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Happy Hanukkah!



*A Great
Miracle
Happened
There*

Cover art by
Stephen Schuster
and Charlie Bunes

Editorial

Shortly after my last editorial where I mention a priest who left only five possessions when he died, I got the following message, "Travel light, live light, spread the light, be the light." No, it wasn't on a fortune cookie. It was on a small piece of paper stapled to the string at the end of a tea bag. I find these short quotes to be uplifting and wise.

This message is appropriate for any time of the year, but especially during Hanukkah with shorter days and longer nights. Also during this time of year, so much focus is on material things. The other messages we receive from manufacturers and retailers make us think that we cannot be happy unless we have every new gadget, appliance, technical device, automobile, jewelry and piece of clothing that comes into style.

To bring the spiritual back into the picture, I am reprinting most of my column written two years ago at this time.

Because in my part of the world it is very cold and dark, I decided to create the following eight meditations for Hanukkah. These can be done before the candles are lit, after the blessings and songs are sung when the candles are burning or even after they go out.

First night: Imagine bringing the light from the one candle to any place in your body where there may be a health concern or simply little aches and pains. Let the warm sensation from the light relax the tight muscles around the pain. Feel the area improving from the healing glow of the light and all stiffness and soreness is releasing.

Second night: Feel free to repeat the first night meditation knowing that the light is double in strength. Now think of any emotional pain you are feeling. Are you missing a close friend or relative who had been celebrating Hanukkah with you every year? Were you expecting a raise or simply a holiday bonus but did not get it? Let the light from the candles whirl in your mind, dissolving all of the sadness and bitterness replacing it with the thought that something good is just around the corner.

Third night: One can repeat night one or any of the previous night's meditations on any of the upcoming nights as needed, knowing that the light will be even brighter than it was the first time around. Now that you are feeling stronger, think about any concerns with your family or close friends. Is one of them in harm's way? Grieving a loss? Not getting along with a spouse? Shine the light all around them bringing with it a sense of love and peace.

Fourth night: Are there challenges in your neighborhood, your synagogue or the city where you live? Some congregants want to allow women on the *bimah* and others do not. Some Jews want a menorah in a public place

Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

Nov. 19, 2010, Vayishlach
(Genesis 32:4-36:43), 12 Kislev 5771

In a few days it will be Thanksgiving. Communities will be holding interfaith Thanksgiving services that bring people together regardless of the church, synagogue, mosque, or temple they attend. Money will be collected to assist those who may not have enough to eat. Organizations like our own Interfaith Hunger Initiative (IHI) will remind us that hunger isn't only local and that we can help children in a small place in



and others oppose it. Let the light swirl around the dark places where differences of opinion are. Imagine it shining brightly over the situation bringing new ideas to encourage a solution or compromise.

Fifth night: As the lights continue getting brighter, think about the state where you live. Are there challenges in your state? Some citizens want prayers before the legislative sessions and other want separation of church and state. Let the bright light swirl around those citizens with opposing points of view and help them to see both sides of the situation and resolve to make an effort to understand each other. Maybe a solution will eventually come from that.

Sixth night: The bright lights from the candles are filling up the room. Are there challenges in your country? Let's see. No shortage here: the economy, the stock market, the bailouts, adjusting to the new administration, gays and lesbians struggling for equal rights, racial prejudices, to name a few. Let the bright lights shine over these very difficult topics and bring with it the needed patience and compassion to work through them.

Seventh night: Even brighter lights are just in time for the planet's woes. What about the challenges facing the world that we all share together? Again no shortages: the environment including safe drinking water and global warming, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Let's all shed some light on these ordeals and see what becomes visible when the darkness is dispersed. Maybe some fresh insights will come.

Eighth night: Tonight the lights are very bright! We have experienced how the warmth and glow of the lights have been a source of comfort and joy during this dark time. This is how it was when God was creating the world and it was very dark. Then God said, "Let there be light!" That same powerful light is available to us now in this dark, cold season and in this difficult time to help us heal ourselves and heal our world.

Happy Hanukkah!

Jennie Cohen, December 1, 2010. ★

Kenya receive at least one nourishing meal a day. I urge you to support the IHI, Gleaners, or your own local food pantry with a gift.

At many Thanksgiving tables, families and friends will gather for a delicious meal often overlaid with family recipes and traditions. I know that many of us will stop to offer thanks for blessings and bounty in our lives. I must say that I have learned a deeper meaning of family, friendship and blessing during these last several months. Thank you to so many of you for your support, kind words, and concern. Who knows what tomorrow will bring, but I have my health, my wife, my children, and my friends, so everything after that is just a bonus. I hope that all of you take a moment to stop amidst the noise, football, or whatever your family traditions are and say, "Thank you." Even in the midst of the difficulties of this world, we have much to be thankful for, and Thanksgiving is an opportunity to remember and reflect on this.

