacement for Abel. It must be this way since all mankind can't be the descendants of the murderous Cain – right? An intelligent creator would never curse the generations to come with that legacy.

So, as we have read, the Lord has told the world's first newlyweds, "be fruitful and multiply." And he says the same to the animals. There may even be some more specific instructions that the first great matchmaker thought unnecessary to recite to Moses the scribe. Sure, as I recall the Talmud has a fulsome chapter on sex – but that came later.

So, we all know Eve's purpose. She would be the reigning half of the corporation of humanity. ("It is not good for man to be alone.") She should be a helper and a good listener, too, to the man with the missing rib. (I remind my wife of this constantly.)

The creator, whose consciousness is the cosmos, takes pains to provide a partner for man and incidentally – almost as a wayward second thought – a mechanism for survival of the species. But back to the cat.

The animals. What about the animals? The Lord fills up his world with animals. And he even tells them to be fertile and multiply. No multiplication, and the species disappears. He didn't take it upon himself to replenish the world with cats. That's up to the cats. With his power this could be automatic like grooming their coat – an obsession with every feline I ever met.

He utters not a word distinguishing male and female or recommending mating. He gives them no manuals like "Propagation for Dummies." He doesn't even instruct them to be holy like him. Evidently, there are no instructions – not even that rib trick that brought us Eve. The Creator stands aside. Free will, when it comes to reproduction, rules.

Still, somewhere in the brain of the cat, the mice behind the walls of my pantry, the mosquitoes on the patio, the termites nourished by my foundation, and the cocker spaniel that lives in my neighbor's backyard – there is an undefined, invisible, intangible command to make more cats, mice, dogs, termites, mosquitoes. The details of multiplication and fertility are not the subject of multiple speeches. The Designer of all life, human and animal, only says it once to the animals – as he did to Adam and Eve – with no details about how, when, or where. He does not announce it as divine goal. Maybe that smart snake instructed them. But somehow the creeping, crawling, swimming, flying things understood that



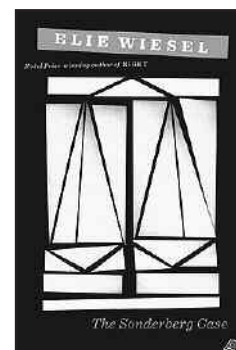
Book Review

BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Suspenseful Holocaust-related novel

The Sonderberg Case. By Elie Wiesel. Translated from the French by Catherine Temerson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 2010. Pp. 178. \$25.00.

With over 50 books to his illustrious credit, Elie Wiesel, who prefers to write in French and have his work translated, continues at age 82 to bless us with his multiple pursuits, including recently as a musician of his childhood songs and melodies. Indeed if anyone deserves to be known as "Our teacher and rabbi" in these unsettling times of post-holocaust perplexities for Jew and gentile, it is this humble yet honored survivor. He emerged from the "kingdom of the night" resolved to help save humanity, struggling with his shaken faith in his early classic *Night*, and contending with his brethren's



survival depended on procreation. Intuitively, they complied with the same impulse leveled on humans. In fact, they outdid us. The cat had triplets. Not many human mothers can do that. But the "why" question remains.

No divine laws mandating procreation. It comes from the impulse of the creature itself. How clever. Reproduction could be a natural axiom: like, every cat has four legs and two cute, pointed ears and it likes to lap cream or its equivalent. Else it dies. It has that freedom, too. The Creator made a democratic, nonregulatory world. There are no Czars. A world of choice for every species – even humankind. But maybe we need the choice – to reproduce – to do good or evil. To find our final destiny.

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

fate in Soviet captivity in *Jews of Silence*, ever faithful to his Jewish moorings and their universality.

Wiesel, a 1986 Nobel Peace Laureate – he should receive one for literature too – is on the very short list of those who serve as humanity's conscience. He courageously speaks for human rights in addition to his "Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanities," and academic work as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanity's at Boston University. Wiesel is a recipient of the United States Congressional Gold Medal along with the Presidential Medal of Freedom and is the founding chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Museum Council, among other prestigious honors. He is a humanitarian ambassador par excellence.

Wiesel's latest literary "home-run," *The Sonderberg Case*, is a suspenseful Holocaust-related novel, testimony to his unique situation of being at home both in the vineyard of Jewish knowledge as well as general philosophy and literature with the traditional Jewish penchant of responding to questions with questions, while spreading nuggets of humanizing wisdom. He converses equally at ease with Talmud and Kabbalah sages along with the likes of Voltaire, Camus and Gogol, masterfully utilizing the literary construction of tales within tales.

The book's protagonist, New Yorker Yedidiah ("God's friend"), gives up at his professor's urging a career on stage for one as a theater critic, teaching us that words count more than theatrical acts in a Jewish context, for "man is a book" (p.16). Wiesel himself was a journalist in Paris following World War II.

