

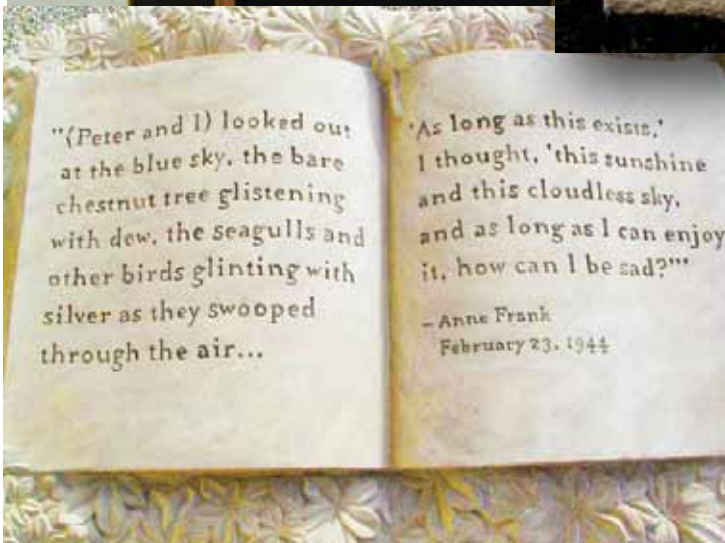
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"[Peter and I] looked out at the blue sky, the bare chestnut tree glistening with dew, the seagulls and other birds glinting with silver as they swooped through the air.... 'As long as this exists,' I thought, 'this sunshine and this cloudless sky, and as long as I can enjoy it, how can I be sad?'"

—Anne Frank, February 23, 1944



Editorial

About the Cover

For those of you living in climates like Indianapolis, currently experiencing snow, freezing temperatures and sunset by 5:30 p.m., I have a story to share that is WARM and de-LIGHT-ful. This is in honor of Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of the trees, and demonstrates how important they are.

Just after Thanksgiving on Nov. 30, 2009, a new sculpture was formally dedicated at The Children's Museum (TCM) of Indianapolis. Depicting a page from the diary of Anne Frank, it was commissioned for the museum's new Anne Frank Peace Park.

In our April 15, 2009 issue, I wrote about a permanent exhibit at the museum that is a replica of the Secret Annex where Anne Frank was in hiding with her family and others during World War II. It is part of an exhibit titled "The Power of Children: Making a Difference." Anne Frank's section is called "Facing Hatred: Daring to Dream: The Power of Words."

This is the only permanent Anne Frank exhibit in the U.S., approved by the Anne Frank Center USA in New York (www.annefrank.com) and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam (www.annefrank.org).

Now outside in front of the museum, something new is being established. One might expect this to be taking place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Denver, Detroit or Cleveland. But it is here in Indianapolis with an approximate Jewish population of about only 10,000.

The 150-year-old horse chestnut tree that stands outside the Secret Annex and which provided comfort for Anne Frank was suffering from a fungus disease, but so far is being preserved. Last spring the Anne Frank Center in New York contacted TCM about the incredible opportunity to receive one of just three initial saplings being grown in Holland from the dying Chestnut tree in Amsterdam. Of the other two, one is to go to the White House, and the other to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

In addition, TCM is slated to receive the saplings that will be planted at eight other locations to care for them during their "quarantine period" in their BioTech Lab up in ScienceWorks at TCM. The quarantine period is three years.

"We are very excited about this opportunity to receive and care for these world treasures," Jeffrey H. Patchen (left, at podium), president and CEO of TCM remarked at the dedication. "...It is our hope that the Anne Frank Peace Park and Diary Sculpture will serve as a remembrance of the tragedy of the Holocaust, but also as a symbol of Anne's hope and our hope for the future."

After the quarantine period, one sapling will be planted in the Anne Frank Peace Park next to the sculpture of her diary in front of the Museum. This has all been made possible through the generous support of local Holocaust survivors Gerald and Dorit Paul (pictured on the

Obituaries

Miep Gies, 100

Miep Gies died Monday Jan. 11, 2010. She was the last of the few non-Jews who supplied food, books and good cheer to the secret annex behind the canal warehouse where Anne

Frank, her parents, sister and four other Jews hid for 25 months during World War II.

After the apartment was raided by the German police, Gies gathered up Anne's



Photo from 1998.

right) of Indianapolis, and the sculpture was created by Michael Donham of Accent Limestone & Carving in Spencer, Ind.

I talked to the creator of the sculpture, and his assistant Travis Abrams. Donham has more than 20 years experience, and Travis has 15. It took both of them about two weeks to finish it. They were given guidelines such as length, height and width, but the quote and the style of letter had to be approved by the Anne Frank House. Donham and Abrams did some research to make sure that the leaves on their sculpture were precisely those of a Chestnut tree.

I asked Donham if this was an unusual request and how they felt about creating it. He said they had respect for where it came from and what it represents.

"We like to make the most out of what we have to work with and put it into the stone. Whenever we are asked to do a sculpture, we have those involved talk to us about what it means to them. We usually have a great feel for what they want, even if they can't describe it. The fun part for us is to take a two-dimensional drawing and make it into something three dimensional," he explained.

These were the same artists who created the Seven Wonders of the World for The Children's Museum and the County Walk on pieces of stone at the Indiana State Museum, both outside the buildings. Donham said that they have done sculptures for places as far away as California and even Canada. Their Web site is www.accentlimestone.com.

After the dedication, I spoke with Patchen and mentioned that there is a new Holocaust museum in Skokie, Ill., that opened last April.

"What about a sapling for them?" I asked him. "Surely there are other places around the country that deserve to have one."

"I wouldn't be concerned about a shortage. They are way ahead of us in Holland," he commented with a grin. "It is rumored that saplings have been planted from that Chestnut tree and are growing all over their countryside."

Jennie Cohen 1-13-10. ★

scattered notebooks and papers and locked them in a drawer for her return after the war. Gies gave the diary to Frank's father, Otto, the only survivor, who published it in 1947.

After the diary was published, Gies tirelessly promoted causes of tolerance. She brushed aside the accolades for helping hide the Frank family as more than she deserved.

Born Hermine Santrouschitz on Feb. 15, 1909 in Vienna, Gies moved to Amsterdam when she was 11 to escape food shortages in Austria. She lived with a host family who gave her the nickname Miep.

In 1933, Gies took a job as an office assistant in the spice business of Otto Frank. After refusing to join a Nazi organization in 1941, she avoided deportation to Austria by marrying her Dutch boyfriend, Jan Gies.

As the Nazis ramped up their arrests and deportations of Dutch Jews, Otto Frank asked Gies in July 1942 to help hide his family in the annex above the company's canal-side warehouse on Prinsengracht 263 and to bring them food and supplies.

In her own book, *Anne Frank Remembered*, Gies recalled being in the office when the German police, acting on a tip that historians have failed to trace, raided the hide-out in August 1944.

After their arrests, she went to the police station to offer a bribe for the Franks' release, but it was too late.

After the war, Otto Frank returned to Amsterdam and lived with the Gies family until he remarried in 1952. Miep worked for him as he compiled the diary, then she devoted herself to talking about the diary and answering piles of letters with questions from around the world.

For her courage, Gies was bestowed with the "Righteous Gentile" title by the Israeli Holocaust museum Yad Vashem. She has also been honored by the German government, Dutch monarchy, and educational institutions.

She is survived by her son and three grandchildren. ★

Rabbi Murray Saltzman, 80

After a relatively short illness, Rabbi Murray Saltzman died on Jan. 5, 2010 of pancreatic cancer at Hope Hospice Center in Ft. Myer, Fla.

Saltzman was born in New York City to immigrant parents and was raised in Brooklyn. He earned a bachelor's degree from University of Cincinnati and then in 1956 was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he also received bachelor's and master's degrees in Hebrew Letters. In 1975, he was awarded a doctorate in divinity from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

During the 1960s, he marched across the South with Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Because of his outspoken civil rights activism, President Gerald R. Ford appointed him to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1975. He held that position until 1983.

From 1956 to 1958, he was assistant rabbi at Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun in Milwaukee, after which he moved to Hagerstown to be rabbi of Congregation B'nai Abraham. He left Hagerstown in 1962 when he became rabbi at Temple Beth-El in Chappaqua, N.Y., a position he held for five years, before being named senior rabbi of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation.

"As we say in Hebrew, Rabbi Saltzman was one of the 'great ones of his generation,' and he left quite a legacy of his commitment to social justice, human dignity and pluralism," Rabbi Jonathan A. Stein, a longtime friend and senior rabbi of Temple Shaaray Tefila on New York City's Upper East Side told *The Baltimore Sun*.

(see Obituaries, page NAT 3)



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Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Today I'll tell you a story from the geriatric ward of our local hospital.

For the last 20 years I've been visiting hospitals regularly. However, I started to go to the geriatrics area only a year ago. Of course it is a great Mitzvah to honor and learn from the elders, but I was busy doing other Mitzvahs, and the geriatric ward is also a bit off to the side. One day a fellow volunteer told me about two men there who wanted to put on tefillin. They have been religious all of their lives, and had put on tefillin regularly for 60 or 70 years, since their bar mitzvah. Now they were in the hospital after a stroke and couldn't put tefillin on by themselves.

The next day I went and helped them to put on tefillin. They were very grateful, and since then I visit geriatrics regularly. Gradually I got to know the staff and the patients. Soon five of them were putting on tefillin every day, then ten, then 15 and now I have 20 regular customers there. I also help the staff and visitors to put on tefillin.

Visiting geriatrics has many advantages. In the other wards the patients usually stay only a few days. Geriatric patients can stay for years. You get to know them and their families.

About half a year ago I met Chanoch. One day I was going from table to table, helping my geriatric friends to put on tefillin. He came up to me and asked me if he could also put on tefillin. I said, "Sure." I was a little surprised, because Chanoch looked quite religious. He had a full beard and was wearing a hat. Maybe for some reason he hadn't been able to put on tefillin that day.

After he finished I asked him what happened, and he told me his story. He pointed to his sister, one of the patients, and said that he had come to visit her. For a long time he hasn't put on tefillin. Now, while he watched the other men pray, he was inspired to pray himself.

Now I was really curious. I asked him why he had stopped putting on tefillin. He told me that when he was young he had been abused by an uncle, and as a result had never married. He really loves children, and it hurt him that he didn't have any of his own. He stopped praying because he was upset with Hashem.

What could I say? How could I help him? I closed my eyes and silently asked Hashem for inspiration. An idea came to me. I looked him in the eye and told him that it's true that he has missed some important relationships. But what is the most important relationship? Our connection with Hashem, our Father, our Creator, our Merciful King, the Source of everything. That relationship he can and must have. Everything else is secondary. I encouraged him to start praying every day and he promised to try.

Since then we have met many times, and Baruch Hashem he is doing much

better. For a few months whenever we met he would put on tefillin, and I would encourage him to start putting them on himself. Then he started to put tefillin on every day by himself. I then encouraged him to try to help others on his kibbutz to put on tefillin. Recently we met and he was happy to tell me about a small tefillin stand that he makes regularly, and people that he helps to put on tefillin.

What can we learn from this story? Abuse can seriously affect a person's life until he gets help. Unfortunately for many reasons people don't get help. They may try to deny what happened, and so forth. If you were abused, get help. It's true that your life has been damaged, but you can be healed. Try to get help. There are many paths to healing. Find Hashem and bring Him into your life. He is the Source of all healing, the Source of everything. If you know someone who was abused, try to help them. When you help yourself, when you help someone else, you are helping the entire world. Each of us is a small, but really important, part of our world. When we heal ourselves, when we heal others, we are actually healing all of the world.

Find Hashem and bring Him into your life. He is the Source of all healing, the Source of everything.

When even one part of the body is sick, then to different degrees the entire body is sick. Every part of the body is significant. If that part is healed, the entire body benefits. And not just the human race is affected by the state of every individual, (see Chassidic Rabbi, page NAT 15)

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Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

**January 8, 2010, Shemot
(Exodus 1:1–6:1), 22 Tevet 5770**

About a month ago, I wrote about the "Women of the Wall" and their desire to open up the Kotel, the Western or Wailing Wall, for all people to feel a part of it. Little did I know when I wrote that Shabbat Shalom that my niece Naomi, who is currently studying in Israel, had joined the "Women of the Wall" that Rosh Chodesh morning for the service. She wrote about that experience in her blog and the arrest of Nofrat Frenkel. It was a bitter introduction into the religious politics that surround what most Jews consider the holiest place in the Jewish world. It was my niece's first time praying with the women, but it wasn't her last.

In this week's *Jerusalem Report* there was an article titled, "Cracks in the Wall." It talked about the history of the ultra-Orthodox takeover of the Western Wall and the Western Wall Plaza that sits to the west of the Wall. It includes reflections of non-Orthodox Jerusalemites who say that they no longer go to the Wall or really think about it because of the Orthodox hegemony over the place. Over the years the ultra-Orthodox have turned this public space that belongs to all Jews and all people into an Orthodox synagogue that separates men and women and ignores those who don't hold to Orthodox standards. It not only separates men and women, but marginalizes the women into a decreasingly smaller space to the south side of the Wall.

Rabbi Rabinovich, who heads the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, said, "Everyone can pray at or near the Wall as long as he doesn't offend anyone else." He feels that women praying together, wearing *tallitot*, and reading from the Torah is offensive. He feels that Reform Jewish youth on a NFTY in Israel trip praying together in the plaza away from the Wall is offensive. If I can interpret what he is saying, he believes that if you don't pray as ultra-Orthodox and Chasidic Jews pray, men and women separately and the women really don't count, then it is offensive.

Finally, non-Orthodox Jews are standing up for what belongs to all Jews. After a summer of tension between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem over some significant Shabbat issues, secular and non-Orthodox Jews, Conservative and Reform, marched together, some 2,000 strong, to say enough is enough. This city belongs to every Jew. The Wall belongs to every Jew. It is time to take back the Kotel so that everyone can go and feel a part of the spirit of that sacred place. We may feel that this is an issue that is far away, but it really cuts to the heart of Jewish relations everywhere. Orthodox Judaism shouldn't set the standards for Jewish life. Reform,

Conservative, and Reconstructionist Jews have molded and shaped Judaism over the last 200 years so that Jews can find God in whatever place they are in.

Judaism is about change and growth. We survived because we could adapt to the changing world around us. We reconsidered Judaism for our day just as the rabbis reconsidered Jewish life after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Despite what Rabbi Rabinovich thinks, there isn't just one way for Jews to pray. Despite what some Jews think there isn't just one way to celebrate Shabbat. If you or your child has attended a Jewish camp such as GUCI, then you know that the passion of that Erev Shabbat walk, service, meal, and song session is no more or less as passionate as Chasidic Jews celebrating Shabbat. Different doesn't mean bad and shouldn't mean offensive.