Because next weekend is Thanksgiving, I won't be writing a Shabbat Shalom. Therefore, allow me a moment to comment on Chanukah, which begins a few days after the secular festival weekend ends. Chanukah has a charming, kid-friendly side to it, as we spin *dreidels*, light candles, eat great food, and enjoy the chocolate *gelt*. Yet, Chanukah also has a serious, deeper, and more important meaning as well. We celebrate this festival to recall our struggle, battle and survival for religious freedom.

The Greek community that ruled in the Middle East since the time of Alexander the Great for about 170 years wanted to impose its will and way of life on the tiny Jewish community in what was then called Palestine. Many Jews, though not all, rejected this attempt to impose Hellenism. Jews wanted to live Jewish lives filled with Torah, Shabbat, traditions and rituals. We often forget

that about 400 years earlier dating to 586 BCE, the Jewish community in Palestine was virtually destroyed by the Babylonians. The leadership and scholars were deported to Babylonia and the country was laid waste. Seventy years later, the Jews began to return as the Persians, the new rulers of the world, wanted a Jewish presence in the land. Until Alexander arrived, Jewish life, as difficult as it was, had been reestablished, and living the life of Torah was in the soul of the people. The Greeks tried to rip this away, but the Jews, led by Judah Maccabee, fought back to preserve what they loved and won a brutal war.

It is hard to grasp the deep desire of our ancestors to cling to Jewish life. As American Jews, no one threatens our Jewish way of life. For the most part, this is a tolerant country toward Jews. We live where we want and go to the schools of our choice. We can consider ourselves successful here. But success comes with a price. Being a Jew today is a choice for most Jews just as not being Jewish is a choice as well. If for no other reason, I write to you each Shabbat to remind you of what it means to be a Jew and encourage you to choose Judaism as your way of life. Celebrate Shabbat and the holy days. Be a part of the organized Jewish community. Fulfill our Jewish mission by participating in *tikkun olam* to make the world a better place for all people. Study Torah. Teach the next generation. Light your *chanukiah* each night for the eight nights. Be thankful for Judah Maccabee as he helped preserve this heritage for you and me.

When you light your candles this Shabbat, light one as a reminder of the blessings we have in our lives. Light the other for all those who came before us and left us their teachings, traditions, and love of a Jewish life.

Rabbi Adland has been leading Reform congregations for more than 25 years in Lexington, Ky., and Indianapolis, Ind. ★

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Editorial and sales offices located at
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Editors
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Grechen Throop

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Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

One of my readers, a dear friend and colleague, thinks that it is important that I write about my work in our local hospital. I love the work, and I'm happy to oblige.

Two weeks ago one of the patients in the internal medicine ward came up to me and greeted me in Yiddish. To hear and speak Yiddish is a pleasant experience. A few minutes later we met again outside. He and his wife were sitting on a bench. I blessed him with a speedy recovery and suggested that he put on *tefillin*. He declined, saying that it has been 32 years since he has put on *tefillin*. We got into a friendly conversation. His name is Danny. He is 62 years old, and worked many years as a truck driver. He had been a heavy smoker, and now he has serious breathing problems and can't work. He has been unemployed now for four years, and his financial situation is difficult. In addition, he has four adult children, and none of them are married.

I told Danny not to worry. We have a great and merciful Father in heaven. Turn to him, and He will help you. His wife, who grew up in a religious home, also put in a few good words. Soon Danny put on *tefillin*, and all three of us prayed together. It was a moving experience for all of us. Afterward I sat with Danny and his wife for another hour. I told them my story, how I grew up in Indianapolis, Ind. the only Jewish kid in the class. How I returned to *Hashem* when I was 18, and all of the wonderful blessings that *Hashem* has given to me and my family. How the ways of *Hashem* are good, and help us to have a beautiful life. I was a little surprised at myself, spending an hour and a half with one family, a very rare experience. An inner voice told me to stay with them. I have learned to listen to that inner voice.

The next day I looked for Danny. He was sleeping, and I did not disturb him. Two days later I met him and his wife again sitting outside. Danny put on *tefillin* right away. He asked me if he could keep the *yarmulka*. He said that if I give it to him, it will stay on his head. He will wear it all the time. Wow! I almost fainted. To wear a *yarmulka* all the time means that you are an observant Jew. Danny was taking a really big step forward. In Lubavitch we learn how to make deals. I told him that if in addition he will put on *tefillin* every day and *daven*, he can keep the *kipah*. He agreed.