Assigned by his editor to cover a trial of 24-year-old Werner Sonderberg, a German student at New York University who is charged with murdering his uncle Hans Dunkelman, Yedidiah ponders Werner's seemingly contradictory response of "Guilty...and not Guilty" (p. 74).

Hans, who is really Werner's grandpa, is an unrepentant ex-Nazi officer of the notorious *Einsatzgruppen*, boasting to Werner of his murderous record and only regretting that Hitler lost the war with hope of yet a future victory. (My own mom's sister and husband and their three children were among the *Einsatzgruppen's* victims in Sarnay, the Ukraine, along with countless relatives between Minsk and Pinsk.)

Werner confronts his grandpa prior to Hans' apparent suicide, for depriving him and all German youth of normalcy by condemning them to eternal guilt. "Because of you, all of you, though we were born after the atrocities, we feel guilty. Because of you, my joy will never be unmitigated. Because of you, the child I see in his mother's arms makes me think of the children you sent to their deaths" (p.167). Werner's soulful anguish resonates in the sharing with Professor Wiesel of his German students

(see Zoberman, page NAT 19)

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Italian converts to Judaism in 1930s

The Jews of San Nicandro. By John A. Davis. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 256 Pages. \$30.

One manifestation of the unrest that characterized Europe between the two world wars was the proliferation of evangelical proselytizing in southern Italy. Among the locations for these efforts was the poor rural town of San Nicandro on the Adriatic coast. Most of its 16,000 inhabitants were agricultural workers with a surprising degree of literacy. Their poverty, especially in the 1930s, stimulated their search for religious experiences, leading to belief in magic; expansion of sects; and revival of folk religions. Groups of Pentecostals, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists and members of Catholic cults were active in the town. In either 1928 or 1930, one member of these groups, seeking converts, gave a copy of the Bible in Italian to San Nicandro resident Donato Manduzio. This led to a surprising series of events that form the basis for this book.

Manduzio kept a journal which became a major source of information for author Davis, an expert on Italian history which he teaches at the University of Connecticut. During World War I, Manduzio served in the Italian army; became ill; and returned to San Nicandro as a cripple. Lengthy stays in military hospitals gave him the opportunity to learn how to read and write. Supported by a pension, he read extensively, organized performances in his house, and became a popular faith healer. His reading of the Bible led him to reject Catholicism and Protestantism. Through dreams and visions, he became a Jew, convinced that he had been divinely appointed as "The Prophet of This Century." He inspired 19 adults and 30 children to follow him and to attend weekly prayer meetings on Saturday mornings. As leader of the group, he produced a Hebrew calendar and persuaded his followers to observe the Jewish holidays. Once he learned that there were other Jews in Italy, he worked hard to reach them. Most of the rest of the book is devoted to these efforts and what came of them.

One early result was a 1935 visit to San Nicandro by Jacques Faitlovich, a leading advocate for the Ethiopian Jews

who heard about Manduzio and his group. Convinced as to their authenticity as Jews, Faitlovich urged them to move to Palestine and he made some efforts on their behalf. A focus of their interaction with the Jewish authorities in Rome became seeking help to settle in Palestine. They were eager for formal conversion and succeeded in persuading the Chief Rabbi to send a physician to San Nicandro to circumcise the males in Manduzio's congregation.

World War II interfered with additional progress but did result in contact with Jewish Palestinian soldiers serving in the British army who became their advocates. This led eventually to the conversion of San Nicandro's Jews and, finally, after the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, to their settling in Israel. A few of them remained in Italy where several Jews are still to be found in San Nicandro.

The remarkable account of how a small number of Italians became Jews is set forth in this book with considerable verve by an accomplished writer. Davis also manages to tell a little about the tragedy of Jewish life in Italy under Mussolini and the triumph of Israel's founding. He demonstrates his extensive knowledge of Italian history and his diligent tenacity in digging out this compelling but barely known story about San Nicandro's Jews.

Fascinating story on history of netsuke art collection

The Hare with Amber Eyes. By Edmund de Waal. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. 354 Pages. \$26.

Although the author of this remarkable book is the son of a Church of England clergyman, he is the descendant on his mother's side of a Jewish family named Ephrussi. During the 19th century, the great wealth of the Ephrussis placed them in the same category as the Rothschilds. They were Odessa grain merchants who became European financiers with branches run by their sons in Vienna and Paris. One family member, Charles, was uninterested in business. Settling in Paris, he became a collector and a patron of the arts, hobnobbing with writers and painters. Proust made him one of the models for Charles Swann in *Remembrance of Things Past*. During the 1870s, when Japanese art became popular in France, Charles bought 264 netsuke, intricately carved, miniature figures made of ivory or wood, one of which gives the book its title. What happened to that collection and its owners until it

became the property of author de Waal is the fascinating story he tells.