I am proud of the "Women of the Wall." The Torah they read from was donated to them by the Women of Reform Judaism in solidarity and support of their mission. Each month on Rosh Chodesh, the first day of the Jewish month, we should stand together with these women and maybe, just maybe, there will be "Cracks in the Wall" that will allow me to go to Jerusalem and say a prayer on a site and in a manner that is meaningful to me. All of us stood together at Sinai to receive the Torah and all of us felt the pain of the destruction of the Temple so long ago, and all of us deserve to be considered equal as Jews today.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for the "Women of the Wall" and their dream of an egalitarian Jewish life. Light the other for Shabbat and let its light guide you in your Shabbat celebration this evening in whatever holy manner you choose.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ★



OBITUARIES

(continued from page NAT 2)

Saltzman was senior rabbi at IHC from 1967–1978. Stein was his associate and assistant rabbi for three years from 1975–1978 and then succeeded him as senior rabbi when Saltzman left in 1978 to take a position as senior rabbi at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. In Baltimore he also served as president of the Coalition Opposed to Violence and Extremism, BLEWS (the Baltimore Black-Jewish Forum), the Baltimore Board of Rabbis and many other organizations.

IN 1996 he semi-retired and moved to Fort Myers where he became a part-time rabbi at Bat Yam Temple of the Islands Tzedakah.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, the former Esther E. Herskowitz, two sons, Oren of Owings Mills, Md., and Joshua of New York City, a daughter, Debra Brooks of Portland, Ore., and six grandchildren. ★

A Tu B'Shevat Seder Hagaddah

BY RABBI DR. ARTHUR SEGAL

Host: Welcome! A joyous Yom Tov! Happy Tu B'Shevat. Happy New Year to our trees!

Guest: "There is not even a single blade of grass that does not have angel over it making it grow." This is from the Midrash Rabbah 10: 6.

Guest: Today is the birthday for our trees. The Talmud tells us that the 15th of the Jewish Month of Shevat, when there is a full moon, is to be celebrated as the New Year for Trees. It was the date used to determine when the fruit of a tree could be used by its owner, and when the first four years of produce were donated to the Temple to be used for charity.

Guest: When the Temple was destroyed and Judaism replaced Hebraism, Jews celebrated this holiday by eating the seven grains and fruits associated with the land of Israel in the Torah, the Jewish bible.

Guest: These seven species, called *Shiv'at Ha-min-im*, in Hebrew are wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. We use four colors of wine for our grapes. We include almonds as well, because these blossom this week in Israel.

Guest: This is based on the Torah's verse from Deuteronomy 8:8: "For the Lord your God is bringing you to a good land: ...A land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates; a land of oil-yielding olives and date honey."

Guest: The Kabbalists assigned spiritual and mystical qualities to each of the foods to teach us lessons about living. The four cups of wine symbolize acting, relating, knowing, and being.

Guest: Tu b'Shevat has been called the first Earth Day as it celebrates all of the ecological commandments in the Torah and Talmud. They can be summed up with the Jewish notion *bal tash-chit* to neither destroy wantonly, nor waste resources unnecessarily. Jews have countless laws in the Torah and Talmud to adjure us to open our eyes, and act responsibly and compassionately toward the world around us. We are reminded of these edicts on this holiday at this seder.

Cantor 1: At this moment, we are like farmers looking at our empty fields in winter. We have faith that if we plant, our crops will grow. We begin our Seder with a glass of White Wine symbolizing the white, calm sleeping winter.

We say the blessing: Blessed are you Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine. And for those who wish to chant with us in Hebrew, we sing: *Ba-Ruch A-tah A-do-nai, El-o-ha-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, bo-rah pe-ree ha-gah-fen.*

Guest: "A man is a tree of the field" reads Deuteronomy 20:19, and fruit is the tree's highest achievement. Our Kabbalistic sages tell us that each and every one of us has not one, but two souls: an animal soul, which embodies our natural, self-

oriented instincts; and a Godly soul, embodying our transcendent drives – our desire to escape the ego and relate to that which is greater than ourselves.

Tu b'Shevat is yet another Jewish holiday where we work on our spiritual renewal to break out of ego, and let the love of God and love for our fellows into our lives.

Host: Let us pass around the plates of food with the olives and the dates. These are fruits with one seed.

We say two blessings:

Cantor 2: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates fruit of the tree. And we sing: *Ba-Ruch a-ta A-do-nai El-o-hei-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, bo-rei p-ree ha'etz.*

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season. And we sing: *Ba-ruch a-ta Ad-on-ai El-o-hei-nu Mel-eck Ha-o-lam, she-hech-i-ya-nu, vi-ki-ye-ma-nu, vi-hig-i-a-nu laz-man ha-zeh.*

Guest: The Talmud in Tractate Ta'anit page 23a tells the story of the sage Honi the Circle Maker, who could summon the rains to come within a circle he would draw on the ground.

He saw an old man digging in the ground and he asked what he was doing. The old man said he was planting a carob tree. Honi remarked: "But a carob tree takes 70 years before it yields fruit. You won't get any carobs." The old man said: "My parents and my grandparents, planted trees so that I could have fruit. I am planting trees so that my children and grandchild should have fruit as well."

Guest: The sages teach that just like a small seed in an olive or a date, every loving action we take, no matter how small, helps make this earth a better place.

Guest: *Zeit She-men* is the Hebrew word for olives. Olives symbolize peace and hope. From the time of Noah and the flood, the olive branch has been a sign of hope for an enduring future.

"God fed Israel honey from the crag and olive oil from the flinty rock" (Deuteronomy 32:13). Olive trees grow anywhere – even under the most adverse conditions. As olive trees stand firm in all kinds of terrain, so will we endure and remain strong no matter what the circumstance. *Atz-ei zeit-i-mom-dim*, the olive trees are still standing.

If there is someone you've hurt, near or far, extend the olive branch. Send a jar of olives, a container of olive oil, or any food made with olives, along with a note of *Teshuvah*, amends.

Guest: The olive in us is that part of ourselves that thrives on struggle. Just like an olive, say our sages, which yields its oil only when pressed, so, too, do we yield what is best in us only when pressed between the millstones of life and the counter forces of a divided self. Yet our goal is to become integrated, one with God, with our fellows, in true Shalom.

Guest: *D'vash* is date honey in Hebrew. We are to be always concerned for all living things (*Tz'a-ar Ba'al-ei Hay-yim*). While originally *d'vash* referred to the honey-like date syrup, today honey

comes from the hard work of bees, the most humble of creatures.

Once, when a Kabbalist rabbi was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him inadvertently plucked a leaf off a branch. The rabbi was visibly shaken by this act, and turning to his companion he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing, unless I have to." He explained further, "Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the Creation." For the first time the young student understood what it means to show compassion to all creatures and began to learn the wisdom of the Mystics.

The Talmud teaches us if we have a pet, or any animal, to feed it before we eat. Make sure its water dish is filled and clean. Volunteer at a local animal shelter. Try not to buy products that are animal-tested or that exploit endangered species.

Guest: Let us pass the plates with figs and pomegranates. These are fruits with many seeds. We seed hope and love in others with our acts of kindness many times during the day, and with our acts that take care of our environment so that our children's children have a wonderful Earth.

Guest: Note how there is no relationship between the size of the tree and the size of the seed. We can never know what a small act of loving kindness can mean to another person.

Guest: The Midrash teaches that the Torah, the Bible, is like a fig, *Te'enah*, in Hebrew. Every fruit has some inedible part, but all parts of the fig are good to eat. Following the paths of Torah, the Bible, will hopefully lead to an era of peace, a time when "every person will call to his neighbor from under his vine and fig tree" (Zechariah, 3:10).

Guest: If you count the seeds of the pomegranate (Rimon), you will find 613, more or less – the number of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah. "May we be as full of mitzvot as the pomegranate is full of seeds," meaning, may we live a life doing God's will.

Cantor 3: Now we take our white wine. We add a few drops of red wine to it. Note the slight change in color symbolizing spring and hope and the restless rebirth of nature. It reminds us of our own spiritual renewal. Again we sing: *Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, El-o-ha-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, bo-rah pe-ree ha-gah-fen.*

Host: Pass around some almonds. Hope doesn't come easy to those who have a history of oppression. However, when we take on the hardest tasks, we reap the best rewards. The almond has a very hard shell, similar to a chestnut or walnut. The Hebrew word for almond tree is *Shek-ay-di-yah*. The Hebrew word for almond is sha-ked and both come from the same word as *shak-dan*, which means a hard working, diligent person. Think of the team work it took and all of the tasks it took to produce this one almond...planting, picking, shelling, packing, shipping, and

buying. When we work together as a team, great things can happen.

Cantor 1: King David wrote: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity."

And we sing: *Hi-nei ma tov u-ma na-im, shev -et ach -im gam ya-chad.* (Repeat several times.)

Cantor 2: Now we get ready for the third glass of wine: Fill it half with white and half with red. This is the brightness of fall. This is to remind us that we are all equal in the eyes of God, and equal partners with God, in helping to repair the world, Tikun Olam, in Kabbalistic terms. In autumn we have a harvest, but soon winter will come.

And we sing again: *Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, El-o-ha-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, bo-rah pe-ree ha-gah-fen.*

Hostess: Our job is to help spread hope just as a tree in the winter, barren, reminds us that it will soon bloom and hope is always present. We light candles to symbolize hope on this holiday, *Rosh ha Shana ha Atz-im*, the New Year for Trees:

Ba-ruch A-ta A-do-nai, El-o-ha-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, a-sher Kid-di-sha-nu ba-mitz-vo-tav, vitz-se-vah-nu, la-had-lik ner, shel yom tov. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and has commanded us to light the candles of this holiday.

Cantor 3: We are soon coming to the end of our Seder. We now will drink from a glass of wine that is all red. This symbolizes the bright sun of summer. And again we sing: *Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai, El-o-ha-nu Mel-eck ha-o-lam, bo-rah pe-ree ha-gah-fen.*

Cantor 1: Our last two species are wheat and barley: in Hebrew *Hit-tah* and *Se'or-ah*. Ethics of the Fathers in the Talmud reads: *Im ein ke-mah, ein To-rah.* Literally, this verse means, "Without flour, there is no Torah." If you can't nourish your body, you can't nourish your soul; if you can't feed yourself, you can't find time to study.

So as we break bread, we say: Blessed are You, Lord our God, Who brings forth bread from the Earth. And we sing: *Ba-ruch a-ta A-do-nai, El-o-hai-nu Mel-eck ha-O-lam, ha-Mot-zi lech-em min ha-er-etz.*

Guest: To conclude the seder, we recite the following verse from Psalm 21:1: *L'A-do-nai ha-a-retz u-m'lo'ah* (Psalms 24:1). "The Earth and all its fullness belong to God." We are the caretakers of the Earth, and it is up to us to protect and preserve its beauty. Happy Tu b'Shevat!

Rabbi Dr. Arthur Segal counsels Jewish Spiritual Renewal. Sign up for free classes, via "Shamash online," a service of Hebrew College Yeshiva, Newton Centre, Mass., by emailing RabbiSegal@JewishSpiritualRenewal.net. See Rabbi's publications at www.JewishSpiritualRenewal.org.

(Acknowledgements: R. Musleah, Rabbi M. Klayman, Y. Abramowitz, and M. Fine.)

P.S. You can download a Spanish version from: www.scribd.com/doc/11744308/Seder-de-Tu-B-Shevat-ano-nuevo-de-los-arboles-del-Rabino-Arthur-Segal. It was translated by the chief rabbi of Madrid's shul. ★



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Reflections on Limmud London

I was honored to be invited to share my work in meditation, kabbalah and healing at a Limmud London conference over this past Christmas week. It was my first Limmud gathering. The Limmud conference provides an inclusive and pluralistic forum for exchanging ideas across the spectrum of the Jewish community.

The first Limmud conference began in England. There are now Limmud gatherings in California, South Africa, New York, Poland, Germany and many other places.

Almost everyone who wants to teach is given the opportunity to do so at Limmud. The conference also invites professional teachers from all over the world to share their expertise on a variety of subjects from politics, to traditional Torah learning, to spirituality and everything in between. Needless to say, there was an abundance of creative and interesting workshops.

Considered to be the crown jewel, the England gathering is the largest one. This year 2,500 participants and 300 presenters gathered two hours from London at a university campus for a week of learning. What impressed me the most, even more than all the wonderful workshops was that this flawlessly run conference is primarily staffed by hundreds of volunteers who meet throughout the year to plan in great detail and sensitivity everything required to meet the needs of a diverse population of Jews living together for almost a week. This is truly grass roots Judaism at its finest.

I doubt whether America could or would host a Limmud conference on quite the scale that England does. It is not just that I can't imagine 700 Americans volunteering to work together for a year to plan a single gathering, but I do not think that we have the same kind of need that Jews in England and Europe do. Because there are only 200,000 to 300,000 Jews in England, and Jews in surrounding countries are an even smaller minority in their host country, they particularly need the creative grassroots forums for sharing ideas and connecting with each other that Limmud offers. I heard much mention of the conservatism and formality of the existing religious institutional structures and the polarization between the haredi, the ultra religious and the rest of the Jews in England, so all the more need for Limmud. Limmud also serves as a social meeting place for singles across England. Many marriages have resulted from these gatherings.

I came to share my work but I also came to learn. I mostly wanted to hear firsthand about the interests and concerns of Jews

in England and Europe. I wondered whether they were interested in the same things as Americans or were they different. As I had had no previous or significant contact with Jews of the United Kingdom or Europe, I felt that it was important for me to expand myself in this way. I was delighted to meet Jews from Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland, South Africa, Israel and many other countries as well. I had interesting informal discussions with them during meal times. Sometimes the best connections happen outside of the workshops. In addition to my giving one to two classes each day, I attended a variety of other classes and was impressed by their quality. Perhaps the most important class that I attended was surprisingly the one given by a Moslem scholar. I initially resented the prominence of Moslem scholars at this Jewish conference, but these workshops were worthwhile and offered a unique opportunity for me. Using textual study, one Moslem scholar showed us directly how the mainstream and universally accepted commentaries on the Koran acknowledged that Israel is the homeland for the Jewish people and that its borders, I seem to recall, are from Lebanon to Jordan, and include the West Bank, Jericho, Bethlehem and part of Sinai as well. I suspected that such sentiments might be buried in the Koran and that this knowledge should be part of our claim to Israel.

Perhaps the most important class that I attended was surprisingly the one given by a Moslem scholar.

He shared how he initially tried to encourage discussion of these texts at academic seminars, but has retreated for fears of personal security. He now teaches primarily for Jewish audiences. What a shame that he feels unsafe to share his teachings more widely with people of the Moslem faith, but he is courageously arming us with this knowledge of Islam. I asked another Moslem representative what kind of outreach is being done to counter the most radical teachings and people in Islam. They are trying, but like most people who attend interfaith gatherings, they are more comfortable with the freedom of discussion in the Jewish community than in their own. The Moslems I heard speak however expressed their desire to replicate Limmud in their communities. If the Moslems are inspired to do a Limmud, a comparable pluralistic forum for themselves, that would be amazing.

After Limmud, I spent Shabbat at a Moishe House, a Jewish communal house for 20-year-olds. To welcome the Shabbat on Friday night were 100 young singles in their 20s with perhaps less than a handful of 30-something-year-olds blending in. I have not been around

this kind of intense positive youth energy since I was in the college. I was impressed. These young people for the most part knew the words of the davening and sang with all their hearts. It was an Am Israel Chai moment, the nation of Israel lives, even in England. It was a fabulous Shabbat, the only problem was that I was no longer 23 years old or even 29 years old. I felt like I had traveled through time to another dimension where everyone was young, but I was not. Still it was a beautiful and inspiring Shabbat, and spending Shabbat at Moishe House offered me an interesting model for what Jewish communal living can be.