What is so special about my *yarmulka*? How did it make such a profound change in this man's life? I will share with you the secret. On my *yarmulka* is written in big letters "Long live our master, our teacher, our Rebbe, the *Moshiach*, for ever and ever." I try to be a *shaliach*, an emissary of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I myself am nothing, but I am a representative of the Rebbe, and the

Share gifts that won't be recalled



BY RABBIS
DENNIS C.
AND SANDY
EISENBERG SASSO

December brings the holidays of Christmas and Hanukah, each with its distinctive history and message. Yet at the heart of both there has evolved a common theme of light and gift giving.

In the course of time, the spiritual focus of the holidays has been overshadowed by the material. Even before Thanksgiving, the consumerist thrust of the season begins to surface. What seems to matter most is what bargains we can get, how much we can purchase for how little.

The first evening of Hanukah is arriving soon. During the eight days

Rebbe has unlimited strength. He is bringing profound changes in the world, in many people's lives, on the way to the complete and final redemption. We believe that the Rebbe is *Moshiach*, and he will redeem us, hopefully today, right now.

What can we learn from this story? When life is going smoothly it is easy to forget about *Hashem*. For 32 years Danny got up in the morning and went to work. At the end of the month, he got his paycheck and paid his bills. *Hashem* blessed him with children and they grew up. Danny was indeed blessed but didn't think twice about where his blessings were coming from. He just took them for granted. Only when he lost some of his blessings, when things got difficult, was he open to think about where his blessings really came from, the Source of all blessings.

From here are two lessons. Go to the hospital and visit the sick. This is a wonderful opportunity not only to comfort people who are suffering, but also to improve their life greatly.

In addition, learn to see the good in everything. One of my readers is having difficulty believing in *Hashem*. If *Hashem* exists, and why there is so much suffering. Here we see an example of how suffering brought profound goodness into someone's life.

We believe with all of our heart that this stage of our history is ending. Our generation has seen much suffering, and has seen profound changes for the good in millions of lives. It is up to us now to do *mitzvahs*, to do acts of loving kindness to bring our complete redemption and goodness to all of the world. We want *Moshiach* Now!

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

following it, Jewish families and friends will gather around the menorah, eating latkes, playing dreidel games, singing Hanukkah blessings and songs. Three weeks hence, Christian families will gather around Christmas trees, sharing festive meals and singing carols. On both occasions, gifts will be exchanged.

If we were to follow the news reports, the health of the country is measured by how much we purchase during this season. The more we spend, the better off our economy is purported to be.

Our children receive more than 5,000 messages a day telling them to buy something. Advertisers spend billions of dollars to target our youngsters. And they are paying close attention. Studies have shown that children younger than 18 spend \$150 billion in consumer goods and services in the United States annually. Experts report that by age 3 children begin to believe that consumer brands actually embody their personal qualities – whether they are cool, or strong or smart. In a recent study, researchers at Stanford University found that children ages 3 to 5 tend to rate food that is wrapped in McDonald's branded paper as tastier than the same food wrapped in plain paper. They are unable to distinguish between facts and illusion.

Too often during this season we convey the wrong lessons. We teach our children that material products satisfy and that happiness can be bought. We create in them increasing discontent by celebrating goods rather than goodness. We train our children to be consumers rather than stewards.

How do we help the next generation to stand up to this consumer culture when what they want most is to be part of it? In a world of abundance where so many have so little, how do we say no to a life devoid of care and concern for others, to a life filled more with having than being, greed than gratitude?

At the heart of Hanukkah is the refusal to succumb to the tyranny of the majority. It is an affirmation of the unique gifts of the individual and of each faith community.

Both Hanukkah and Christmas had in their origins a countercultural and anti-establishment message. Hanukkah confronted the homogenizing allure of Hellenism and Christmas responded to the overpowering authority of Rome. Both provided alternative visions to the ethos of their times.

Sadly, in our generation there has been a reversal of the meaning and deeper values of our holidays. For many, the celebrations of both Hanukkah and Christmas have been transformed from their message of light over darkness to a message of glitter and tinsel; from lasting good to disposable goods; from service and caring to pampering and acquisition.

While it is fitting to show our affection and holiday joy by the exchanging of gifts, let us not allow the material goods we purchase to overpower the sense of

'Twas the night before Chanukah

'Twas the night before Chanukah. Oy! What a shock! Somebody outside was picking our lock!

And there at the door stood a *zayda* in blue – and he wore on his *kupp* a blue *yarmulka*, too!

His *punim* was *shain* – everybody would love it! 'Round his neck hung a chain with a gold *mogen dovid*!

He wore silken *tsitzes* beneath his wool vest, and a small flag of Israel was draped on his chest!

He said: "I'm no burglar, so please don't be nervous. I'm the spirit of Chanukah, here at our service!"

"*Menchen* all call me 'Reb' Shalom Shapiro! Without me, this *yom-tov* might need a new 'hero!'"

"I visit all *yidlach*, and bring – *kinnahorra* – good fortune as bright as a glowing menorah!"