A noted and skillful potter whose work is on display in many museums, de Waal is professor of ceramics at the University of Westminster, residing in London with his family. He devoted two years to the research for his book, traveling to Paris, Vienna, Tokyo, and Odessa. In Paris, he traces Charles's experiences, including the anti-Semitism he encountered, especially during the Dreyfus affair. De Waal follows the trail to Vienna where Charles sent the netsuke in 1899 to his cousin, Viktor, as a wedding present. Viktor married the Baroness Emmy Schey von Koromla, member of an aristocratic Jewish family. They live in an elaborate house with 17 servants and many rooms. The vitrine containing Charles's wedding present is placed in Emmy's dressing room.

Emmy and Viktor, de Waal's great-grandparents, have four children, including Ignace, known as Iggy, who eventually becomes the third owner of the netsuke. Before that occurs, the two World Wars intervene and the anti-Semitism, always latent in Austria, becomes lethal as Hitler takes over. This hideous history is recounted briefly but with all of its terror and horror. When the Nazis occupy Vienna and evict the Ephrussi family from their house, the netsuke are saved by one of their loyal servants, Anna, who hides the collection in her mattress. The four children wind up in Switzerland, Mexico, and the United States. Eventually, the oldest daughter, Elisabeth, a lawyer and a poet, who was de Waal's grandmother, gets to England. After the war ends, she visits Vienna and retrieves the netsuke. Her brother, Iggy, who served in the American army, comes to see her in 1947, en route to a job in Tokyo, and he takes the collection with him. De Waal later visits his great-uncle in Japan, sees the collection and finally inherits it. The netsuke are now in his English home.

This family saga covers several generations, many locations, and a great deal of history. It is bound together by the netsuke which have become a symbol of the family's turbulent experiences. Informative material is presented with considerable verve, gripping the reader's interest throughout. The thorough investigation conducted by the author results in an authoritative and authentic account. In less competent hands, the narrative might easily have been weighted down by the extensive material it covers. De Waal deftly avoids this by his unusual ability to write crisp and unpretentious prose. Some of the events described will be familiar to many readers. However, they are woven into an enlightening chronicle about a family that effectively dramatizes the recital, producing a book that is truly hard to put down.

Widower's evocative account of losing his wife

Say Her Name. By Francisco Goldman. New York: Grove Press, 2011. 351 Pages. \$24.

The tragic loss of a husband has been the heart-rending subject of several recent books including *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion, *Epilogue* by Anne Roiphe, and *A Widow's Story* by Joyce Carol Oates. In April, 2011, these poignant memoirs will be joined by a widower's evocative account of losing his wife when Grove Press releases Francisco Goldman's sensitive story, *Say Her Name*.

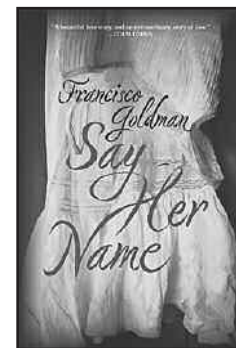
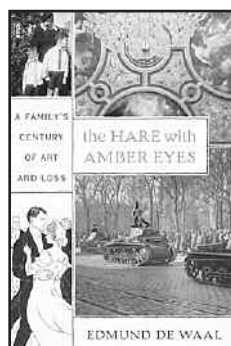
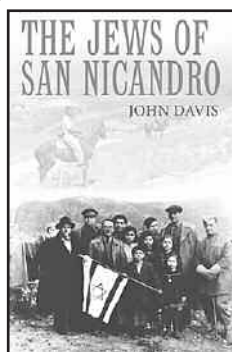
Goldman was born in Boston in 1954 to a Guatemalan mother and a Jewish father. His first three novels, *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992), *The Ordinary Seaman* (1997), and *The Divine Husband* (2004) were all highly regarded and received many well-deserved plaudits. Goldman's first non-fiction book, *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?* (2007), won considerable acclaim and several prizes. In addition to his books, Goldman has published short stories and articles in newspapers and magazines. Also, he teaches literature and creative writing. He lives in Brooklyn and Mexico City.

In 2005, Goldman married 28-year old Aura Estrada, a Mexican student and writer who was studying for her Ph.D. in Spanish-American literature at Columbia University. When they first met, they talked in Spanish and English. He told her that she spoke English like a New York Jew. She explained that she had learned English as a child by watching television, especially *Seinfeld*. They fell in love despite the substantial difference in their ages.

In 2007, a month before the second anniversary of their wedding, the happy couple was vacationing in a Mexican beach on the Pacific. Aura was surfing when a wave caught her and knocked her unconscious. By the time an air ambulance flew her to a hospital in Mexico City, it was too late to save her life. The awful details of this horrible accident and Aura's funeral are described in excruciating detail.