I have been impressed how vibrant Jewish life is in England, at least what I was privileged to witness. Jews in England may be very mindful that they are English. I was surprised how many times they needed to tell me that directly. They even pride themselves and also excuse themselves on their British reserve, yet still they remain Jews, in spite of the impact that the culture of the host country has had upon them.

Sometimes a person has to travel to another country to appreciate how universal Judaism is. I remember when I went to a synagogue in India. The Jews there looked like the rest of the people from India, but they were named Sarah, Moshe, and so forth. It had a huge impact on me. I saw firsthand how universal Judaism really is. Whether Jews live in Britain, America, India or another other place in the world, we seem to adopt the nationality of the host country that we live in, we assimilate, we wear the clothes of the country we live in, we speak the language, we become professionals, we are successful and influential. Yet, in our hearts and souls wherever we happen to be living, we still yearn for the very same things that Jews all over the world do; that is, a direct connection to the Holy One, a place in the Jewish community and lineage. Sometimes, a person has to travel out of his comfort zone to be reminded of this important truth.

I am looking forward to returning to America. Even though the people speak English here, it is still very much a foreign country, and I do not feel quite at home. I hope that I will appreciate the feeling of being at home more when I return to Florida.

P.S. The Moslem scholar I mentioned has published a paper on Jewish claim to Israel, and I have requested a copy. Should you want to receive it, I will forward a copy to you.

Melinda Ribner, L.C.S.W. is a spiritual psychotherapist and healer in private 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. ✨



Letter 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, 238 S. Meridian St., Suite 502, Indianapolis, IN 46225, or by e-mail: jpostopinion@gmail.com.

Dear Rabbi Podet,

I thoroughly enjoyed your article (P-O, Dec. 16, 2009) and have included underlined copies with my will and medical papers.

I too am a scientist, a medical one at that, and agree wholeheartedly with your wife.

Have you ever heard of the HOD, www.hods.org; it is the Halachic Organ Donor Society. Maybe that would ease your single-minded idea that your wife's body belongs to you, as my husband does. I am truly committed to having all organs that are useable donated though this organization, and the remainder of my useless shell donated to a nearby medical school.

Esther Gold, (address withheld) ✨

Tu B'Shevat

BY LOUISE RARICK

It is a new
Year of trees.
Upright, plum-line trees and
Wide trees spreading their shade
like an umbrella.

Vines and stems
in arbors, gardens, and glens
Like sets of string-theory illustrations.

Jerusalem here and in Zion and in Kofi
Awooner's *Breast of the Earth*,
lands of promises and milk and honey
and wheat and barley, and wine and...

Fruits we taste and contemplate –
Oranges, bananas, peaches, cherries,
grapes and pears

We hope these will not be dull
nor insufficient
We meditate and analyze and bless and pray
for fine flour, and apple orchards, cool
brooks, and southern palms.

Let us remember Robertson Smith,
who said
the purpose of sacrifice anciently
was so the people could eat,
the laws in Leviticus being a king of
organized sociological
insurance for a Pure Food and Drug
Administration.

And let us remember the public library
in a nearby county
which displayed signs saying
Read a poem to the family
at the supper table
while beginning the meal. ✨



The Art of Observation

BY RABBI ALLEN H. PODET

Hold the messianic expectations of politicians

Moishe Karp grew up on the west side of Chicago. I knew him well; we decided to enter seminary together. Moishe, Morris to gentiles, was a brilliant young man and has become a brilliant and influential rabbi.

So I was somewhat surprised to read an article of his, loaded with bitter and furibund complaint about President Obama. It seems that Moishe campaigned vigorously for Obama, buttonholed his people left and right, knew and quoted every word the man spoke, may even have raised money, and now has turned from him with all the passion that heretofore he poured into adoration.

Moishe feels betrayed, there is no other word for it, and he says so himself.

Ours is a *messianic* people. Not just in the sense that we have produced not one but a goodly number of messiahs, most of whom are unknown now except to historians and those with an interest in Jewish oddities.

In fact we created the word, and we invented the concept. It does not occur to most of my Christian students to wonder where this odd notion, "messiah," came from, what context, what people, what circumstances.

We are a messianic people also in the sense that, in absolute contrariness to our infinitely repeated experience, we continue to believe in the next superhuman savior to come along, and to endow with wholly unrealistic expectations the next man of charisma.

"Moishe," I want to say to him. "What is Mr. Obama, Moishe? (Pause for effect.)"

"Mr. Obama, Moishe, is a politician. When he told you there would be gold in the streets, how could you possibly have forgotten who he is and what he is?"

Our teachers have said *sney et ha-rabbanut*, which does not mean to hate the rabbis, but rather to stay far from the powerful, the rulers; and with good reason. To put your uncritical, messianic trust in a man, any man, is to ask for deceit. There are indeed some leaders who deserve and are worthy of trust, but there are none who have messianic power to end our woes and restore us to an ideal and idealistic world. I did not vote for the man, but knowing what I know now I would probably do so. But not because I confuse him with a messiah.

I am glad he is our president. He has positioned himself splendidly in the Near East. With words and gestures, he has dompted the Arab street, giving it reason to call him "friend" and to look to him

with some considerable measure of hopefulness, while at the same time he has taken no real actions invidious to Israel apart from some tough talk. I am moved to cut him a good deal of slack, and to note with some contentment much of what he has done, as opposed to what he has said.

As Mr. Bush's war has ground down in Iraq, Mr. Obama's war has risen to take its place in Afghanistan. He said he would get the troops out of Iraq, and he is doing it. He is moving them to Afghanistan. The military budget, and those multitudes of us who directly or indirectly depend upon it, one may rest assured, will not suffer. Not in the foreseeable future, at any rate.

We may indeed hold high hopes that, as politicians go, the current crop will be little worse than those who went before. But to look on them with messiah-seeking eyes is a tragic mistake that Jews have made all too often. What can we do? It is our national nature: In the face of pessimism, we are eternal optimists. It is part of the secret of how we live.

To put your uncritical, messianic trust in a man, any man, is to ask for deceit.

When I was very young indeed, I stood in our kitchen and saw a member of my cantor father's congregation, Ohr Chodesh Anshey Sfard of Cleveland, gesture upward toward a picture of Roosevelt that hung in many a Jewish home. "I would give my right arm for that man," he exclaimed. So I was given to understand that FDR was a messiah for us, the Jewish people.

When I came at a later time to read FDR's words, his assurances, his blessings upon us, and his promises, I fully understood what that congregant had meant, and I shared that kalopsia. FDR, or the image of FDR, made me and my whole cohort of young Jews Democrats.

It was only much later that I learned. And most of my cohort has learned, "book"-learned, but not absorbed.

Wilson before Roosevelt was a messiah too, but a lesser one. So, believe it or not, was avuncular pipe-smoking Joe Stalin, he of the comforting *zeyde*-moustache, at least in some quarters. Who knew? Who wanted to know? Who could afford to know, when we were beleaguered by wolves?

It is a natural and a historical thing: In the old country, that wonderful, *gemuettliche* Europe to which our people are happy to travel on a cloud of nostalgia and which our forefathers prayed God to escape from, in that place where we were powerless playthings of the ruling class, we developed a tradition of *shtatlanim*, relatively wealthy and powerful Jews, who could speak for the community, represent us, get for us the best possible chances for survival for a while...until the next catastrophe at least.

So we learned to be dependent on the



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

So much for transparency

I have seen transparency in government, and I don't like it. I watched what happened when "politics played out as being the art of the possible," and it was difficult to watch. Somehow, I believed that faced with a national audience, members of Congress would step up to the bar with some semblance of honor. What we saw, was senators and representatives rising to new levels of *chutzpah*.

It is important to point out that this was all within the legal limit. These were not informal trips, vacations or illegal gifts. They all did this openly and gladly, and they are not ashamed of what they did to see their vote for health care. They felt no shame. They are looking out for #1 (themselves) and #2 (their constituents), who may rightfully feel that an extra \$100 million dollars for a new hospital in Connecticut won't sink the country.

It is not clear whether the rest of us should call our senators and representatives to congratulate them for their honor, or chide them from not grabbing a part for us. It was difficult to hear Senator Harry Reid explain that this is just how the system works. But, Senator Reid, how about all of the U.S. citizens who have to pay our part to Senator Dodd's constituents and Senator Nelson's constituents, all those lucky people in Nebraska. This was an example of the government working best for those people who hold the electorate in the greatest contempt.

I have suggested to you before that no one just violates their marriage by the act of intimacy outside of their family. The associated crimes are the lying, cheating, and stealing that enable the act. And whether you are rich or poor, ordinary or a star, the family is decimated by loosing it sense of trust. What are we supposed to think of the behavior of our lawmakers when the cameras are shut down and the new reporters are not on the job? Are they split personalities? And is this how the other system works, the one with

messianic figure, the *shtatlan* who would save us because he could maybe get the ear of the mighty. It relieved the rest of the community from responsibility to take aggressive action, likely suicidal action.

And what alternative action could they take, that would not have led to immediate destruction?

The same tradition came to these shores, and may be seen in the adulation showered on Jewish leaders, and on some friendly gentiles, in the earlier 20th century. Powerful people would save us.

(see Podet, page NAT 11)

private rather than public advantage-selling their vote for private gain rather than for private-interest gain.

We are told that the Europeans are contemptuous of our moral standards. Somehow, that is supposed to make us feel better about the "rush" of public amorality, immorality and "it's all okay."

Recently four young freshmen from the University of Mississippi took a train to Milwaukee as a part of a Freshman Honors Program to talk about faith. Three of the four were Mississippians were raised in the Oxford area, the fourth was from Texas. All four had gone to public schools, were "churched," and had a pristine appearance, which I used to think of as the look one has when they just have gotten out of a refreshing shower. Can it be, that of all places, Mississippi is still producing decent young people?

We don't hear many positive results in any central city public school system, much less Mississippi; and it may be that they went to suburban public schools. We have those, as well, but it was more than that. I spent the better part of two days with them, talking, comparing, questioning, and I came to the conclusion that all four of these young people had been raised under a protective canopy, where morality, ethics and honesty still counted. But, in truth, I didn't try to puncture the picture I was seeing, I just reveled in it.

I have many grandchildren of the same age, living in much more segregated environments than these four young travelers, and even then, I see the effects of the edges of their environments. It isn't only the air we breathe or the water we drink that is contaminated; it is the society in which we live.

Most of the people that we hear and read about in the papers live in a world of falsity. The world they live in is often make-believe, luxurious and when it all blows up, and it regularly does, we treat it as if it was just a case of conspicuous consumption.

Too many celebrities lack the skills to live lives filled with values. It takes a rigorous discipline to regulate your desires when you can buy them all, have them all, and do it all right out in public.

The current economic disaster has taken a whole generation of people and given them a new life experience that may, in the long run, if the lessons are learned, serve them well.

I am not sure what it will take to compel us to "stop the world" get off, and spend some time in a careful mode of spiritual realignment. I am hoping it will not have to be catastrophic, but with our national rush into insanity, a simple dose of anything we have, does not appear to have the answer.

The first opportunity I have, I am going to spend some time in the environs of Old Miss, and Oxford, Mississippi itself. I want to find out what they are growing down there.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc. His e-mail is howkar@wi.rr.com. ★



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Ending the "secular" year

New Year's Eve is almost here. We called our new friends, Howie and Alice, who are from Washington, D.C., and made aliyah a few weeks before us and whom we met at the home of synagogue friends and said, what are you doing for New Year's Eve?

We just found a box with a new tablecloth, a New Year's Eve runner, napkins and other stuff plus we've got some unopened bottles of champagne we bought in our lift. We aren't planning hats and horns, just lots of food and *schmoozing*. Now we are doing a party at their apartment. Alice and I are even going to my hairdresser to get our hair done!

I remember when I lived here in the 70s, the line was *mah aht osah b' Sylvester?* Of course I had no clue what was Sylvester until I did a little research and discovered New Year's Eve was called St. Sylvester's Day in Europe as a feast day after a Roman priest who became pope from 314 to 335 and was the first Pope when the first Church of St. Peter's at the Vatican was built. He died on Dec. 31.

In Israel, for years the rabbinate exerted its power threatening to remove *kashrut* certificates if hotels hosted celebrations because on the Christian calendar it is called St. Sylvester's Day. However, in recent years, more and more Israelis host parties, and hotels advertise midnight parties on Sylvester.

In all countries that use the Gregorian calendar, with the exception of Israel, New Year's Day, Jan. 1, is a public holiday. Since it is a Friday this year and many offices close in order to give workers a two-day weekend, there will probably be more celebrating.

Something new has entered my life, kind of a secret ambition that got fulfilled. Some weeks ago I read in the *Jerusalem Post* weekend magazine of an Internet-only radio station based in the building of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, called Rusty Mike radio. Adam Mallerman, a 38-year-old immigrant from England is providing information in English, based on a format of music and chatting, 9 to 12 hours a day.

A few weeks ago I went in to see Adam and proposed doing some spots, and he loved the ideas. Once a week, Adam and I chat with "Shuk Shopping," where I give the two hottest items in Machaneh Yehudah, the Jewish produce market in Jerusalem; two items you should wait to buy when prices come down; and something I've found in the shuk that is really unusual. After my first show a week ago, there were 300 hits on my spot and Adam was flabbergasted.

Later in the week, I started a second spot on the *Afternoon Shmooze* talk show with Nettie Feldman called "It's a bargain," where I talk about bargains. So far, I only have Jerusalem but I'm trying to get friends around the country to send me items. Those wanting to hear me on the shuk shopping can plug in <http://bit.ly.82XFla>, but you may have to use a special program in your system for it to work. Otherwise, try typing in Rustymikeradio.com; in upper right-hand corner box, type in "shuk shopping"; when the explanations pops up, hit "podcast" and listen to me! So far only episode #1 is on but #2 should be up soon.

In the past two weeks, we've had two very special evenings sponsored by our synagogue, Kehilat Morshet Avraham. One was an evening of Shuly Natan singing the songs of Naomi Zemer. Shuly Natan was a young army girl in 1967 when Naomi Shemer, one of Israel's well-known song writers, heard her on the radio and asked for her to sing a song she had just written for a song contest. The song was "Yerushalayim shel Zahav, Jerusalem of Gold," and Shuly Natan's career was launched.

The second evening was historian, biographer and author, Sir Martin Gilbert, sharing highlights of his forthcoming book, *Jews Under Islamic Rule*. We were part of a crowd of over 400 people, spell-bound as he related the plight of these Jews from the 15th century to the present. Look for the book in the spring.

Two more days of the old year, and I still have plenty of stories to write including an afternoon-evening trip with the Jerusalem Municipality, showing us new City of David archaeological excavations, a meeting with the mayor, dinner at a typical Israeli restaurant and the Tower of David Sound and Light spectacular.