"Ich shlepp lots of blessings and Chanukah *gelt*, and joys that are *takka* the best in *der velt*!"

"If you know nice *menchen*, I'll visit them quick, and I'll bring them *gezunt* and a houseful of *gluck*!"

So we sent him to your house, and shook hands and parted. He shouted, "*Shalom*!" out the doorway he darted!

He ran to a wagon with horses ahead. He fed them some bagels, and here's what he said:

(see 'Twas the night, page NAT 13)

appreciation and wonder, the spirit of generosity and sharing that are at the heart of the holidays. Let us find ways to unwrap with our children and loved one gifts of time and memory, gifts of faith, gifts of the spirit. These will never be recalled.

The Sassos have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis, Ind. for more than 30 years. (Reprinted from the Indianapolis Star Dec. 4, 2007.) ★



Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Small change inspires big changes

It was quarter to five when Susan realized she didn't have the fresh basil and black olives she needed for the chicken dish she was preparing for dinner. Guests were arriving at seven and she still needed to shower and change. Scribbling the few items down on a scrap of paper, she dashed out of the house – hair in a mess and T-shirt stained with olive oil.

Like a bird in flight, she flew from the parking lot into the store and headed straight for the spice aisle.

What was it she needed again?

Shuffling through old receipts and coupons in her purse, it hit her. She threw the list in the trashcan outside the store with a used tissue that was in her pocket.

Back outside, Susan began to rummage through the garbage. At first, she gingerly set aside the greasy bags and magazines stained with food. But it didn't take long to abandon her squeamishness and pride and engage in a full-out search and rescue mission for the list.

Which was right about the time a good-looking, middle aged man tapped her on the shoulder.

"Excuse me miss, can I help you?" he asked solicitously.

Susan hoisted herself up, garbage clinging to her sleeve. Before she could answer, he continued.

"I'd like to give you something, to help you out."

"Oh no, really, I'm fine," she stammered. "Really, I'm doing great."

"No, no, I insist. Here, take this," he said somewhat gallantly and thrust some coins into her hand before walking away.

Susan closed her mouth and opened her palm. In it was 48 cents, mostly dimes and nickels.

Her humiliation turned to shame, but then another feeling swelled inside her.

"Forty-eight cents? That's the best you could do? You could have at least given me a dollar!" she fumed as she marched back into the store with the list clenched in her other hand.

When Susan told me this story, I laughed at first. But as she went on, I understood the scenario differently.

How we treat a beggar, bag lady or homeless person is an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as human beings. Do we offer a smile, a kind word, some spare change? Do we give her a sandwich or a coupon for McDonalds? Do we dodge the situation altogether by avoiding eye contact or pretending to be talking on our cell phone?

There is a concept in Hebrew expressed by the words *B'Tzelem Elohim*. It means that each of us is created "in the image of God." What does it mean to be created in God's image? The rabbis answered that question with words that help us understand the essence of what it means to be human. Simply stated, it is this: that each of us is unique, of infinite value and of equal worth.

These three ideas – that we are all unique, equal and of immeasurable value – can and should influence our actions and relationships. From encountering a bag lady to addressing our children, from dealing with our own prejudices to listening to people we don't like or agree with – *B'Tzelem Elohim* is meant to keep us on track so that we treat each person with the respect and dignity they deserve as human beings. Judaism teaches that when we honor others in this way, we also honor God.

So what made Susan so upset? The fact that by giving her less than 50 cents, her "benefactor" did something more damaging than helpful: He robbed her of her dignity. That gesture made her feel small and unworthy.

How we treat a beggar, bag lady or homeless person is an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as human beings. Do we offer a smile, a kind word, some spare change?

Since the fateful afternoon of the trashcan, Susan keeps a roll of dollar bills in her purse. Now she gives – not one, but two dollars – to the woman in front of Walgreens or the newspaper man on the corner. Why?

"Because even though a dollar might be enough to show my respect, I know that two will make them feel much better. And really, it won't make much of a difference to me in the long run, except in how I feel about myself."

There are many ways we can respond to others in need. Some would argue that it is best not to give to individuals who ask for help on the street but rather, to give to organizations like the local food bank or homeless shelter that support them. However we choose to give, we should recognize that it is an opportunity to do more than just hand over a few dollars. It is a chance to engage another human being and dignify their value and existence.

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



Kabbalah of the Month

By MELINDA RIBNER

The empowerment of Kislev

Every Hebrew month ushers in new spiritual energies and opportunities. According to Kabbalah, the Jewish calendar as a whole is a road map for personal transformation. It is the original 12-step program. Those who are attuned to these energies know how to use this knowledge for their personal growth and success.

In the last month, Cheshwan, we did the hard inner work of shedding the past, letting go of what is no longer true. Now in the month of Kislev (Nov. 8th – Dec. 7th, 2010) we embrace all the possibilities before us and we are empowered to go for what we really want.