Goldman reviews his blissful relationship with his wife, displaying the depth of his grief as he recounts all aspects of their experiences without regard to sequence. As his narrative moves back and forth through time, he tells about their friends; her broken family; her strong mother; his unhappy parents; and the

(see Teicher, page NAT 19)





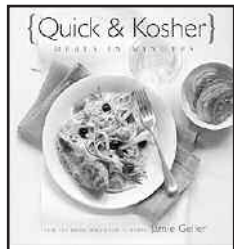
My Kosher Kitchen

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Cookbook review and Purim recipes

Quick & Kosher: Meals in Minutes. By Jamie Geller, Feldheim Publishers, \$34.99 hardcover.

In 2007, *Quick & Kosher: From the Bride Who Knew Nothing* by Jamie Geller was published. Now, five years after her marriage and four children later, she offers us 217 recipes based on her past five years' experiences and her current position as chief marketing officer at Kosher.com and a New York City TV producer.



The triple-tested recipes have very clever chapter headings – “If You’ve Got 20 Minutes,” “If You’ve Got 40 Minutes,” and “If You’ve Got 60 minutes.” Among recipes in the “20 minutes” category are: Beef and Green Bean Stir Fry, Fines Herbes Goat Cheese Omelet, and Mozzarella Mushroom Burgers. In the “40 minutes” chapter are: Aromatic Baked Flounder Over Capellini, Chicken Marsala, and Honey-Glazed Skewered Beef. If you’ve got 60 minutes, you can really expand your talents with Beef Bourguignon with Noodles, Smoked Salmon Crepes and more.

Subsequent chapters include: Holiday Meals, What’s New in Kosher, Become an Expert Wine Taster in 10 Minutes Flat, Cheese, and more.

Each recipe is preceded by a full-color photograph, and after the recipe is a recommended wine and comments relating the wine to the recipe. Many recipe pages have the primary recipe paired with an accompanying recipe. Blueberry Cheese Quesadillas is accompanied by Sweet Potato Leek Soup; Loaded Baked Potato is accompanied by Chopped Salad; Vegetarian Chili is accompanied by Homemade Corn Bread.

Personally, as a busy woman who cooks practically every day and entertains a lot, I found the book extremely useful on a practical level with many old ideas as well as new, creative dishes to try. Don’t neglect to read the glossary with clever definitions. Give this book as a gift to any kosher cook and she’ll love you for it! Here are two recipes for Purim from the book plus another.

Baby Lamb Chops with Red Wine Sauce

12 baby lamb chops
2 Tbsp. kosher salt

2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
4 Tbsp. canola oil
1/2 cup minced shallots
1 cup red wine
1 cup all natural beef broth

Preheat oven to 200°F. Season chops with salt and pepper. Over high heat, heat 2 Tbsp. oil in each of two large sauté pans. Place chops in one layer in each pan or brown in two batches if they do not fit. Cook until brown, about 3 minutes on each side or to your desired doneness. Remove to a baking sheet. Cover tightly with foil. Place in oven and turn oven off. Drain all but 2 Tbsp. fat from the pans. Add shallots and cook, stirring for 1 minute. Add red wine and broth and cook until sauce is reduced by half, about 4 minutes. Serve lamb chops with sauce.

Garlic and Chive Mashed Potatoes

6 medium potatoes
(peeled and quartered)
2 cloves garlic
Kosher salt to taste
1 cup all natural chicken broth
4 Tbsp. pareve margarine
2 Tbsp. chopped chives

Place potatoes and garlic in a large saucepan and cover with salted water. Bring to a boil and boil gently for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender and break apart with a fork. Drain and return to the pan. Heat broth for 30 seconds in the microwave. Heat margarine in microwave for 20 seconds. With a potato masher or hand mixer, mash potatoes and garlic with broth, margarine, chives and salt. Mash potatoes to desired consistency.

The following recipe is from the *Food & Wine* online column, by Lauren Chattman, adapted from Cake Keeper Cakes.

Poppy Seed Cake

3/4 cup poppy seeds
1/2 cup water
1 1/3 cups flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
1 3/4 sticks soft unsalted butter
(use pareve margarine if serving with a meat meal)
1 cup sugar
4 large eggs
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. almond extract
Confectioners’ sugar

Bring water to a boil in a saucepan. Add to poppy seeds and cover. Let stand for 1 hour. Pulse in blender until lightly crushed. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease and flour an 8-inch square baking pan. In a bowl, whisk 1 1/3 cups flour with baking powder. With hand mixer, beat butter with sugar until fluffy. Add poppyseed mixture and beat until combined. Add eggs one at a time and beat. Beat in vanilla and almond extracts. Stir in flour mixture with wooden spoon.

Jews in Sports

Israeli doubles tennis stars touring US

By MARK HAYDEN

MEMPHIS, TENN. – One of them is from Argentina and the other is from Uruguay, but together Jonathan Erlich and Andy Ram proudly represent Israel on professional tennis courts near you.