Walking in the Footsteps of My Ancestors More than 3,000 Years Ago

People always say there is much history under foot when you walk in Israel. When the Jerusalem Municipality offered members of the foreign press some unique views of the city, we jumped at the chance to participate. First on the agenda was the VIP tour of the City of David with Shahr Shilo, marketing director and tour guide of the City of David, former teacher in the tour guides course, and history and archaeology teacher, par excellence,



3,800-year-old city wall from time of King David with view of Arab Silwan (Shiloach) in the background.



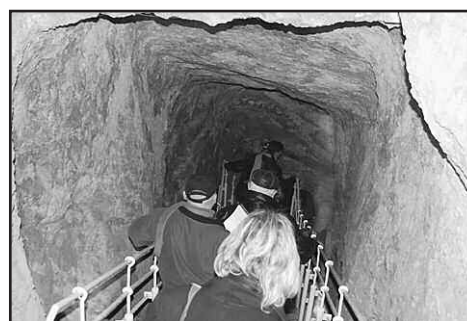
Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Is Judaism Green?

I entered the classroom, where more than 30 Jewish adults who had been studying together for the past semester buzzed in conversation. I began class by asking my students a simple question: "Are you concerned about what is happening to our environment and how it may affect the future of your children and grandchildren?" Without a single exception, every person in the room said yes.

Read any newspaper today and you will find stories about the problems that are being created by global warming, water, air and soil pollution, destruction of ecosystems and rain forests and of course, our dependency on oil. But human abuse of our earth is not a new issue or one that has



Descending the steps to one of the tunnels that brought water to Gihon Spring. Both photos by Barry A. Kaplan.

who told us "seeing the City of David is walking the Bible."

After a lovely lunch of lox, bagels, cream cheeses and salads on the deck of the reception area, we received a brief orientation, learning that where we were in ancient Jerusalem, first mentioned in Genesis 14 as the city of Shalem hosting Abraham 3,800 years ago. Why was this ancient city outside what is today the "Old City" surrounded by walls? The answer is because of water and being a strategic point. There were no aqueducts in the 2nd century BCE. While high society people wanted to live in the upper area, poor people lived at the bottom.

From here we walked to a room where we were handed 3-D glasses to enjoy an audio-visual 3-D narrative of the history of the City of David.

Down many steps, we went to the area of new excavations on King David's palace, now standing in the area beneath the floor of the deck and entrance where we had lunch. We heard more about the place 800 years prior to King David's time, the ancient Jebusite city of Zion (II Samuel 5) when David captured it.

We hear of archaeologist, Dr. Eilat Mazar, who in 2005 discovered what is believed to be the 10th-century BCE (see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 15)

developed solely as a result of technology. Sadly, man's instinct to destroy the natural world dates back to Biblical times.

It seems that we have always needed guidance in how to treat the earth. In Deuteronomy 20:19-20, we are commanded not to cut down fruit-bearing trees during a siege against a city because they may one day feed the people who survive, although we are permitted to cut down non-fruit-bearing trees to use for building materials. This prohibition against destroying (*bal tashchit*) teaches us two very important lessons: the value of humility and restraint in how we act towards the earth.

The basic principle they established bears repeating today: While man may use the earth for his needs, he may not use any resource needlessly.

Think about it: What better time is there to limit the human tendency to act without concern for our environment than after a successful conquest, when we are infatuated with our own sense of power? And what better value can we instill than our responsibility to rebuild and renew the earth for future generations than after the destruction incurred during a war?

Judaism has a lot to say about how to create a balance between using the resources we have and abusing or destroying them. The rabbis greatly expanded the concept of *bal tashchit* to prohibit wasting goods and materials, clogging wells, releasing toxic fumes and chemicals into the earth and killing animals for convenience rather than necessity. The basic principle they established bears repeating today: While man may use the earth for his needs, he may not use any resource needlessly. But how do we weigh our needs against our excesses? Who decides what a legitimate use is and what is wasteful?

In attempting to answer these questions, we need to look at the purposes for which man was created in the first place. Our first answers are found in Genesis 1:28, where we learn that man was put on the earth to "fill it and conquer/subdue it," and in Genesis 2:15, where our divine purpose is "to work it (the Garden of Eden) and to guard it." Our marching orders seem clear, or do they?

From the beginning of time, we have had to face the challenge of balancing two contrary ideas: our obligation to use the environment for our own needs against the responsibility of preserving and protecting it. As a result, Jewish tradition is rich with rituals and holidays that enable us to develop a sound and balanced environmental ethic.

(see Lederman, page NAT 14)



Jewish Scholar

REVIEWED BY JACOB NEUSNER

Reform Judaism for our day: Why it is necessary

*The Bamberger Lecture
Hebrew Union College –
Jewish Institute of Religion
NYC, Dec. 1, 2009*

To explain the personal context for speaking about the future of Reform Judaism, I begin with a short story. Once upon a time there was a young man, a third generation American, who was raised in a classical Reform temple, who in the Reform manner celebrated becoming a bar mitzvah and who was confirmed in the Reform rite. He was inspired by his Temple's Reform rabbi to become a Reform rabbi. He held national office in the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), and he was admitted to Hebrew Union College. This prince of the Reform realm – on the very day he was supposed to begin studies at Hebrew Union College – entered the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. To do so he agreed to give up the lobster dinners, the veal parmigian, and the B.L.T. sandwiches that he had loved and even to quit smoking on the Sabbath, as admission to JTSA demanded.

Why all this? It was not a drastic change of convictions. He was not a *baal teshuvah* – one who reverted to the true Torah and acted out his new faith. His reason for apostasy was not so profound as that. He thought he would get a better Jewish education at JTS than at HUC. To that goal everything else was secondary. Six years later he was graduated by JTS as a Conservative rabbi.

As you surely guessed I am the man. I choose this occasion to explain why I have come back to the convictions (if not to the cuisine) of my youth – not because they are expedient but because they are compelling. After 50 years I affirm Reform Judaism as the American Judaism of choice and of necessity. I maintain that if Reform Judaism did not exist today, we American Jews should have to create it. Now therefore is a time to reaffirm Reform Judaism for tomorrow. That is what I learned in 50 years of apostasy. Reform Judaism answers the urgent question confronting American Jews in the American context.

To explain why I have found my way back to the Reform heartland of American Judaism, I do not propose to appeal to the surveys that count Reform as the most numerous Judaism in the USA. That would merely echo the demographic triumphalism of Orthodox Jews who say that the future of American Judaism can be calculated from the number of baby

carriages and coffins in each movement, and that they therefore are on the rise and the rest of us are on the way down literally.

Demography matters, but I do not offer a triumphalist reason for Reform, following the obnoxious example of those Orthodox Jews who tell the rest of us we are dying out and the sooner the better. The numbers of American Jews who identify themselves as Reform are formidable, but I do not ask demographic findings to prove theological truths. Rather I venture to explain the findings of demography by appeal to the ideas that people hold and whether those ideas conform to the intellectual circumstance in which they find themselves. Reformist Judaisms – not just Reform Judaism but its integrationist cousins – offer religious systems that compete favorably with other segregationist Judaisms.

First, because I use some unfamiliar language, I'll briefly define my terms. What, exactly, do I mean by (1) a religious system, (2) a Judaism and (3) a reformist Judaism?

(1) A religious system is a set of ideas and practices that cohere and animate the life of a group, a community. A religious system holds together by focusing on an urgent question and supplies that question with a self-evidently valid answer. The answer is repeated in the beliefs and behavior that comprise the system. So the key is: A religious system says the same thing about many things. A repeated message expressed through many media would be, for example, the election of Israel, the people, as God's chosen, a motif that is expressed in nearly all transactions of nearly all Judaisms.

(2) A Judaism is a way of life and a world view that embody and explain the shared life of people who regard themselves as the Israel of which Scripture speaks. A community of Judaism commonly calls itself "Israel." It is that appeal to the status of being Israel that marks a religious system as a Judaism.

(3) A reformist Judaism is any Judaic religious system that takes as its urgent question the issue of how to be Jewish and something else. A reformist Judaism joins practice of Judaism with another cultural affinity, for instance how to be American by nationality and Jewish by communal culture and religion – Jewish and American, Jewish and French, or Judaic and Buddhist, to take a popular example. Reformist Judaisms are culturally integrationist. By that definition even the modern Orthodox Judaisms of the USA are a branch, a species, of the same genus, reform Judaism. They make space for other commitments besides those of Judaism, teach their children something beyond Torah for instance, but Orthodox Judaisms that accommodate only one culture, a Jewish one, segregate themselves and are called self-segregationist. They do not belong to the reform genus.

A reformist Judaism treats reform as a verb (as Leonard Fein proposed a generation ago) – a verb and not a noun. A Judaism that reforms the received tradition to

accommodate the ambient cultural and social order is a reformist Judaism. The outcome of that reform to begin with is the Reform Judaism with a capital R that is embodied in the institutions that we know as HUC-JIR and its companions.

By these definitions there are only two categories of Judaic religious systems in existence today: integrationist and self-segregationist. There is a single corpus of Judaisms that affirm the integration of Judaism and its faithful into the matrix of contemporary secular culture. This is the reformist genus of which Reform Judaism is a primary component. There is yet another corpus of Judaism that segregate the faithful from all other religious and secular communities in the world today. Here is self-segregationist Judaism and there is integrationist Judaism.

I maintain that if Reform Judaism did not exist today, we American Jews should have to create it.

By that definition the various integrationist Judaisms encompass Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and New Age Judaisms, and so-called modern Orthodox or self-defined "traditional" Judaisms as well. I see no categorical distinctions between Conservative Judaism, with its sporadic engagement with the authoritative Halakhah, and modern Orthodox Judaism, with its concern for the issues of modernity and its courageous effort to mediate between tradition and modernity. Integrationist Orthodoxy is a reformist Judaism and differs from Reform Judaism in degree, not in kind. But a reformist Judaism differs fundamentally from any self-segregationist Orthodoxy, whether of the Hasidic or Habad or the Mitnagdic-yeshiva variety of Agudat Israel. Self-segregationist Orthodox Judaisms flourish in the state of Israel and take root everywhere Judaism is practiced; integrationist Judaisms predominate in the USA and in Latin America.

At issue in self-segregation is social vision of a Judaic religious system. That is not a matter of outreach. The yeshivas recruit students and seek to transform them. They do not teach science or history in the yeshivas, only Midrash and Talmud. A Judaism can seek to attract newcomers without qualifying as integrationist. It is what happens within the group that matters. Habad invests in outreach but measures success by the number of black hats it assembles for its great assemblies. Habad does not accommodate to modernity but seeks to reverse its effects.

With these definitions in hand, let us return to my claim that if we had no Reform Judaism today, we should have to invent it. I maintain that Reform Judaism persuasively answers the particular questions that American Jews find urgent.

It prides itself on its relevance to the contemporary social order, to the issues that engage the Jews to whom it speaks. Specifically, Reform Judaism began and now thrives in America among Jews who want to be Jewish and also to make their lives in the American mainstream. It has found a way to do so, and because it answers an urgent question facing us, reforming Judaism is as necessary now as it was a century and a half ago – how to be Jewish and also a citizen in a modern democratic republic.

A reformist Judaism speaks to Jewish generals and admirals, U.S. senators and representatives, judges and cabinet secretaries. Imagine the Jewish scene in the USA if the only Judaism on offer was one or another of the self-segregationist Torah-true Judaisms – systems that permit no negotiation between the ambient culture and the norms of the sole valid Judaism. Would a self-segregationist Orthodox Jew wearing a big black hat consider running for president as Senator Lieberman did for a time? But the Orthodox Judaism of Senator Lieberman does not include wearing Jewish clothing, a black hat for example. To take a weightier example: There is a range of behaviors that are impossible in modern America for the self-segregated, shaking a woman's hands for example.

Reformist Judaisms respond to the aspirations of most American Jews that practice a Judaism, and self-segregationist Judaisms speak to the rest. Most American Jews want to be Jewish. Among them many want to practice a Judaism. And the vast majority want to be Americans not only by citizenship but by culture. So they respond to systems of Judaic thought that explain how to be Jewish and American – how to be American but not so American as to dismiss the Jewish difference as negligible, how to be Jewish but not so Jewish that in our lives America stands for citizenship but not culture – merely another version of Canada.

American Jews see themselves as both American and Jewish. They dress like other Americans, speak the language in the accent of other Americans, and associate with other Americans. Reform Judaism presented itself from the very beginning as the Judaism defined by the American condition. It set forth a Judaic religious system for Americans by culture and language not merely by the passport.

That is why by these definitions reformist Judaisms form the bulk of contemporary communities of Judaism. And for that same good reason the position of Reform Judaism with a capital R grows ever more prominent.

If American Jews didn't want to be Jewish, they could – and today many do – easily find a place in a variety of other religious communities and cultures. Many Jews do reckon themselves part of a secular cultural community defined by music, art, drama and learning, not solely by prayer and study of holy books. And yet many of these same people derive

satisfaction in study and prayer and other forms of unique Jewish expression. They do not shut down one part of their brain to accommodate other parts.

If American Jews didn't want to be Americans in a cultural framework, they could emigrate to the state of Israel or affiliate with a self-segregationist commune in domestic Orthodoxy. The numbers of those who exercise either option – give up the Judaic option, abandon the American one – are negligible in proportion to the size of the Reform and reformist components of a community of six or seven million.

What conclusion do I draw from these diverse Judaisms? That Judaism can be so diverse and so dynamic attests to the power of the ideas that comprise Reform Judaism in America, and in my opinion it saved Judaism in America for the vast majority that affirmed the promise of modernity. We cannot sustain a Judaism strictly on the basis of nostalgia.

So after a half century, I return to my Reform roots. In the wilderness I have gained perspective on the situation of Judaisms in America. True, I am moved by sentiment, hearing the grand old songs of the Union Hymnal and repeating the stately cadences of the Union Prayer Book, which I knew by heart in my youth. But these are matters of taste, subjective judgments of no concern to any community of Judaism. What do I conceive to form the principal contribution and the primary task of Reform Judaism now and in the future?

I answer the question in negative, then in positive terms: What should Reform Judaism not do, then what defines its principal task?

It should *not* adopt as uniquely authentic to a single Judaism the norms of Halakhic Orthodoxy and negotiate on someone else's terms. Over the past half-century Reform and Conservative Judaisms have taken the path of pseudo-Orthodoxy and adopted some traditional rites while rejecting others. The outcome of this reversion to tradition was to present Reform Judaism as less authentically Judaic than Orthodoxy. The younger generation perceived tradition to trump reason and "returned" to Judaism defined as Orthodox Judaism. Reform and Conservative Judaisms ended up losing the most committed minorities of their faithful. I refer to two opposed constituencies. First is the tiny minority of Reform and Conservative families that opted for self-segregationist Orthodoxy as their Judaism and the somewhat larger minority that gave up one integrationist Judaism in favor of another, somewhat more rigorous system. Second is the minority that affirmed the classical definition of integrationist Judaisms, and saw nothing wrong with the program of Reform and Conservative Judaisms as is.

By their witness abandoning the conception of a Judaic reformation and adopting the norms of Orthodoxy the reversionists delegitimized the large majority that did not choose the route of return. What was left behind was not just

synagogues denied their most active constituents but the self-affirmation that comes with the presence of those who say by their personal participation, "This is authentic Judaism, this is Judaism as it can and should be. There is no reason for another Judaism."