Kislev is a time of going forward, actualizing one's dreams. It is also a great time for travel. We are able to take risks in Kislev because Kislev is actually a time of deepening faith and trust in God. Kislev is a time of clarity, a time to receive important guidance about one's life purpose.

The whole month of Kislev is shaped by the holiday of Chanukah, the holiday of miracles that occurs at the end of the month, the darkest time of the year. During Chanukah, we learn the most important truth about life. At the darkest time, there is light and there will be light. Actually, the light in the darkness shines even more brightly because of the darkness that surrounds it.

Like the Maccabees who redeemed the Holy Temple in ancient times, during this month we redeem the Holy Temple within us. The Holy Temple represents the holiest, the most pure dimension within us. It is the seat of our deepest hopes and visions of life that are beyond the mind, not bound by the laws of logic and reason. The oil used for the rededication of the Temple was pure and undefiled, reminding us of the possibility of returning to a state of original purity. The miracle of the rededication was that, although there was only enough oil to burn for one day, it lasted for eight days. It was not logical, but God is beyond logic.

During this month of Kislev, we too leave the shackles of the limiting Greek mind and open to greater faith. When we are limited by the mind, we are always tied down to what is known and familiar. We seek to understand why and how. Faith is, by definition, beyond the reasoning powers of the mind. Faith enables us to be present, to not dwell in the past or worry about the future, but live moment to moment fully with trust and fearlessness. It is faith, not the mind, that opens us to new possibilities and

new dimensions, enabling us to go forward in ways that we could not do solely on our own.

This month is a time when we go beyond what is logical and go for what we really want. Though the name Kislev is Babylonian in origin, the word "Kis" in Hebrew means "pocket" and "lev" means "heart." This has been said to refer to the capacity to be a vessel for what your heart desires. Very often people may want and want, but they do not know how to receive what they want. During this month we have a greater capacity to actually receive what we want, but just a small allowing within ourselves. In determining what we really want, we may still need to sift and distill our visions to make sure that they are not contaminated by the ego mind and come for the purest place within us. To know what we really want inside, we have to listen to what God wants for us.

We are able to take risks ...because [this] is a time of deepening faith and trust in God.

By a simple allowing and deep listening on our part, the light of our highest soul connection with the Divine emerges to shine upon us and guide us during this month. When we do this, we experience miracles. This is the month of miracles. With the light of Chanukah, we see even the ordinary aspects of life as miraculous. By the way, Kislev according to the Talmud, is a time of unexpected money.

The fixing of this month is sleep. So Kislev is a time to allow oneself to sleep a little longer than usual. Sleep is not a waste of time, but it provides an opportunity to live in another dimension. So much healing occurs during sleep. The healing of sleep also means that this is a time when we should wake up from the sleepy dimension in which we usually live, and see clearly. When we sleep, we should sleep, but when we are awake, we should not be sleeping.

May we individually and may the Jewish people as a whole be blessed with miracles in Kislev. Amen. Amen.

P. S. The information and knowledge in this article are excerpts from my book, *Kabbalah Month by Month*. This book contains so much more additional information, and meditations, about the months, holidays.

Melinda (Mindy) 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 by email at Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com. ★



Wiener's Wisdom

By RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

I believe

Many times I hear from different people with different attitudes and histories who indicate that it is not necessary to do many things that are expected regarding faith observance because all that is needed is to believe.

"I believe in God, what more is needed?" "I am a good person, isn't that enough?" Both questions sound logical on the surface but are actually difficult to answer. We observe different customs because of background or location and then change them to fit our present requirements. Some enhance those traditions by strict observance and some dilute them by saying that they are old fashioned and hold no relevance in today's world.

We even excuse the lack of response by finding excuses such as, "The laws of Kashrut were originated for health and cleanliness. Now that we have refrigeration and health inspections, it is no longer necessary." That's just one example. There are many more.

I am reminded about a man who lived in the 12th century. He was called The Rambam, an acronym for his real name, Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon. He was better known as Maimonides. He was a physician, philosopher and rabbi. His feats were many, primarily in the field of medicine and Torah. In fact some of his medical pronouncements are still used today. He promoted and developed philosophical traditions of Aristotle. Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were among the notable Western readers of the Rambam. There was an equal legion of Torah scholars who embraced his writings on Talmud and explanations of Scripture.

Because of his worldly appeal and his love of philosophy, he was criticized by his peers and even threatened with ex-communication. He sat down, and among his most notable writings we find the Thirteen Principles of Faith. It is a digest of all the laws of Judaism and their significance to human values and our relationship to God.

These principles are repeated time and again in many different ways. You can find them in song and prayers and poems. They are repeated on the lips of the devout as well as the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their faith.