Known in Israel and around the tour as “AndiYoni,” their benchmark moments thus far came at the 2008 Australian Open when they won the men’s doubles championship in straight sets over Arnaud Clement–Michael Llodra, 7-5, 7-6 (4). The pair also reached the quarterfinals in the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

They say neither highlight could’ve taken place without the support of their fans – in Europe but mainly those in the United States. “We see it at every tournament that we play in the states. It’s a good feeling when we get support.”

Both married and with children, Erlich and Ram are products of Israel’s Tennis Center. During the 1970s and ‘80s, donations from various Jewish communities from around the world brought these centers to every corner of Israel from Jerusalem to Haifa where Ram and Erlich attended, respectively. “It was the dream of Jewish communities around the world then to bring tennis to Israel,” Ram said.

According to its website, the Israel Tennis Center is a nonprofit organization established 30 years ago in order to empower the social, psychological and physical development of every child in Israel by imparting practical tools through sports.

The ITC has produced up to 19 professional Israeli tennis players since, with Shahar Peer, Dudi Sela, Ram and Erlich among the top 100 in the world. The four of them have become accustomed to their celebrity status. “There aren’t too many sportsmen or athletes in Israel so people know us,” Ram added.

“There are a few Israelis doing well in sports, so if we do something good, the media writes about us.”

The two started in singles play but

Scrape batter into pan. Bake for 45 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean. Let cool 10 minutes. Invert onto a wire rack to cool for 2 hours. Dust with confectioners’ sugar, cut into squares and serve.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food writer, compiler and editor of nine kosher cookbooks, and feature writer. She leads walks in Jerusalem’s Machaneh Yehudah Jewish produce market and has a weekly spot on RustyMikeRadio.com, Israel’s only English-language radio station accessible on the internet. ★

have since moved over to the quicker pace of doubles competition. “It’s a completely different game,” Ram said. “Doubles is a more serve-volley game. It’s the same game, but it’s a different game. You’ve got to believe in yourself; the more you practice the better you are, and the better your reactions get.”

“We just decided to focus on our doubles. We play well together and we enjoy it.”

While they fared poorly in tour stops in Memphis and Delray Beach both anticipate and look forward to their June 20 stop at Wimbledon.

Until then they hope their fans in the Jewish communities on tour continue to follow them on the road as they aim to climb the tennis rankings while in America.

“It’s a good feeling when we get support here, and we feel like we’re a good representative of Israel as well. We do it with pride and we’ll definitely continue to strive for that.”

Mark Hayden is a freelance writer in Memphis, Tenn. He can be reached at markn58@aol.com. ★

RIBNER

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practice (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). She can be reached at Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com. ★

DAVID

(continued from page NAT 7)

It was not until April 2010 that he and his son took steps to supplement the much needed educational reform necessary to make religion both appealing and applicable in modern life. The father-son duo’s solution? Light of the Nations.

Since its creation, LOTN has received much positive feedback, ranging from both the Bay Area of California to the big apple of New York, even finding some initial support internationally in both Canada and Israel. The program materials have been in the fine-tuning for upwards of 30 years, and both Bruce David and his team of experiential educators are eager to be out on the road.

They are already taking reservations for their day and weekend programming, with goals of travelling around the United States this summer for their initial Jewish camp tour, immediately followed by their official launch and university/community tour, beginning in Fall 2011. For more information about supporting their efforts, or bringing Light of the Nations’ programming to your area, please visit their website: LOTNexperience.org. ★

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page NAT 10)

The chefs took the ethnic or traditional cuisines and merged them with the high-end chef cuisines, “taking a good look at our own cuisines to create new, modern Israeli food in the last two decades.”

Kedem, who has been a chef for the past 20 years, said his ambition and mission is to create “a language. I started a long journey, it’s only a beginning. The taste that the land can produce is wonderful.”

He agreed with Aharoni that for the last ten years chefs have started to look around and understand “they need to cook the things we grow in Israel, fresh ingredients, local ingredients.”

He said he thought the essence of Israeli cuisine is the juice from the olive oil and lemon juice of an Israeli salad.

Mrs. Nathan said that for her there are three types of cooking – the everyday meal we have to eat; the chefs’ foods or high end foods that titillate and we try to replicate for parties; and the traditional.

Aharoni cited someone he saw at a stand having the vendor put into pita *schnitzel* (breaded, fried turkey or chicken), Turkish salad, French fries, and Yemenite *shug* (a condiment of fenugreek).

“That’s a wonderful metaphor, it crosses all these flavors.”

Purim Is Coming to Jerusalem

Jews around the world will celebrate on the 14th of Adar, March 19, except in cities that were walled at the time of Joshua, such as Jerusalem. In that case, we will celebrate on the 15th of Adar, the evening of March 20.

During the past few weeks, I’ve been walking around Jerusalem, sometimes on cold, crisp, sunny days when the wind was normal, sometimes when it was rainy and sometimes when it was a bit warmer, to see what the signs of Purim coming were.