So Conservative Judaism has lost the minority that affirmed the Judaic component of the systemic message. That group chose the Orthodox or even the Haredi option. The majority that did not then chose the Reform option, they chose to disaffiliate. The children of Conservative synagogues in large numbers have divided up and abandoned their origins. *The center has not held and will not hold.* The sorry state of Conservative Judaism – once the giant of American Judaisms – proves the point.

So much for the negative judgment. What do I perceive as the positive intellectual program of Reform Judaism for the next 50 years? It is to revert to its roots in reason and criticism. Reform Judaism began among critical thinkers, theologians who followed the requirements of reason and rationality. It appealed to historical fact as the foundation for authentic Judaism and invoked historical fact to justify the Judaic reformation. In the struggle between reason and science and revelation and faith, Reform Judaism draws on deep roots of rationality. It appealed to critical analysis not blind faith. Reform justified change through historical criticism and with arguments based on this worldly reason and demonstrable fact. The task of Reform Judaism today is captured in the title of a book published last year under the pseudonym of R. D. Gold, titled *Bondage of the Mind: How Old Testament Fundamentalism Shackles the Mind and Enslaves the Spirit, Toward a better understanding of the religious experience* (Menlo Park, Ca 2008: Aldus Books). Gold says:

For the past 2,500 years there have been the two major strands of thought running

through Western civilization. In one camp are those who believe the truth about the world can be found through scholarly inquiry, evidence and reason, that truth emerges through the use of the human mind. In the other camp are those who believe that truth about the world can be found only in God's word and God's will, handed down from on high in divine revelation, and that this revealed truth trumps reason...

Gold devotes his book to a negative answer to the question, "Are the doctrines of Orthodox Judaism really true?" He pays Orthodoxy the compliment of taking it seriously and at face value. But he concludes with a theological affirmation in the Reconstructionist tradition. It is time for Reform to join the issue of fundamentalism that it addressed at its beginning. Its task is intellectual not political and at stake is religious truth not social expediency.

Reform Jews pay undue respect to Orthodoxy for its theological fundamentalism. We see this in the major gifts flowing to Habad institutions from Reform Jews. Reform Jews reject Orthodoxy for its externalities – the dress code, the separation of the sexes, the extremes of kashrus and Sabbath observance, the paranoid distrust of gentiles, the chubbiness. The rejection of Orthodoxy on such a basis is superficial and bigoted and leaves Orthodoxy unchallenged on the front of theology – a far more serious matter.

The challenge facing reformist Judaisms, whether Reform or Reconstructionist or New Age, is to frame a theology that accomplishes intellectually what Reform and Reconstructionist Judaisms brought about in practical terms. Three intellectual tasks face the next generation of Reform Judaism, which will flourish in the age of reformist dominance. Reform Judaism has tended to apologize for itself to the other Judaisms of the age, to see itself as an inferior brand of Judaism – a set of compromises of convenience. My advice is the opposite: Revert to the clarity and courage – if not to the details – of the Pittsburgh Platform, and assert the right and duty of Reform in the face of contempt. Reform Judaism has apologized itself into the front rank of contemporary Judaisms, so it must be saying something that is true to the experience of its vast constituency. Specify what it is and build on that. So much for the negative task, to stop apologizing. What about the affirmative task? Of what should the program of the next half century be comprised?

I see three components of the intellectual platform on which Reform Judaism should take its stand, but I offer counsel on shaping the future.

(1) The first plank in the platform is to affirm the tradition of reason and criticism that characterized Reform Judaism from its inception. Reform Judaism founded modern learning in Judaism and has no business to do with fundamentalism. Its Scripture was not dictated word for word by a supernatural

being from outer space. Its theology does not promise pie in the sky when you die. Reform Judaism cannot revert and sponsor reversionism. But Reform Judaism should not commit the error of being too traditional and not Jewish enough, to cite the criticism of a synagogue told to me by its rabbi. The power of Reform Judaism from its 19th-century origins was its courage to say, that's the Judaism of the past, we stand for the Judaism of today.

(2) The second plank is to expand the realm of the secular that Reform Judaism defined as legitimate. Like Reconstructionism it should advance modes of Jewish cultural expression in secular media such as literature and poetry, art, music, and drama. Scholarship that is not a cover for apologetics should define the education of rabbis and teachers. Reform Judaism holds that one can be both Jewish and many other things – that affirmation of the realm or the secular forms the foundation of Reform. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaisms accord to the Halakhah a voice but not a veto. That is the first step in the formulation of a realm of secular culture of Jewishness.

(3) The third plank is to affirm the tradition of individualism that Reform Judaism has fostered, to validate the individual conscience that Reform recognized. I was brought up to affirm what I found personally meaningful and to dismiss as irrelevant what did not fit. The criterion of individual meaning meant to measure success by framing a program true to the criteria of reason and truth. But Reform Judaism must find the way for forming a consensus and establishing norms.

These three commitments of Reform and reformist Judaism – criticism, the provision of space for a secular culture, and commitment to truth join to form a theory of humanity: What does it mean to be a human being? Reason and criticism, the secular dimension of the culture, and the autonomy of the Jewish individual – these secure the freedom of the Israelite or Jewish man and woman. The purpose of Judaism guides us. I find it in the Torah's conception of who and what we are as human beings – portrayed by Scripture as "in our image, after our likeness" – "like God," which Rashi glosses as "creators of worlds." The way we create worlds of meaning and truth is by exercising our power of rational thought and our autonomy of judgment, our capacity to think for ourselves and our non-negotiable capacity to be free. These represent what the reformation of Judaism brings about in the setting of this ancient and enduring tradition and explain why, if there were no Reform Judaism and no reformist Judaisms, we should have to create them today. But happily we don't have to.

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A tribute to Jacob Neusner

By Rabbi Margaret Moers Wenig, DD

This followed his lecture and receipt of an honorary doctorate from HUC-JIR, NY

In his introduction earlier this evening and in the citation he read, Dr. Ellenson gave you a sense of Jack's impact as a scholar. I would like to give you a taste of Jacob Neusner as a teacher:

Through his example, he taught us discipline. He swam every morning except Shabbat. And he wrote for hours every morning except Shabbat. He classes and appointments did not begin until the afternoon, when his morning of exercise and writing was complete.

He taught us respect for one another's time: He did not begin his undergraduate seminars until every student was present. And if you were five minutes late, he multiplied those minutes by the 30 people in the room and reminded you that you had thus wasted 150 people-minutes.

He taught us the importance of clear and engaging writing. In his graduate seminars, in which undergraduate thesis students also participated, every word of every student's thesis was read aloud and critiqued by the group and revised, if need be, and read aloud again. In his undergraduate seminars, he'd draw a tombstone in the margins of a paper at the very point he became bored and stopped reading it. It was pointless to plead, "The best part of the paper is on the next page." Every sentence had to further the argument and propel the reader along.

He taught us the value of *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality) by inviting every one of his students (graduate and undergraduate, Jew and non-Jew alike) to his home for Shabbat dinner. This way, non-Jews also saw Judaism as it was lived.

He taught us the value of limits. Those Shabbat dinners and shmoozes afterward ended when Jack indicated they were over. I always assumed the terminus was designed to ensure that Jack had time to spend alone with wife.

He valued good questions as much as learned answers. He taught us that good questions further scholarly inquiry. A good question, perhaps more than anything, made him smile and elicited his praise.

He taught us the value of honest criticism. He never gave gratuitous praise or offered words of encouragement just to bolster a student's self-esteem. His criticism was direct and untempered. I experienced it as generosity and as an expression of respect, even love. He insisted that honest criticism be one of the things students had a right to expect from their teachers.

He taught us the value of hard work. He assigned a good deal of reading each week and expected us to master it, not to regurgitate facts but to discern methods. Thesis writing was on a strict schedule: If there were five students in seminar, then each student read a chapter aloud every

five weeks. Lateness or incompleteness was simply not tolerated.

There were skills and experiences he knew we could not get at Brown, in his classroom or on our own, so he sent all of his graduate students to study for at least a year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and insisted, even if they weren't religious, that they all attend shul every Shabbat and *yuntif* for a full year, to experience a full liturgical cycle. All of his students were required to master the methodologies of what was then called "History of Religions" including anthropology and also to study the history of Christian thought.

He cared for his students' careers: All of his graduate students worked as TAs and then Instructors at Brown and sometimes also as teachers in the local Conservative Hebrew High School. He made sure each student had adequate funding to remain a full-time student until his or her doctorate was completed. No student was allowed to go on the job market without a finished dissertation. Every student's thesis was publishable and was published and Jack never took credit for or stole his students', work or ideas.

Though he held little respect for most rabbis, he had great respect for some (e.g., Rabbi Joel Zaiman, then of the Conservative, Temple Emanuel in Providence) and sent many of his students into the rabbinate. In the years I was at Brown alone, I can think of six undergraduates who went on to HUC-JIR (Danny Zemel, Howard Apothaker, Laurie Rutenberg, Shira Stern, myself and Ted Lowitz.) Among the six of us, only Ted eventually chose another vocation. Jack "sent" us to the NY school specifically to study with Gene Borowitz and Larry Hoffman.

He cared for his students' personal lives, matchmaking from time to time, interviewing potential mates and often officiating or participating in wedding ceremonies of his students, even if they were not held locally.

He taught us to place our own work in a broad context both by allowing us to participate in his long-term scholarly projects and by teaching us how to articulate the place of our work in a broader scholarly agenda.

He taught us to collaborate and help one another. His graduate students were not given any reason to compete with one another for his attention or approval. They were expected to and did help one another with their work and to help the occasional undergraduate in their midst. If I recall correctly, they were not even allowed to apply for and compete with one another for the same job.

He taught us how to think like historians. He taught us that reports in rabbinic literature of names and events did not qualify as history. Other sources were necessary to corroborate an event. (This may seem obvious now but when Jack began writing history this notion was revolutionary.) He taught us to ask of a secondary source that reports to recount history: "How do you know?" And he



Jews by Choice

By Mary Hofmann

Faith vs Reverence

According to Webster, faith is "unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence." Cogitate a bit on that. Scary, isn't it?

Years ago, when my middle son Cameron (now Dr. Cam) was a teenager, he wrote a wonderful paper positing that agnosticism is the truest and purest stance to take with regard to religion. I agree. Surprised?

He went on to say that certainty in the face of the unknown at best shuts every door but one, leading to an almost psychotic state in which one has disconnected oneself from other possibilities and, therefore, any other people outside your narrow definition. Atheism is itself an inverted form of faith...an intransigent stance that there are no possibilities outside the known. Agnosticism, on the other hand, leaves all the doors open wide to possibilities.

...I don't "believe" much of anything, but I have a profound reverence for Judaism.

I thought about all this when I was asked recently what I believe. The truth is that I don't "believe" much of anything, but I have a profound reverence for Judaism. This struck the questioner as a flippant, inherently self-contradictory response when it's anything but. So, especially as I ponder the changing of seasons and the coming of my favorite holiday, Tu B'Shevat, I shall explain.

asked the same of us when we made historical claims.

And even more revolutionary, he taught us that analyzing the forms of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Bavli, the Yerushalmi, and various midrashim was crucial to understanding their meanings. And he taught us that the world view of the rabbis was a system of thought, not merely details about this matter or that.

He taught us that a good American college education was not about the amassing of facts, but about learning how to learn, acquiring methods of inquiry that we would practice every day of our lives for the rest of our lives. That's the kind of education he gave us and it changed our lives.

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The questioner tried to pin me down with specific examples. Do I believe in life after death? No, I don't. But neither do I deny the possibility. I hope there is something, but the only "evidence" I have was a near-death experience that could be explained quite easily by a physiological brain reaction. So I just don't know and I see worrying about it as a distinct waste of the time I know I DO have.

Do I believe God gave Moses the Torah on Sinai? Not really, at least not literally. Do I believe God *didn't* give Moses the Torah? No, not that either. I just don't know. I do know that Jews through the millennia have acted as though God did, and the path Jews have worn through history has been the most just, most moral, most blessed path I know of. Beyond that, it's two sides of an argument that can never be won, so I look at the result and find reverence there.

Do I believe in God, for that matter? Well, define God and then we can talk. I do feel in my marrow that there's a power greater than we are that holds it all together despite mankind's apparent attempts to tear the world into artificial parts. I feel in my marrow that if I quiet myself into a state of reverence I have at least the potential to tap into that power for healing at some level. But aside from feeling great reverence toward that power I call God, the natural world, and the Jewish path I've chosen to follow, I would never be so arrogant as to define what God is. I feel I am part of a whole... and that wholeness and reverence is expressed and celebrated in Judaism.

And what does this all have to do with Tu B'Shevat? In some ways, it epitomizes everything for me. When I carefully watch the annual life cycle (which, in Central California, mirrors that of Israel), when I watch the buds appear and begin to blossom, giving way to the many fruits that make our summer heat bearable, I am filled with a profound understanding that I am a part of something larger... something that breathes the precious and fragile thing we call life, and the reverence I feel is so profound that words can only scratch the surface.

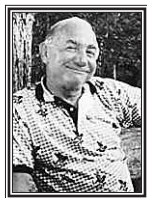
Judaism has found ways to hold onto that reverence, to celebrate it with blessings throughout the day to keep us mindful and careful, to mark the cycle with food and color and celebration, to remember our roots...in the earth, in the Torah, in our lives, and to keep the metaphorical (and physical) trees fed, supported, sustained, and growing, with intellects intact, hearts full, and no need to justify who we are by dismissing those who are different.

I once said to a beloved student rabbi that, basically, I didn't think of myself as a person of faith.

"Ah," she answered. "But you're one of the most religious people I know." True.

I wonder if a person would have to be Jewish for this interaction to make perfect sense.

Mary Hofmann welcomes comments at: P.O. Box 723, Merced, CA 95340; Mhofwriter@aol.com. ✨



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

The secret origin of Tu B'Shevat?

Tu B'Shevat, T B'Shevat, it's not that we don't love you a lot. But spelling you is so darn tough. So, why not Tubbie – that's enough.

You know, Judaism has always been culturally way ahead of the world it lives in. We boast, naturally, of the concept of monotheism. We were preaching monotheism while those so-called sophisticated Greeks pictured a pantheon of celestial creatures who lusted, warred, and competed like the World Wrestling Federation. And the Egyptians were breaking their backs on three-sided stacks of stone and worshiping hawks.

But that's not all. Take ecology. Historically, a new idea, but old stuff to us. Our big, black book of 2,500 years ago cautions us to respect the earth itself. The field must lie fallow so that it not lose its fertility. Dozens of examples stand out. We may not pluck the mother bird from its nest for our lunch – lest the fledglings die. And how 'bout all the rules about kashras? You think snakes and pigs and squirrels and birds of prey didn't thank their creator every day that they were treif (halachically unclean) and consequently not hunted down by hungry Israelites. At least in that small sliver of the Mideast called Judea and Israel – they were NOT a threatened species. I am NOT saying that is the rationale for our dietary laws; but Isaac Bashevis Singer did say he was a vegetarian not because it was good for his health – but good for the health of the animals.

There's even a pseudo-Midrash – that I just made up – that tells of a revolt by the plants and animals. They wanted a holiday just for them.