1. I believe with perfect faith that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

2. I believe with perfect faith that God is One. There is no unity that is in any way like His. He alone is our God. He was, He is, and He will be.

3. I believe with perfect faith that God does not have a body; physical concepts do not apply to Him. There is nothing whatsoever that resembles Him at all.

4. I believe with perfect faith that God is first and last.

5. I believe with perfect faith that it is only proper to pray to God. One may not pray to anyone or anything else.

6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the Prophets are true.

7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses is absolutely true. He was the chief of all prophets, both before and after him.

8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that we now have is that which was given to Moses.

9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be another given by God.

10. I believe with perfect faith that God knows all of man's deeds and thoughts. It is thus written (Psalm 33:15), "He has molded every heart together. He understands what each one does."

11. I believe with perfect faith that God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress them.

12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. How long it takes, I will wait His coming every day.

13. I believe with perfect faith that the dead will be brought back to life when God wills it to happen.

There are many who will dispute some of these beliefs because they seem foreign in today's understanding of God and religion. As time progresses, so does our thinking and our understanding of life and its origins and its finality.

Each generation goes through its battles with beliefs. Each generation has its standards of these beliefs. Each generation goes through adjustments of thought. And each generation proclaims its commitment in ways that may seem strange to generations past and even stranger to the generations that will follow.

This does not mean that each was right or wrong. What it does mean is that just as we have alternative concepts of God, we alter the traditions to fit those notions. God gave us the ability to think and choose. That is why change is not a repudiation of the past but rather an enhancement. We could not have modern ideas if they were not preceded by ancient heritages.

We began communicating with each other with fire followed by drums succeeded by wireless, and then came the telephone and cell phones and computers and who knows what will follow. Does that make fire less important? No, because we have found a way to harness that flame to create warmth for comfort and enjoyment. We just moved forward with the help of what was.

So saying, "I believe in God" is not as bad as it sounds as long as it is accompanied by further clarification through word and deed. We all can't be as firm in our faith as Maimonides, and we all can't sit down

and write 13 principles of faith. It is important to remember that we come together as we do for prayer and meditation to proclaim some belief because we know that without faith there can be no future.

Faith is just not belief in God. Faith is also confidence in ourselves. Faith is loyalty to family. Faith is being in love. Faith is all these things and more. We round it out with an expectation of a benevolence that we understand to be God.

If we all knew the true essence of God what would we be? Part of the mystery of life is the mystery of our birth and the mystery of our continuation after death. Faith is trust. The Hebrew word *Shechina* indicates a "presence or manifestation" and allows us to imagine the meaning of God without really knowing the reality of God because we can never really know God. This is the beauty of faith: The imagination of magnificence.

Maimonides searched for this reality and came to his conclusions after a life time of learning and teaching and applying his craft as given to him by God. We may not be as extensive in our search, but we know that each of us has the ability to reach heights that seem unreachable because of two simple words: "I believe."

Change is not a repudiation of the past but rather an enhancement. We could not have modern ideas if they were not preceded by ancient heritages.

Miracle in the rain

I borrowed the title of this column from a movie I saw recently, vintage 1956, starring Jane Wyman and Van Johnson. It was both moving and heart wrenching. It was nostalgic and timely. It was all these things and more.

The saying goes that art imitates life and that is true in most instances. One thing is for sure, movies can make you feel glad and at the same time make you feel sad. It is sort of like life. We have moments of ecstasy, and in an instant, we are despondent. We are designed to withstand euphoria and disappointment; it's built into the system. Fortunate for us. Sometimes, however, the system breaks down and we can't discern one from the other.

The one emotion that can carry us through dark days and help us rejoice when there is light is called love. It works in mysterious ways. Our hearts can be filled with unimaginable happiness. When we love someone and are loved in return, we enter into the realm of divine fulfillment.

But then the worst happens, and we lose someone we love, and that hurt is

too much to bear. We try to reach for some magical occurrence that will bring back our love so that the hurt will go away and our feelings of happiness return. We remember the bliss of an embrace, the thrill of a kiss, the orgasmic expression of love's completion.

The days and nights are empty now. The touching and reaching are beyond our grasp. The marvel of a smile or a gleam in an eye seems so distant as if they never really were there at all. It is such a lonely sensation. Tears, like falling rain fill our eyes and roll down our cheeks. Sometimes we cry uncontrollably and our body trembles. It is so awful. We are so desolate.

The respected poet-philosopher Noah ben Shea tells the following story:

Once there was a student who was with a teacher for many years. And when the teacher felt he was going to die, he wanted to make even his death a lesson.

That night, the teacher took a torch, called his student, and set off with him through the forest.

Soon they reached the middle of the woods, where the teacher extinguished the torch, without explanation.

"What is the matter?" asked the student.

"This torch has gone out," the teacher answered and walked on.