The first sign was in bakeries. Last year, an article reported that during Purim, Israelis would eat 24.5 million hamantashen, and the average Israeli eats five during the holiday, with poppy seed filling being the most popular.

What is the good news? Hamantashen are an excellent source of calcium.

What is the bad news? Each 50-gram hamantash has 200 calories.

Poppy seeds contain high amounts of oil but also fiber, calcium and iron.

In Machaneh Yehudah *shuk*, Jerusalem’s Jewish market, I did a survey of prices and types. The Machaneh Yehudah open street bakeries are selling chocolate, date and poppy seed for 22–25 NIS (\$6.02–6.84) a kilo (2.2 pounds). One of the bakeries on Etz Chayim (the covered walkway) has poppy seeds, date, chocolate and nuts for 32 NIS (\$8.76) a kilo.

Marzipan, the bakery on Agrippas, famous for its rugelach and challot, has chocolate and poppy seed made with a yeast dough at 35 NIS (\$9.58) a kilo and 325-gram (11.5 ounces) boxes in poppy

seed, halva, chocolate, date and nuts varieties for 20 NIS (\$5.47).

In town, Sambooki, a popular bakery and coffee shop, offers poppy seed, chocolate and dates at 55 NIS (\$15.06) a kilo. English Cake bakery only had 400 gram (14 ounces) in your choice of halva, dates, chocolate, poppy seeds and nuts flavors for 22 NIS (\$6.07).

Costumes plus

What are children and adults going to find to help make up costumes this year? Hats of all kinds (one store had 40 different hats) including large selections of cowboy hats – leather, suede, flowered, with feathers, with sequins, straw, silver, gold and a variety of colors.

Aside from costumes, there are wigs, bunny ears, masks, capes, braids, colored glasses, hose, gloves, fans, jewelry, and shoes. Mustaches, beards, lipstick, nail polish, glitter and sprays of different colors are also available.

At all the stores selling costumes, they are hard to distinguish because they are all covered in plastic coverings, however, I was able to detect a large number of costumes of Queen Esther, princesses, policemen, bunnies, soldiers and Superman.

Come Purim week, adults and children alike will be walking around town in costumes because in Israel, everyone loves to dress up!

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food writer, Jerusalem Post columnist and cookbook author who lives in Jerusalem. ★

GOLD

(continued from page NAT 12)

more and more believable to me. There is one Hassidic community in Cleveland whose rabbi decided that his flock should leave Poland. They spent most of the Second World War in occupied China and made their way to the USA after the war. That experience is no less miraculous to me than Dr. Kesler’s experiences. “I kid you not.” You will have to judge for yourself. “Truth is (indeed) stranger than fiction.”

On another front...

I received a program of a bat mitzvah that recently took place at Temple Bet Shira, Miami, that must have been a splendid musical as well as a religious experience. Along with some relatively lightweight and thus popular fare, there were substantial works composed by Naumbourg, Rovner, Shur, Halevy as well as works by Sulzer, Lewandowski, Alter, Kopmar and Zim performed. I want to thank Dr. Benyounis for sharing this program with me.

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor and music critic for the Post & Opinion. He is the 2010 recipient of the Kavod Award given to him by the Cantors Assembly of North America at their recent convention. He can be reached at: drmortongold@yahoo.com. ★

LETTERS

(continued from page NAT 14)

built, and that there is a Jewish section of Boothill cemetery in Tombstone, Ariz., only an hour drive away. Also the famous or infamous Wyatt Earp either lived with – or she says married and lived with for 45 years – a Jewish girl whose name was Josephine Sarah Marcus from San Francisco. Wyatt is buried in her family’s plot in the Jewish Cemetery in San Francisco. A continuation of the stories would probably bore you, perhaps it has already.

Saludos, Paul Bracker ★

Dear Dr. Gold,

Your *Post & Opinion* piece was provocative and (from this regular reader’s viewpoint as *Journal of Synagogue Music* editor) well-grounded in its reasoning and conclusion.

However, let me take the liberty of offering one factual correction: It’s not Beny Maissner of Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple who’s retiring this year; it’s David Tillman of Beth Sholom in Elkins Park outside of Philadelphia, with “his many youth choirs and adult choirs,” whom you may have had in mind.

You’ve reviewed several of Beny Maissner’s CDs over the years (probably the copies I asked him to send you), and he’s still functioning in top form (thank G-d), so news of his premature departure from the battlefield where he’s won so many victories in the furtherance of truly exquisite Jewish music may bring a few irate denials your way. May this perhaps unexpected rash of fan letters continue unabated for you – in the positive sense – for many years to come.

Supportively yours, *blayb gezunt un shtark,* Joe Levine

Dr. Gold regrets the error and extends his apologies. ★

ZOBERMAN

(continued from page NAT 16)

at Boston University.