"Look at the humans, our keepers. They got Shavuot to celebrate Torah, Yom Kippur for repentance, Chanukah for retail merchants and Purim; where they get drunk and act like fools. So, what about us? Where's our holiday?"

It was a lively discussion led by the lordly Cedars of Lebanon. But the animal tribe, like the donkey, had a lot to say, too. Constantly reminding his fellows that the Moshiah, himself, would ride upon his strong back. And how about the snake? A sly creature who tried to dramatize his importance in that scene in the garden.

"Without me, women would have kids every nine months. No pain. And overpopulation would smother the earth. And men – they'd be pulling luscious fruit off trees and drawing unemployment checks. No accountants, physicists, poets, or carpenters. All due to my salesmanship on that snip of a girl in the garden. You

remember the Lord's punishment – all because of ME!"

But the rest of nature shouted him down. "Eve was just hungry – BIG DEAL – and you happened to be crawling by on your belly like the reptile you are!"

But inside and outside the garden, Jewish thinkers clearly saw the miraculous origin of the machinery of nature. Even to the simplest mind it radiated with its divine origin. So, after a lot more talk it was decided that all the creatures of earth would talk to their Creator and ask for a special day when all the world would look around and give thanks for the contributions of the plants and animals.

"Ever try an iced tea without lemon?" "Or a Waldorf salad without apples?" piped up an Apple tree. "And how 'bout the pecan pie they make in the southern United States," shouted the tall and stately Pecan tree.

Assembled in front of their maker, surprisingly enough – in a shrill, but quiet voice – was a small shrub. "Recognize me? You set me on fire, which is why I look sort of disheveled. Remember how we grabbed Moses' attention? I bear no fruit, my leaves have no medicinal power, yet consider my role in history. Without me, the world's greatest prophet would have been a middle class business man in the sheep and goat trade."

The Lord listened without comment.

Next the mighty Cedars that Solomon had bought from his ally, Hiram of Tyre, thundered, "We hold up the walls of the Temple. Without us the Torah and the Shechinah, itself, would be living in a flimsy cart or a windblown tent. Without us no House of G-d." Ah, this was an impressive contribution. The Lord looked thoughtful. He smiled down on his creations.

And the Fig tree and the Pomegranate bush and the grapevine all talked at once about their contribution to civilization; especially the outspoken grapevine. "Sir, no disrespect intended, but ever since you bounced the newlyweds out of the Garden, life is no stroll in the park. And were I not around to occasionally gladden the human heart, there'd be a lot more highly irritated humans bouncing rocks off the heads of their fellow creatures or jumping off cliffs. I smooth over the rough edges. I inspire dreams."

So, the Lord listened to his children and inscribed on the scroll of creation the holiday we call Tu B'Shevat – the honoring of nature. From the grapevine that hugs Mother Earth to the Cedars of Lebanon that seem to hold up the sky came a hoarse, but happy cheer.

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



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

What does Jewish music sound like?

I had intended this column to review the CD of the music of Lukas Foss ("Elegy for Anne Frank," "Song of Anguish," "Lammdeni") and Robert Beaser ("The Heavenly Feast"). This CD was part of the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music released through Naxos (8.559438). Most of the many CDs in this extensive series of recordings were done in the first five years of this decade. Almost two dozen CDs in this series have previously been reviewed by me in this column several years ago. Incredibly only this one that was sent to me for review was overlooked. Perhaps it was "overlooked" by accident or perhaps by design; I cannot state which, however.

I want to assure my readers that the question of whether I liked or didn't like the music I heard on this CD is irrelevant to this review. I recall having stated my admiration for the scholarship that went into these accompanying booklets, this one above all, the biographical information about the composers and performers alike written by Neil W. Levin as being the platinum standard of scholarship and CD booklets. The information in the booklet with this CD is of the kind that one would have to search through many sources to find. I found the information concerning "Lammdeni" to be particularly noteworthy. That the range of composers and compositions included in the Milken Archive is wide ranging, even eclectic is an understatement.

The larger question of what is Jewish music as opposed to music composed by those who are Jewish is a question that I would be hard pressed to answer. Another topic would be (and perhaps should be) whether a composition can be considered Jewish simply because it sets Hebrew text to music or deals with biblical subjects, or works of literature either by Jewish writers or even because it deals with Jewish-related subjects (i.e., *The Dybbuk*). This is another series of questions I cannot answer. I believe that it is my role here to raise these questions, rather than glibly supplying answers to these questions, or even opinions.

It is not for me to suggest that you purchase this particular CD because you will enjoy, like or be entertained by this music. Probably, I suspect most of my readers will not. Do I believe that these selections are good, worthwhile or are these compositions worthy to be included in this series? My reply is that I do. Both Foss and Beaser are recognized and respected composers. Can these compositions they wrote be characterized as being examples of "Jewish" music? I suspect that it all depends on where one is coming from.

One can be considered Jewish even if one eats shellfish, ham and cheese sandwiches, never prays in a synagogue, and works on Yom Kippur. All right, maybe not a good Jew perhaps, but these actions do not change the classification.

In the same sense, the music here deals with Jewish subjects, Jewish texts in an artistic and musically effective manner. Many will believe that this is not enough, the "something" that one cannot describe or explain is missing. One Supreme Court justice explained that he could not define pornography but knew it when he saw it! You, dear readers, will have to make that determination all by yourselves. It is not that I want to be on both sides of the fence, but simply that the question of what constitutes Jewish music is one that you will have to decide for yourselves. Yes, I do have opinions on the matter, but these opinions are merely one person's beliefs, beliefs that were fashioned by my own background and training. Goldie Hawn remarked: "What does Jewish look like?" To which I would add: What does Jewish sound like?

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor, educator and a music/drama critic. He may be reached at: 6 Webster Street, Springvale, Maine 04083, or by email at: drmortongold@yahoo.com.

Editor's note: Mazel Tov to Dr. Gold! The Cantors Assembly has selected Morton Gold to be the 2010 recipient of their annual Kavod Award. The Assembly is the organization that represents cantors in Conservative congregations in the U.S. and Canada. The Kavod award is analogous to a lifetime achievement award in the field of Jewish music. In addition to writing for various vocal and chamber groups, he has composed seven commissioned oratorios, all with orchestral accompaniment, a Sabbath Eve Sacred Service and seven concerti for various instruments. His oratorio "Haggadah" was performed nationally on PBS stations in 1975 and was performed under his direction at a Cantors Assembly convention the same year. His column has appeared in the Jewish Post & Opinion for more than 20 years. He has three children, seven grandchildren, and he now resides with his wife, Esther, in Springvale, Maine. ★

PODET

(continued from page NAT 6)

But it was a fiction, with a few famous exceptions like Weizmann speaking before Truman, a meeting arranged by Eddy Jacobson based on old friendship.

The truth is that there is no messiah on the horizon, although there are many pretenders. The good news is that there are many good people, people who will help in time of trouble. (Including, whether my liberal colleagues like it or not, a good part of the Christian right.) And for that we should give thanks.

But reserve a little bit of skepticism with the gratitude; it can save one from a nasty fall.

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com. ★



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Community

The new NBC series, *Community*, about a coed study circle of diverse ages and backgrounds at a community college, offered a notable if scattered holiday episode, titled "Comparative Religion." It began by mocking the (Jewish?) dean, bending over backward to be politically correct at the Christmas-Chanukah season: "Nondenominational Mr. Winter is on his way to the student lounge."

But just as we begin to think that we might behold a thoughtful critique of glorified secularization of the holidays, we are served in the form of a Christmas party the worst stereotypes of pious Christians. At the end of the episode, I wished for relief from the relentless, now conventional assault on public and even private Christmas observances that do not benefit Judaism or any other religion whose adherents take it seriously. The claim of such "non-sectarianism" is that it helps every religion by not preferring one. In truth it harms the cause of all religions by mocking every belief.

Shirley (Yvette Nicole Brown), the African American female in the study group, gives everyone "Jesus bracelets," which are cleverly woven into the dialogue, especially in a subplot – or, perhaps, the main plot of the episode: confrontation of a pugnacious bully. She then cajoles, using guilt, all her friends into attending her Christmas party, not at home but in one of the college rooms. She hints that she *needs* her friends to come to her party, saying outright later in the episode: "Due to my divorce and my relatives picking sides, this would be the only Christmas party I'll throw this year."

Anne (Alison Brie), the Jewish member of the group, breaks everybody's non-committal silence at the invitation by offering: "I guess I could wear one of my Chanukah sweaters." Taken aback, Shirley replies, "Annie, I didn't know you weren't – Christian." Gently building on Shirley's shock, Annie answers: "Yup. One might even say I'm Jewish." Shirley tries to be affirming: "That's good for you. That's wonderful. I respect all the religions of the world."

The banter between Jew and Christian prompts the others to chime in with their religious preferences: Muslim, Jehovah's Witness, atheist. When Jeff (Joel McHale), the class pistol, who is at least a decade older than the average college student, declares that he is an agnostic, the 60ish Pierce (Chevy Chase) taunts, "Agnostic. Lazy man's atheist!" Pierce says that he is "born again," having experienced a rebirthing ritual in his friend's hot tub and achieved Number Five Laser Lotus in his "Buddhist community." Some of the others

suspect that he may have unwittingly fallen into a New Age cult.

Realizing that she is the only conventional Christian in the bunch, Shirley sighs, "The Lord is testing me." Jeff urges, "Guys, this is a subject that breeds conflict." Undaunted in her plan to bring Christmas to the Cretans, Shirley observes, "Wow, don't we have a diverse little family? I say we open up this party to all faiths. I brought my star of Bethlehem, which led the wise men to the savior of *all* mankind, and you guys can bring a little trinket or doodad from your philosophies."

It is clear that writer Liz Cackowski intends for the evangelical Christian to come across as contemptuous of, and patronizing to, the other faiths. Shirley even makes a crack about the Muslim attitude toward women. When Annie brings her menorah to the party, Shirley stuffs it into the Christmas tree as an insignificant and disappeared relic. Walking off for a last minute pre-party crisis, she tells Anne, "I can't believe I never knew you were a Jew." Retrieving the menorah after Shirley's exit, Anne picks up the baby Jesus and whispers, "We know you were one of us."

It is refreshing that her Jewish character is likable and tactful, and addresses issues...to the benefit of group cohesiveness and individual dignity.

Shirley does not let up on guilt and badgering to get people to her party and to keep them there. Things get so bad that Annie protests, "Shirley, you are a guilt machine." Pierce (Chevy Chase himself!) pipes up: "And Annie knows a thing or two about guilt. Am I right, Jew?" But what does writer Cackowski mean later on when she has Annie observe that Shirley and later Pierce do not "say the whole word" when they call her a Jew? Is "Jewess" the word that Annie wants to be called, or "Jewish person"?

Certainly, the writer has nothing to add to the Jewish-Christian banter in countless December TV episodes past. It is refreshing that her Jewish character is likable and tactful, and addresses issues (such as the invitation and Shirley's emotional blackmail) to the benefit of group cohesiveness and individual dignity. It is also refreshing that Jewish-Christian relations are not put in the context of interfaith romance, which has been the case in most sitcoms.

But I can't credit the writer with any breakthroughs here. I don't think that it helps the image of Jewish women as "people of faith," to use the expression in liberal Protestant churches, for Annie to be given this last word, "Guys, everyone's faith is weird. Let's just not talk about it." The moral of the episode is expressed by bright



Book Review

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Poet and artist extraordinaire

In My Bustan. Poems by Michal Mahgerefteh. Poetica Publishing Company. 2009. Pp. 77. \$13.

We are in the debt of our very own Tidewater poet and artist Michal Mahgerefteh. Her remarkable contribution to Jewish life, which has gone unheralded by and large, ought to be finally acknowledged with a great opportunity at hand.

Her first published collection of poetry, *In My Bustan (In My Orchard)*, reflects well on her flowing and authentic well-springs of a rich and inspiring Sephardic heritage. Michal's delicate yet penetrating expression on themes culled from the full array of the Jewish experience is faithful testimony to her profound and loving attachment to the unique features of her multifaceted tradition and background.

She succeeds in seamlessly blending the personal observation with the public agenda in the manner of Jewish poets of note whose private world has found its full meaning and purpose in the larger context of the community's roots, challenges and aspirations. Her keen and sensitive eye captures much in the



blond bombshell Britta (Gillian Jacobs), who is Jeff's love interest: "Are we really going to let religion divide us like this?"

Writer Cackowski did add an interesting, attention-getting effort to frame the typical "holiday theme" in a new and unique context. At this she succeeded somewhat.

In the opening frames of the episode, a townie bully (Anthony Michael Hall) hanging around the cafeteria picks on Abed (Danny Pudi), the Muslim student, irritated that Abed takes several cookies for his friends. The bully claims that those are the only cookies he can eat due to "food allergies," and then pushes the dish all over Abed in front of everyone. Jeff steps forward to protect his friend, and the bully threatens a fight. Jeff challenges the guy to a fight later after the bully enters a classroom to heckle Jeff during a Spanish exam and then contemptuously corrects Jeff's Spanish.

The last segments of the episode mostly showcase Shirley's acting up. She tries to get everyone to sing "Jesus is a friend of mine," regardless of their theology. She has accused Jeff of hating her and Jesus because he plans to fight the bully instead of attending her party, writing him off as "dead" to her. "If any of you leave[s]," she tells the others, "you'll be dead, too." But leave they all do, with Shirley following.

Seeing Shirley, Jeff tries to make peace with the bully, but the latter savagely smites (see Gertel, page NAT 15)



seemingly mundane as well as the sacred. For example, Yusef, the Arab worker at the fruit stand in an environment alien to him, or her own family's heartfelt as well as colorful preparations for Shabbat's joy.

Michal is intimately tuned in to her family's saga in both Morocco and her birthplace Israel. Though securely ensconced in her present American setting, her home since 1986, she faithfully listens to past voices, creatively transmitting them to us. Michal, in truly Jewish fashion, transcends the borders of time and space to bring into her, and our *bustan*, that enchanting orchard and sanctuary of our tender essence, a delighting fragrance. A vivid example is the following stirring verses from her poem "Peaceful Thoughts to My Sleep," dedicated to her beloved mother.

I want to walk in your bustan to the scent of the sweet-lemon tree. Harvest this rare fruit, prepare marmalade for me. Take me back to the old days. My heart aches for your laughter and spice, but tonight the cold silvery skies brought a peaceful thought to my sleep; your presence is a beacon to my wondering thoughts stirring formless beginnings of strength and vigor (P. 5).

In addition to Michal's accomplishments as both an award-winning poet and artist creating exhibited acrylic paintings and collages, along with the unflinching support of her husband Ben, who is a native of Iran, she is the founder, publisher and editor of *Poetica Magazine*, *Reflections of Jewish Thought*, enjoying an international fellowship.

Many a poet and author, myself included, owe her the opportunity to appear in a tasteful format and cover. Let us surprise Michal and our own yearning hearts by treating ourselves and others to her soulful poetry at poeticamag@aol.com or 757-617-0821.

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

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Synagogue history will interest all American Jews

Becoming American Jews: Temple Israel of Boston. By Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan, Susan L. Porter, and Lisa Fagin Davis. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, Hanover: University Press of New England. 280 Pages. \$24.95.