"But," shouted the student, his voice plucking his fear, "will you leave me here in the dark?"

"No! I will not leave you in the dark," returned the teacher's voice from the surrounding blackness. "I will leave you searching for the light."

Such is the path we should take when we lose a loved one. During their lifetime they gave us light, the light of hope and completion. They lit our path so that we could experience fulfillment. And when that light is extinguished, it is not really gone because the flame that burned our passion is now embedded in our heart for all time – that is called memory.

Memory will not replace the intensity of the joy, but it will enable us to embrace the very depth of understanding and realization that without the shared love, there can be no memory and memory guarantees immortality. Memory is the next step in the thrilling journey of life.

Sorrow is the rain, and the drops remind us of the tears we shed, and the miracle is that our affliction will be washed away together with the sadness allowing us to begin a new day filled with sunshine and a life yet to be lived. This is the legacy that was left to us and we leave others: That the next generation and the next will be able to share what we had and make it into what they now have.

To have loved and to be loved is a miracle whether in the rain or in the clear skies that dry up our tears. We must carry-on because that is the true miracle of life.

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



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

Don't you just love Jews

Jewish students at Brandeis University are holding anti-Israel programs; aren't we the most interesting people the world has ever known. Even though from the beginning of time, we have never lacked for critics and enemies, we are relentlessly self-destructive. All of these young students feverishly trying to save the world will grow up with adult counterparts. As those of you who read my column know, my current favorites are J Street and the Peace Now Party in Israel. Nothing our critics can do or say about us will ever match the venom of these highly motivated and self-destructive brethren. We wouldn't get rid of a single one of them. They keep us alive and lively in our thinking and our own desire to set the world right.

Some years ago when people categorized Jews, we talked about "cardiac Jews," people who held Jewish life basically in their hearts, even when it was not evident in their attachments and behavior; "gastronomical Jews," who ate the food, but not did not limit their diets; and my newest category, "migraine Jews," people who might cause you to leap off buildings, but would be there on the ledge to keep you from jumping off. May the Almighty bless them all, keep them safe, and give us the strength to wait until their senses catch up with the reality of life.

There is hope. If you have been a reader of the *New York Times*, you know over the years that they relentlessly hired or recruited self-hating Jews. Most of them, at some time in their career saw the light and repented, but not all. Anthony and Flora Lewis never found a single moment in the life of the State of Israel that they could even tolerate; A.M. Rosenthal, was never allowed to use his first name, Abraham, but officially gave up his venom to become a proud Jew, as did William Safire. Thomas Friedman tried to maintain some level of disdain, until Yasser Arafat refused his efforts to solve the Palestinian-Arab dispute, and simply moved on. While Friedman's early history as scholar and journalist who came to his convictions about Israel through study and research was fraught with self-deception, life and times have helped him move on and he has matured into a thoughtful and more mature commentator.

We will survive them all. J Street and the Brandies "organizational-terrorists" will come to understand that Israel deserves and needs to survive, and the Washington establishment will not be moved by their self-loathing.

We really have more important issues to deal with. Some years ago *Jewish Action Magazine* sponsored a symposium on the state of Jewish Life in America. Although there was a continuum of participation, it was an all-Orthodox sharing of ideas, from left to right. I cannot imagine that anyone who read the symposium was more familiar than I was. For many years, I used it to teach critical thinking in my 12th-grade English curriculum. It was invaluable in helping students read 20 opinions on a limited subject area, trying to develop the critical skills of separating one from the other.

I am laying this out for you because one of those "important" issues of our time is the lack of dialogue between Jews. The years have drawn us into a national position of a right-wing Orthodox and a left-wing liberal population that do not traffic in ideas. What little communication there is is shouting and derision. This comes at a time in our history when the biggest single block within the Jewish world is "unaffiliated and uninterested." They are not embarrassed about being Jews, it is simply irrelevant. Some of this is expressed in the section of the *Sunday Times*, which features marriages. One of the *Times* requirements is to list the officiant, and reading the notices about the one partner-Jewish names, reveals a significant number of intermarriages with no apologies. Assimilation is a run-away plague in Jewish life today that threatens our very soul, and we lack a proper venue to talk about it.

...one of those "important" issues of our time is the lack of dialogue between Jews.

One of the participants in the aforementioned symposium was Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, then of Atlanta, now of Israel, who lamented that while we have a healthy core of Jewish life, we are faced with a blighted periphery. If we are to change this basic fact, we have to find some way of talking to each other on a substantive level.

For some time we deluded ourselves about the strength of the "peoplehood" with the support for Israel, for the support of Russian Jews, then Ethiopian Jewry, but, as of now, we are out of causes, and faced with factional differences in the Diaspora as well as in Israel.