Yedidiyah’s intersecting drama concerns his liberating discovery that he was born in Poland to parents who gave him away for temporary safekeeping to their housekeeper Maria. His birth parents perished in the Holocaust and Maria, a loving and righteous gentile returned him to the Jewish people. Not all Poles returned Jewish babies, gratefully recalling Pope John Paul II who instructed a Catholic couple in postwar Poland to depart from “their” Jewish baby. Yedidiyah’s lingering pain of an incomplete past now resolved meets Werner’s pain for which, however, there may be no remedy, though both were victimized by the same evil forces of, in Wiesel’s language, “the great turmoil” (p.30) or “the great Tragedy” (p.43).

The author applies the Holocaust’s lessons of guilt and responsibility,

healing and hope, to the tragic conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, trying to acknowledge all sides while seeking to protect the “other,” that both have suffered from. He probingly reflects on the opposite poles and messages of Auschwitz and Jerusalem, alerting and sensitizing us toward mutually respectful personal and professional relations, reminding us that all we do bears moral consequence affecting human lives deserving of tender treatment. Tackling heavy-duty themes along with light ones in an enchanting framework of skillful interplay, Wiesel eases the burden of memory without diluting its sacred essence. Encompassing much, which is our gain but a literary risk, the author succeeds nonetheless to connect three pivotal countries on three continents in a delicate balance. *The Sonderberg Case* will long echo in a rewarded reader.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, is the son of Polish Holocaust survivors. He was born in Kazakhstan in 1945 and spent his early childhood (1947–1949) in Germany’s Wetzlar Displaced Persons Camp, following an escape from Poland. He lived in Haifa, Israel prior to coming to Chicago in 1966. ★

TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 17)

difficulty of arranging their wedding. Mexican priests expect the matrimonial couple to attend classes and to conduct the ceremony in church, requirements that Goldman and his bride did not wish to meet. In discussing this problem, Goldman mentions that he had been baptized and confirmed as a baby. The wedding finally took place in a hacienda house and it was conducted by a young civil judge in his first year of practice.

To cope with his bereavement, Goldman devoted himself to learning every bit he could about Aura. He sets forth what he gleaned, sorrowfully presenting the information, paying tribute to his wife and the deep love he had for her. Goldman sensitively disguises some of their friends and family members in order to protect their actual identities. This hardly qualifies the book to be called fiction, regardless of whether or not there may be some imaginative elaboration of incidents and some re-named characters. What Goldman has given us is a sincere and honest portrayal of his fervent efforts to respond to his calamitous loss. He has powerfully plumbed the depths of grief, not only providing an eloquent eulogy for his wife but also teaching us one approach to coping with death. This impassioned and important book deserves a wide readership.

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



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

From the other side looking in

Tues., Jan. 25, 2011

Amazing, two weeks in a row we hosted strangers for Shabbat. The week before we had an intrepid guest who arrived almost miraculously. And this past week, there was a student who considered us and our neighbors research material. Did she come to pick my brain? Maybe.

She made it very clear before she came that she isn't Jewish, so we shouldn't be surprised. That was fair. Of course if we needed a *shabbos goy*, we'd have our very own. We didn't need one.

Nu, so we were expecting a non-Jew. We didn't expect to host a non-Jew so familiar with Jewish customs and prayers. She was raised in an area with many Jews. Many of her childhood friends were Jewish, and she probably attended more *bar/bat mitzvot* than I did. She attended the prayer services and couldn't wait to go to our synagogue to see if anything was familiar.

When she discovered that I had been in NCSY, a chapter, regional and national officer, she really got excited. Her childhood friends were also in NCSY, and she had wished that she had activities like theirs.

My friends were mainly Jewish, except in my early time in Great Neck. Great Neck North Jr. High School separated the "new" and "veteran" students in the girls "Home Ec." classes. Anyone who wasn't a student there from the 7th grade was in a "special class." I moved there for the 8th grade, and the Catholic girls entered the school in the 9th grade. That's when I was one of the few Jews in class, and I got to know the Catholic girls. Home Ec. and sewing were the only classes where I studied with a large percentage of non-Jews. For me the school felt very "Jewish," sociologically, not religiously.

I never really thought about how it was for the non-Jewish friends of Jews who would find themselves invited to all sorts of Jewish events. Now, honestly, I got a kick out of discovering that this intelligent young woman, whom we hosted, finds Judaism attractive and was glad to visit us and experience even more.

Mon., Jan. 31, 2011

Only in Israel: Seen at an Israel Football League (IFL) game

I go to Kraft Stadium to:

- see my son play football,
- pray that he survive the game healthy and whole, and
- take some "only in Israel" pictures



These are from the recent game when they, the Jerusalem *Big Blue* Lions, defeated the Gush Etzion Rebels.