Synagogue histories are usually of interest only to members of the congregation about which they are written. This one, carefully researched to observe the 150th anniversary of Boston's Temple Israel, is an exception to that general rule. It will appeal to all residents of Boston, to members of the Reform movement nationally, and to everyone wanting to know more about the saga of Jews in America.

Founded in 1854 as Congregation Adath Israel by a small group of German Jews in order to observe the practices of Reform Judaism, what eventually became Temple Israel flourished from its original status as a German shul to become the largest Reform synagogue in New England. Its development can be recounted through the contributions of the eight men who served as senior rabbi and the two "hazans" who preceded them.

The best known member of this group was Joshua Loth Liebman who came to Temple Israel in 1939. He moved the congregation to modern Reform Judaism, introducing Friday night services, more Hebrew prayers and reinstating bar mitzvahs. Liebman broadcast sermons on countrywide networks, stressing a psychological approach. He helped to reduce anti-Semitism in Boston and he worked to aid European Jews during World War II. In 1946, he published *Peace*

of Mind, a spiritual guide to healing and forgiveness that was based on his training in psychology and his years in psychoanalysis. It turned out to be an international best-seller with more than a million copies in print. Liebman was transformed into a well-known national figure and, in 1947, he was invited to become the rabbi of New York's prestigious Temple Emanu-El. He turned the offer down but a year later, at the age of 41, Liebman suddenly died of a massive heart attack. He was mourned throughout the country.

Roland B. Gittelsohn, who served as Temple Israel's rabbi from 1953 to 1977, also made his mark beyond the sanctuary's walls. He was an advocate for civil rights, the peace movement, and he was a vocal critic of McCarthyism. He helped the congregation to participate in social action initiatives.

These two rabbis, their predecessors and followers were involved in varying degrees with one of the persistent issues in American Jewish congregations – the often contentious relationship between board members and the rabbi. The rabbi occupied (and occupies) a difficult position as both leader of the congregation and as its employee. When Mordecai Kaplan was offered the pulpit of the first Reconstructionist synagogue, he accepted based on the condition that he not be paid a salary. Rabbis are rarely in Kaplan's financially privileged position so that this question remains a bone of contention in the lives of American congregations as it was with several of Temple Israel's early rabbis.

Other aspects of American Jewish history that go beyond Temple Israel but that are recounted in this book are the growth and change of Reform Judaism, the increased role of women in Jewish life, and the late 19th-century troubled relationships between German Jews and East European Jews.

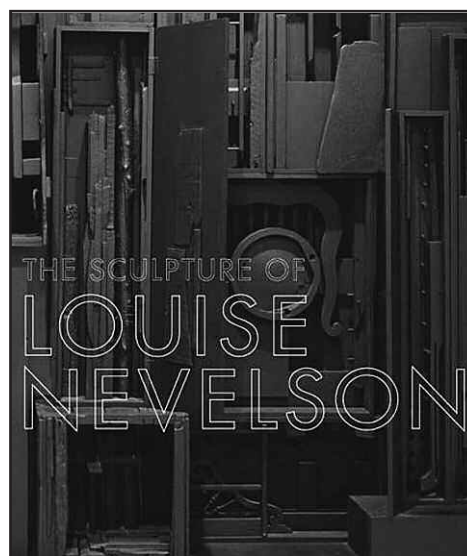
While successfully stressing the story of one congregation, the authors, historians all, have managed to extrapolate from this single emphasis a useful depiction of developments affecting the entire American Jewish community. The book deserves a wide readership, far beyond the Temple Israel membership.

Influential figure in American art

The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson. Edited by Brooke Kamin Rapaport. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 256 Pages. \$40.

In 2007, New York's Jewish Museum mounted an impressive exhibition of Louise Nevelson's work. The accompanying catalog, published in a cloth bound edition, sold for \$55. A new paperback version sells for \$40. This slightly modified review of the 2007 publication applies to the 2009 release since nothing has changed save for the binding.

The book contains 177 illustrations in both color and in black and white. It also has four essays on Nevelson and her work as well as comments by three



contemporary sculptors, two of which are presented as question and answer interviews. Finally, there is a year-by-year chronology of Nevelson's life and a listing of her exhibitions.

Nevelson was born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1899 to a Jewish family of upper-middle-class landowners and timber merchants. In one of the book's essays, a cryptic and unelaborated reference is made to the association between her father's work as a lumberman and her use of wood as the medium for her sculptures. Nevelson, her mother, and two siblings came to the United States in 1905 and joined her father in Rockland, Maine, where he worked in construction and established a lumber yard.

In 1918, Nevelson graduated from high school in Rockland and met Charles Nevelson, son of a wealthy New York shipping family, who had come to Maine on business. They were married two years later and settled in New York, initially in Washington Heights, Manhattan and then in Mount Vernon. They had one son but the marriage broke up in 1931, and after a decade of separation, they were legally divorced in 1941. While they were together, Nevelson began to take lessons in painting and drawing. After the separation, she went to Europe to study art at Hans Hofmann's school in Munich. Hofmann later came to New York and she continued to study with him at the Art Students League. In 1933, Nevelson enrolled in Chaim Gross's sculpture class at the Educational Alliance.

During the Depression, Nevelson worked in the WPA as a sculptor. She began to exhibit her work, showing the abstract wood assemblages that eventually made her famous and financially independent. In 1956, the Whitney Museum acquired one of her wood sculptures, followed a year later by another museum acquisition, this time by the Brooklyn Museum. Gradually, museums and collectors throughout the world, including Israel, bought her work. By 1969, Nevelson began to create outdoor monumental sculptures. Her public art is the subject of one essay in the book.

Nevelson produced works for two synagogues, Temple Beth El, Great Neck, New York and Temple Israel, Boston. In

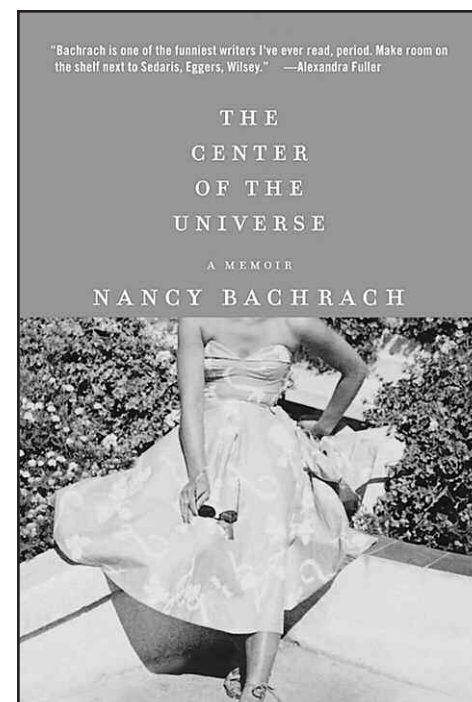
this connection we are told that Nevelson was not traditionally observant, although "she contributed to Jewish organizations."

Nevelson is well known for using "wooden remnants, with scraps, odds and ends, things discarded, left over, displaced, found, free for the taking..." Mostly, she painted them black, although some were painted white and a few appeared in gold. One essay discusses this use of "monochrome and meaning in the art of Louise Nevelson." Unfortunately, little light shines on the question of why she mostly uses black. The author (Arthur C. Danto, emeritus professor of philosophy, Columbia University) claims that "Nevelson intended black to have a function but not a fixed symbolic meaning." He then quotes her as referring to the qualities of wood and blackness as "mechanics." Her response is interpreted to mean that she has failed if this is all the viewer sees. His complex amplification fails to enlighten his readers.

Nevelson died in 1988, but exhibitions of her work continue and she must be considered a significant and influential figure in American art.

Sparkling memoir merges humor and sadness

The Center of the Universe. By Nancy Bachrach. New York: A.A. Knopf, 2009. 237 Pages. \$24.95.



The close relationship between laughter and tears often brings together comedy and tragedy. Drama sometimes unites mirth and ruin, recording a person's aspirations and failures while simultaneously presenting an amusing picture of limitations and frailties. These elements are all richly examined in this sparkling memoir that creatively merges humor and sadness.

The "center of the universe," which gives the book its title is the author's (see Teicher, page NAT 15)



Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

The Carob for Tu B'Shevat

Remember in Sunday School when they gave us a little bag for Tu b'Shevat with an orange and dates and figs and that funny shaped pod with seeds inside and a sweet honey taste called carob?

On Tu b'Shevat, it is also customary to eat apples, raisins and other dried fruit. The sweet syrup from the carob's brown leather pod is popular in baklava and other Middle Eastern desserts.

Philologos, who write the column "On Language" in *The Forward* (Feb. 4, 2005), expounded on this eating of carob, also known as St. John's bread, known in Hebrew as *charuv* and in Yiddish as *bokser*. He explained that the Hebrew, *charuv*, came from the Arab, *harub*. What was more fascinating was the Yiddish derivation of *bokser*. This word came from Medieval German for fruit of the carob tree, *bockshornbaum*, meaning a buck or ram or goat's horn because the pod looked like a horn. The New Testament talks about John the Baptist who ate carob pods in the wilderness, hence, St. John's Bread.

Today, carob trees line streets in Jerusalem and are most likely indigenous to Israel, but they are not mentioned specifically in the Bible. There is one reference (Exodus 30:13) to the shekel being equal to 20 gerahs and one-twentieth was the carob seed. Several references to carob appear in the Talmud; one indicates that Rabbi Simeon Ben-Yochai lived on carob when they were hiding from the Romans.

Carob can be used as a substitute for chocolate in candies and desserts and it very healthy. It contains large amounts of fiber, has almost no fat and is naturally sweet (high in natural sugar) and free of caffeine and theobromine, the stimulants in chocolate which cause headaches, fatigue, rashes and allergic reactions. It is relatively low in calories, high in potassium, low in sodium.

The Almond

Name something associated with Tu b'Shevat produced in the U.S., Spain, Syria, Italy, Iran and Morocco. They can be made into flour for low carbohydrate diets and they are gluten free. They are rich in monounsaturated fat, responsible for lowering LDL cholesterol. They are mentioned nine times in the Bible beginning in the Book of Genesis.

The answer is the almond, *shaked* in Hebrew. The almond is one of only two nuts mentioned in the Bible and is among the earliest cultivated foods. The word actually means a wakeful hastening, referring to the fact that it blossoms so early.

Beginning in Genesis 39:37, after Laban and Jacob are negotiating the sheep, we

read: "Jacob took him rods of fresh poplar and of the almond and of the plane-tree." A little further on in Genesis 43:11, Israel says to his sons to take the fruit of the land to Egypt, "a little balm, and a little honey, spicery and ladanum, nuts and almonds." (Ladanum is a shrub or gum resin.)

In Exodus 25:33, Moses is given directions from G-d to make the candlestick – "three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch." This is repeated in Exodus 25:34 – "and in the candlestick four cups made like almond blossoms." Again, later on, in Exodus 37:19, describing the candlesticks of pure gold: "three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, the next verse, Exodus 37:20 repeats: "And in the candlestick were four cups like almond blossoms."

In Numbers 17:23, when G-d is instructing Moses to make rods for the tent of meeting: "Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and blossomed blossoms, and bore ripe almonds."

In Jeremiah 1:11, Jeremiah responds to a question from G-d: "And I said: 'I see a rod of an almond tree.'" Finally, in Ecclesiastes 12:5, describing the death of men, "And the almond tree shall blossom..."

Nutritionally, in 100 grams of almonds, there are: 580 calories and 5 grams of sugar, with 51 grams of fat (the monounsaturated or "good" fat that lowers LDL cholesterol). The 100 grams also contain: protein, calcium, and high amounts of magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and zinc. Almonds are also rich in Vitamin E.

Carob Bread Pudding (4 servings)

3 cups milk
1/3 cup carob powder
1/4 tsp. salt
3 egg yolks
1/2 cup brown sugar
3 cups stale challah bread
2 tsp. vanilla
1/8 tsp. almond extract

Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a soufflé dish. Heat milk, carob powder and salt in a saucepan to boiling point. Beat egg yolks and brown sugar until thick and creamy. Add to milk mixture. Remove crusts and cut bread into 1/4-inch cubes. Add to custard with vanilla and almond extract. Let sit 15 minutes. Pour into greased soufflé dish. Set dish in baking pan and add water to reach two-thirds up. Bake in preheated 375°F. oven 45 minutes. Remove from oven and let stand. Spoon pudding into serving dishes with custard from bottom on top.

Carob-Date Candy

24 pitted chopped dates
4 tsp. carob powder
1/2 tsp. coarse salt
honey
1 cup finely chopped or ground nuts

Blend dates, carob powder and salt. Add enough honey so mixture is sticky. Add 3/4 nuts and mold into a cylinder.

Place rest of nuts on wax paper and roll the cylinder in the nuts. Refrigerate until cold. Slice.

Coffee Tortoni (6 servings)

1 egg white
1 Tbsp. instant coffee
1/8 tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. sugar (eliminate if whipped cream is used)
1 cup whipping cream with
1/4 cup sugar or
2 1/2 cups sweetened whipped cream
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. almond extract
1 tsp. amaretto
1/4 cup chopped almonds

Beat egg white in a bowl until stiff. Add coffee, salt and 2 Tbsp. sugar. Beat whipping cream and add, or add whipped cream. Add vanilla, almond extract and amaretto. Spoon into muffin paper cups. Place in a baking dish. Sprinkle almonds on top and freeze.

Almond Crumb Loaf

2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
2/3 cup pareve unsalted margarine
1/2 cup sliced almonds
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. allspice
2 eggs
3/4 cup pareve whipping cream or non-dairy creamer
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. almond extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a loaf pan. Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Cut in margarine until it resembles coarse meal. Place half in another bowl. Add almonds, cinnamon and allspice to half. To main batter, add eggs, pareve whipping cream or nondairy creamer, vanilla and almond extract and blend. Pour one cup batter into loaf pan. Sprinkle 1/3 almond spice mixture on top one cup batter. Add half of remaining batter, half of remaining almond spice mixture, rest of batter, and rest of remaining almond spice mixture. Bake in preheated 350°F oven 1 hour or until toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, food columnist and feature writer who moved from Overland Park, Kan., to Jerusalem in September 2008. She has recently completed compiling her ninth kosher cookbook We're Cooking at Kehilat Moreshet Avraham. ★

On this date in Jewish history

On January 13, 1898

Emile Zola published J'Accuse, in defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus.

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

LEDERMAN

(continued from page NAT 7)

Every day, each time we eat, the Jewish "menu" of *kashrut* (food "fit" for consumption) reminds us that the world is ours to use, but that there are limitations on how we can use it. The concept of restricted foods is incrementally introduced in the Torah – first, when God permits Adam to eat only fruits and vegetables and later, when the Israelites are given a list of animals, birds and fish that they are no longer permitted to eat. Both instances reinforce the idea that we do not have unrestricted use of the world in which we live.

Jews also have a special weekly reminder to help us balance our need to control the environment with caring for it. Shabbat is the original Earth Day: It celebrates the majesty of creation and tells us in no uncertain terms that the earth is for us to enjoy, but that we have a weekly obligation to let it rest, just as we are commanded to rest. On Shabbat, we relinquish our own work in order to pause and reflect on the wonder of creation rather than to dominate and control it.

The concept of the sabbatical year, or *Shmita* in Hebrew, also helps us develop a continuing environmental awareness by requiring us to refrain from agricultural activity such as planting, plowing and harvesting during the seventh year of the seven-year agricultural cycle mandated in the Torah. Once again we are required to limit our use of the earth, which is on "loan" to us, in order to fulfill our role as stewards.

Recently, much has been written about the concept of Eco-Kashrut, which is the practice of using environmentally friendly, eco-certified, kosher foods, goods and materials as a way of sanctifying individual use and consumption. Eco-Kashrut looks for Jewish solutions to contemporary environmental problems resorting to Jewish values like *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *chesed* (compassion) and *tzedek* (justice). It encompasses more than just the food we eat, but the clothing we wear, the cars we drive and the products we use. A website sponsored by the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (www.coejl.org) offers excellent resources to develop an understanding of the issues.

The Jewish view of our environment mandates that we balance our needs against our excesses for two important reasons: First, because we are bound to all life on the planet and have an obligation to sustain it, and second, because we are obligated to future generations to leave this world better than we found it. There is no better time than now to embrace that challenge.

Amy Hirshberg Lederman (www.amyhirshberglederman.com) is an award-winning, nationally syndicated columnist, author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney. Her new book One God, Many Paths: Finding Meaning and Inspiration in Jewish Teachings won the 2009 Arizona Book Publishing Association's Best Book Award on religion. ★

palace of King David as well as over 50 seals from the remains of a royal archive. We are standing where Dr. Mazar believes was the infrastructure of the palace.

Via many stairs, we walk along the regular route to the residential area of the City of David, known as Area G, one of the areas excavated between 1978 and 1985. Excavations here determined the city wall was from the time of King David and King Solomon and once supported a palace or fortification.

After many more steps, we pass by Warren’s Shaft, named after Charles Warren, a British army engineer, who discovered it in 1867. This was an access to the Gihon Spring. Here we learn about the Canaanites, an ancient people of seven nations, prior to the time of the Israelites, who were conquered by the Israelites after they left Egypt. Today, there exist, in Israel, the remains of 100 cities from the Canaanite period each with ancient water systems.

Down more steps, we pass a group of soldiers in the Canaanite fortress where David descended when the Philistines came from Emek Refaim and we continue past the Gihon Spring, part of the original ancient water system. As there were no rivers in Jerusalem, people were dependent on the rain. From Ramallah to Hebron, the only strong and valid spring is the Gihon Spring, Jerusalem’s main water source, which flows from the lower part of the eastern slope of the City of David. It is also where King Solomon was anointed.

The City of David was located around this spring. During the Middle Bronze II Age, a secret underground tunnel leading to a pool was hewn into the eastern side of the hill. To explore this water system, we went down the steps and then turned into the irrigation system, a very narrow dry tunnel, where we walked, for perhaps 10 minutes, most of the time turning sideways.

Had we gone straight ahead, we would see Hezekiah’s Tunnel, named for the Judean King who fortified the city, surrounded his quarters with a wall, diverted water from the Gihon into a pool and had two teams of men dig a tunnel from two ends, meeting in the middle. Walking through the tunnel was not on our agenda as the walk takes 40 minutes and the water is about 70 cm deep (more than 2 feet).

At various points and when we emerge from the dry irrigation tunnel, we notice opposite us all along the hillside are the homes of Silwan or Shiloach, inhabited today by perhaps 3,000 Arabs but the guide says that is approximate since no census has been taken.

Today, Ir David, the City of David, is inhabited by about 70 Jewish families and about 80 Arab families. At the conclusion of our tour, Shahar tells us to come back for five or more hours because we have seen only about 10% of the City of David.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ★

Jews in Sports

Teams with Jewish coaches square off

By MARK HAYDEN

Memphis – The University of Tennessee’s 14th-ranked men’s college basketball program proved too tough for Josh Pastner and his University of Memphis Tigers recently in an intrastate matchup.

The newly formed rivalry between Jewish coaches Bruce Pearl and Pastner ended with a tense, but entertaining, 66–59 Tennessee Volunteers win.

Neither team played especially well, UT’s 35.8 shooting percentage shaded Memphis’ 31.4, but the Tigers entered the game with a bit of an excuse. Pastner took over a team that lost two of its 2009–10 freshmen after they left Memphis to follow former coach John Calipari’s staff to Kentucky. One other player also transferred to Kansas.

Pastner has one of the top recruiting classes in the country enrolling next season at Memphis, so the rivalry series, slated to resume next season in Knoxville, should only get more intense.

But for now, Pastner’s Tigers will complete most of their remaining games in Conference USA; Pearl’s Volunteers will do so in the rough SEC. ★

CHASSIDIC RABBI

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but all of the animals, plants, and even angels are affected. Even the Shechinah, the Divine Presence, is suffering in exile. It’s up to us to help and heal ourselves, and others, to learn more Torah and do more Mitzvahs, and to help others to do Mitzvahs to bring healing and redemption to the world.

The Torah tells us that in the end of days we will return to Hashem, and then He will redeem us. This is what is happening now. It’s up to each of us to do our part. We want Moshiach now!

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

GERTEL

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him with fist and foot. Seeing this, Shirley screams for Jeff to retaliate. Jeff retaliates well, and Pierce even manages to hit Jeff in the face so that he passes a male rite of passage. “Congratulations on becoming a man,” Pierce says, thus confirming Jeff as a bona fide bar mitzvah man by virtue of this nonsectarian pre-Christmas brawl.

In the end, Shirley violates the Christmas spirit at the hour of her own pre-Christmas party by striking one of the bully’s goons with a huge candy cane facsimile even

after the latter has begged for mercy. Then she sings a vulgar, politically correct version of “Silent Night.” She has been converted to the spirit of diversity and multiculturalism by the comradeship of brawling. The implication of this episode, which did have some clever touches, is that people who believe in the truth of a particular faith cling to such a belief out of dysfunction, and need to be “socialized” in any way, including a street fight, to find salvation in secularism. Yet the “message” is such cliché political correctness that this episode may well lead viewers to question the very platitudes dished out here. There has to be a better basis of interfaith relations than the revamping of Christmas into a common ground – and ground-and-pound – observance.

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. A native of Springfield, Mass., he attended Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic for The National Jewish Post & Opinion since 1979. ★

TEICHER

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mother, Lola, a colorful woman whose experiences and psychotic episodes provide ample material for what is essentially the story of her life. However, the book also tells about the author’s father, Mort, and her two siblings, Ben and Helen. Accordingly, while the focus is on Lola, the narrative becomes a vivid and vibrant biography of this off-beat Jewish family whose religious observance consists of “twice a year to temple for the High Holy Days.”

While the opening scenes are tragic in nature, the presentation is filled with wit and humor, paving the way for the problems that follow, all set forth with beguiling jocularly. The story begins in May, 1983 in Paris where the author has been sent by her New York advertising agency to launch a marketing campaign for an antiperspirant. Her brother, Ben, a lung specialist who works in Bellevue’s emergency room, calls to inform her that their father is dead and that their mother is in a coma. They were on their boat, *Mr. Fix-It*, named for Mort’s insistence on his clumsy puttering to repair anything “mechanical, electrical, combustible, whatever.” His effort to fix the generator on the boat resulted in their being “baked and smoked.” Mort had been dead for several hours when they were finally pulled out. Lola had a pulse and was taken to a hospital but was not expected to live. The author hastens home to Providence, expecting to attend a double funeral. As things turn out, Lola survives but is unable to attend her husband’s funeral.

Flashback scenes humorously describe the early lives of the family, going back to

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the grandfather who came to America in 1898 and who became “the chief rabbi of Rhode Island.” He kept getting arrested during the Prohibition era for selling sacramental wine. Other colorful characters are introduced and hilariously portrayed.

Lola eventually recovers sufficiently to be discharged from the hospital and the author delays her return to Paris in order to look after her mother. However, after a series of bizarre episodes, Lola is admitted to a psychiatric institution and is then transferred to a “rehab” hospital. She makes progress and a year after the accident, she moves to Florida. The book ends ten years later when all three siblings visit Lola who has lived with a succession of men and is still a bit “dotty” but is managing. “I keep my head down,” she says. “I keep my eye on the ball. And I just keep swinging.”

Nancy Bachrach’s first book is an eminently successful portrayal of a family, effectively combining cleverness with banter and grief with farce to demonstrate the close linkage between comedy and tragedy.

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

MEDAD

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up in. He doesn’t even remember his bar mitzvah, even though he certainly had one. Every day as we take our walk around my neighborhood, we observe the weather.

“It’s so warm outside. Is it really the end of December? It must be much colder in Great Neck now.”

“Yes, they even had a snow storm.”
“The house was always warm. The end of December? Then it’s going to be a new year soon. And then I will be 90, right?”

Ya’acov was taken to Egypt by his children, and l’havdil, to differentiate, I brought my father to Israel. G-d willing, my mother will sell the house quickly and join us. Most of their descendants are here in Israel. That was the magnet that drew him here and made him agree to come with me.

Before he left New York, he mentioned to friends and family that he probably wouldn’t return. He expects to live the remainder of his life in Israel. Most of his friends and family of his age group have already died, or like him can no longer travel easily and independently to visit each other. So, life in New York is not what it once was. The time had come to make real changes.

We’re all doing the best we can so that he’ll enjoy however much time G-d gives him. Vayechi... and he will live...

Batya Medad is a veteran American olah, immigrant in Israel. She has two active blogs, <http://shilohmusings.blogspot.com> and <http://me-ander.blogspot.com>. You can contact her at shilohmuse@yahoo.com. ★



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

Since when is abusing a child more “humane” than profiling?

Profiling is the most humane and ethical way of doing security checks. When a young child's sleep is disturbed, because it's “no pillow time” on the plane, you know that idiots are in charge.

I wrote a sarcastic piece soon after the new rules were announced, but not even I could imagine that a child's vomit couldn't be considered a legitimate exception to these rules and properly cleaned up during “toilet close-down.”

But on the plane, restricted movement and confiscated comforts took a toll.

“The last hour and a half, they said we couldn't move at all,” Ms. Cain said. “That was very hard for my daughter Emily. The flight attendant came by and took the pillow from her head. I didn't like that. Why did they have to wake her up? It would be better for her to sleep.”

Then Emily threw up, never any parent's dream, but all the more unpleasant when the bathroom cannot be visited.

L'havdil, to differentiate, last week when I finally got my father's Israeli identity card, it was from an older clerk and supervisor, both much more experienced and aged than the one who had *stood on principle* and refused when one document was missing. We had other documents that were of a higher security rating. That's using common sense.

Israeli security personnel are trained to intensify and trust their gut reactions, instincts and know what behavior could be suspicious. Granted flight stewards/stewardesses don't all have that talent, but they should be given instructions on when to break the rules. Instead of wasting their time and efforts on disturbing a child's sleep, they should be watching those who could be terrorists. Yes, that's profiling! Profiling saves lives and is even more efficient.

Waffle-making tips and report



Ever since my husband won the fancy new waffle-maker at the First International Jewish Bloggers Convention, I've had to

find excuses to make waffles. Well, that was a year and a half ago, and I must admit that last night was maybe the second time I've done it. Making waffles is very easy.

One secret: Waffles and pancakes are the same recipe. Another secret: I didn't even measure this time! The basic ingredients are:

flour (*we used light whole wheat*)

sugar (*I used demara*)

baking powder

eggs

oil

milk (*plain yogurt is good, too, but we only had goats milk and fruit in the fridge*)

vanilla extract (*I used my homemade in vodka*)

It is like a slightly thicker than normal plain cake.

I preheated the waffle iron (a bit more than my daughter thought was necessary) and put a bit of oil on it every few batches. Actually, that was perfect, since nothing stuck. I waited until smoke or steam came out or the green light was on, and the waffles were stuck to the top. They were perfectly cooked and the waffle iron was perfectly clean. It must be hot before you add batter, and don't add too much.



That didn't stop anyone from eating. Of course, with the toppings (carob spread and bubblegum flavored syrup) my daughter brought along, they probably would have eaten cardboard without complaints.

Sorry, I admit that I purposely took awful pictures to be more discreet about the family's identity. My kids don't like to be identified as my kids. My daughter lives only about 15 minutes away, so this was a nice Saturday night family outing for them. When they finished eating, the kids got into pajamas, brushed their teeth, and then we walked them to the car, and they drove home.

I guess it's like going to a waffle shop for a family treat! It was a treat seeing the kids. My father kept saying that my mother would really get a kick out of seeing the great-grandkids singing, dancing and eating.

One of the advantages...

...of my father's and my walks around the neighborhood.



This tree looks different every time I see it. It's almost like a sun dial telling the time with its shadow.

Shoot first – Ask questions later

The other week I was walking to Jerusalem's Central Bus Station, when I noticed a demonstration, so I whipped out my camera and started shooting.



It was only later when I got closer could I ask questions.

Honestly, I didn't quite understand what the demonstrators were telling me. Maybe they had been in the hot sun too long, or maybe I had. I figured that eventually I'd find out what's going on.



Davka, this morning I heard something on the news about a Water Authority strike, so I googled “Israel water authority strike” for more information. And now I can write about the demonstration.

The Israel Water Authority workers want a better salary deal. And more government workers are joining in with solidarity strikes. Not having seen their pay checks nor having observed how hard and stressful their jobs are, I don't know how justified it all is. Everyone wants more money, though not everyone really needs it to live. Some of us really need proper full-time jobs and salaries,

because we don't have them, or because our “full-time” in time is just “part-time” in money.

Yes, it's a Jerusalem landmark, a new one

Looking at the Jerusalem String Bridge, designed by Calatrava...



In all honesty, it's not my taste, and I can't vouch for the safety of construction, but I certainly can't deny that from certain angles that bridge is WOW! It really dominates the Jerusalem landscape. Maybe one of the reasons is that it really is so incongruous.

Jerusalem is full of visual ironies, and this is one of them for sure.

You can also call it the Olmert monument to...megomania. Between the bridge and the light-rail, he won't be forgotten for a long time.

Vayechi! Let's Live!

This week's *Parshat Shavua*, Torah Portion of the Week, is *Vayechi*. Biblical Hebrew has a different grammar from our Hebrew of today. Take your verb, put it in future and add “and” and you have the past. Yes, strange, but that's grammar for you.

Vayechi is about the life and death of our Patriarch Ya'acov Jacob. He fathered the twelve tribes, the foundation of the Jewish Nation. He lives on through all of us. There's life after death when you have children and further descendants. Although his own father never left the Holy Land, he trekked and returned and then went down to Egypt for his final years, only demanding from his children to bury him in the Promised Land.

Today's the first day of the goyish calendar year, 2010. Now that I don't have attendance forms to fill out, and rarely do I write a check, I pretty much ignore the goyish date. That's pretty easy for me to do. The Hebrew date is something else, just looking in the sky and seeing the shape of the moon, and we can gauge pretty accurately what today's date is. This picture shows a full moon, so it must be the middle of the month.

My father is only connected to the goyish calendar. That's the world he grew

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