Tues., Feb. 1, 2011

Trying to communicate when there's no common language

I've blogged that there are quite a few Arabs who shop in Yafiz. With most I can communicate in either Hebrew or English, plus a bit of pantomime. Last night, I ended up trying to explain the "half off the second (or less expensive) item" discount with another medium of communication.

I finally grabbed a piece of paper I found and started writing:

$$100+80 (80 \times 1/2 = 40) = 140$$

$$100+100 (100 \times 1/2 = 50) = 150$$

And yes, after that they caught on to what I had been trying to communicate. I explained to one of my young fellow sales people that I had been a remedial teacher. I honestly believe that those talents, skills and experience really help me with some of the customers.

When one method doesn't work, I try another. I did that when teaching EFL to small groups. As long as there is basic intelligence there will be a method that suits. Today's teaching, at least here in Israel, is based on the very expensive and rigid workbook. The "experts" claim that it's good that the children can progress at their own pace, but there is very little real teaching. Not everyone's mind suits

those workbooks. Some people need to hear the concepts and facts repeated in different ways orally, and workbook learning is not oral. Workbook teaching isn't flexible either. I would have been a total failure and trouble-maker in today's classroom.

I learn best with discussion. I use that when I give my *Tanach*, Bible, classes to my friends. If any of my grandchildren are like me, they're in trouble.

Sat., Feb. 5, 2011

Romantic? Hah!

Would someone like to tell me why most (*at least it seems like most*) of our electric problems come on a Friday when I'm getting ready for Shabbat?

According to Jewish Law, we're not supposed to be dealing with electricity on Shabbat, nor cooking, changing switches, lighting matches on Shabbat, that's the 25 hours from before Friday sunset until at least three stars are visible in one glance Saturday night.

Friday afternoon, suddenly most of our electricity *went*. Why did I write "went?" I hate euphemisms. But in this case, when the fuses were fine, and I couldn't figure out why the TV didn't work, the den computer did, the bedroom lights didn't, the outside light did, but none of the kitchen appliances were working including the oven and refrigerator, so, I'd say "went" is a pretty accurate verb. *A nearby neighbor called in a panic saying that they thought that all their electricity was out. And they were expecting grandchildren for Shabbat.*

I called our electrician, the only electrician this house knows. He worked with the contractor who built the house and visits when it needs repairs. So, as soon as I explained the awful mess, he said:

"It's from the three-phase wiring. Not all the phases work. Call the Electric Company."

We reported to the customer report number, and the electrician called his contacts. A crew was on its way, but of course nobody knew how long it would take.

Luckily I had baked most of my vegetable treats. I'd have to finish off on the gas stove top, food, water and such. I had already gone that road a couple of

months earlier. Everything was fine except for the fact that I didn't want to open the fridge. Then my neighbor came in for some dog food, table scraps. I started apologizing saying that I didn't want to open the fridge when it suddenly occurred to me that I had to open it to lock the light off. It's a good thing she came or I may have forgotten to do it and then we'd really be in trouble. Sammy got his food and I prepared the fridge. And I also asked if I could bring the baked veggies to her fridge. She had full electricity. We did that.

Did I tell you that I was expecting guests?

Yes, four guests. To make a long story short, they loved the candle-light dinner. I did a good job keeping the food hot. Everyone had a great time. They all took food home to their functioning refrigerators.

And we went to bed early. Later at night, as we slept, the electricity came back. This morning I ran off to some of the neighbors to bring home the food we needed for lunch, and now I'll get the rest of it. I'm becoming quite an expert in coping with these "incidents" or "situations." *B"H*, it worked out OK.

Only in Israel are the bus drivers so great

Rick's mom tells a great happy ending story about her daughter who was helped by some Israeli bus drivers. It brings me back to something that happened to one of my daughters almost 25 years ago. We've been in Shiloh almost 30 years.

Our youngest daughter must have been between ten or a bit older. It was in the middle of a very rainy winter. Her friend's parents had invited her to a special birthday they were making for their daughter and insisted that she come. They live in Maale Levona, which is just west of Shiloh. At that time the bus passed the Maale Levona junction; only a few went in. The parents promised that they'd pick her up at the junction. It was a very rainy night. When my daughter got off the bus, the driver asked her what she was going to do, because he was worried. He waited there for a while and then told her to get in; he'd drive her to their house, which he did.

Apparently the parents had been so busy with their other guests that they had forgotten to pick her up and were surprised when the bus stopped at their house.

Batya Medad is a veteran American olah, immigrant in Israel. She and her husband made aliyah in 1970 and have been in Shiloh since 1981. She's a wife, mother, grandmother, EFL Teacher, writer and photographer. Besides her articles and photographs we've been featuring in this publication for a number of years, Batya is very involved in the international cyber community as a Jewish blogger. She has two active blogs, <http://shilohmusings.blogspot.com> and <http://me-ander.blogspot.com>, besides having established the Kosher Cooking Carnival; details on me-ander. You can contact her at shilohmuse@yahoo.com. ★