We have lost the comfort of being able to talk to each other without being judged or judging one another. If you read the *National Jewish Post & Opinion* from cover to cover, you are probably seeing the widest and most diverse discourse in Jewish life today, all under one masthead. The challenge is how to make it a conversation.

I am hoping that at some time in the



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

"Oy," saith Isaiah, "Things could be verse!"

The Hebrew word *qadosh* is usually translated as *holy*, i.e., spiritually perfect, associated with God, and untainted by evil. But the root of *qadosh* originally meant "reserved." Thus, wine jugs of ancient Judean kings were stamped *qadosh lammekleh*, i.e., "reserved for the king." Over time, *qadosh* took its current meaning, and as it did, Jews began approaching national holy texts with greater solemnity. Understanding a text's meaning displaced listening to a text for pleasure.

Certainly, Jews have always valued our ancient texts' meaning. But the texts were also meant to be read aloud to be heard and learned. And texts intended for hearing are crafted to be memorable. Features that make a spoken text memorable include drama, pathos, wisdom, wordplay and soundplay – playful use of rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and meter. (For example, "road rage" is a more memorable phrase than "highway rage," because the words in "road rage" have matching initial consonants and the same number of syllables, unlike the words in "highway rage.")

Now, the Dr. Seuss book *Horton Hears a Who* has an important message

near future, the *Post & Opinion* will gain some financial recognition of their unique place in Jewish publications today, and will have the where-with-all to sponsor both written and live symposiums drawing leading Jewish figures in one paper and under one roof.

There are plenty of voices to consider. Many of them have appeared in the pages of the paper. But when they come together, they can not simply come to present, but rather to talk to each other. There needs to be a place for AIPAC and J Street on the same dais. The young people from Brandeis need to come to discuss why they feel so alienated. There needs to be religious and secular voices from Israel, and enough Israeli politicians need to come willing to tell us and each other about why the country is continually deadlocked and seeming at odds with each other.

The issue is not the survival of the Jewish people. We have the Biblical historical evidence that we will endure. The question is how we will survive intact?

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

("a person's a person, no matter how small"), which is conveyed with soundplay. Soundplay is not incompatible with an important message. Indeed, "translating" Dr. Seuss into ordinary prose would diminish the effectiveness of his books. Likewise, ignoring the soundplay of Hebrew texts impoverishes our holy books.

Of course, changes in Hebrew pronunciation have obscured some soundplay in ancient texts, just as changes in English have obscured meter and rhyme of the Middle English verses known as the *Canterbury Tales*. Using the ancient pronunciation of Hebrew can restore soundplay, but in some texts soundplay is heard even with modern pronunciation. In Isaiah 30:1, we read "Woe to the rebellious children, says Adonai, who do as advised [by humans], but not as I wish, who pour out [molten metal] to form an idol, but do not pour out my spirit, thereby piling sin upon sin." In the transliteration that follows, capitalized syllables are stressed, the words *la'asot* and *le-ma'an* are shortened to *la-sot* and *le-man* as in ancient times, and the symbol // marks the end of a poetic line. Note, too, the word *e-lo-KAH* is substituted for *Adonai* to restore the sound matching of the ancient text but without pronouncing God's preeminent Name.

Thus: hoy ban-IM so-re-RIM // ne-UM e-lo-KAH // la-SOT ei-TSAH// ve-LO min-NI // ve-lin-SOKH ma-sei-KHAH // ve-LO ru-KHI // le-MAN se-FOT // kha-TAT al kha-TAT.

Just as "a stitch in time saves nine" is memorable, so is Isaiah 30:1.

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

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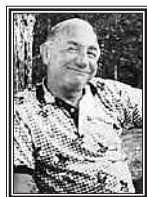
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Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

Herbert Hoover and the Jews

Herbert Hoover was not a man blessed with great timing. He gets elected in 1928 and in '29, he's smacked with a World Depression. Three years later he's voted out of office and replaced by Franklin Delano Roosevelt with a huge plurality of votes. Don't let the door hit you in the rear end, said six million Americans. And as the White House door slammed shut – the song ringing in the ex-president's ear was: Happy Times are Here Again. His four years were no Camelot.

Bad timing. Few remembered that he saved millions of Europeans from the clutches of starvation – first in post-World War I Belgium. And again in hungry Central Europe. We Jews, who naturally look at the world through our own ethnic spectacles, consider Herbert Hoover and say – what's he got to do with us?

Everything. Because the starving masses he fed in the early 1920s were the *bubbes* and *zaydes*, uncles and aunts, maybe parents of many of us. If Oscar Schindler was pronounced a hero for saving a few thousand Jews, Herbert Hoover should be anointed as the *Mosiach*, the Messiah, or maybe granted charter membership to the Hall of Righteous Gentiles. His contribution ("The Great Humanitarian" they called him) is told in the Hoover Digest, affiliated with Stanford University.

World War I – "the war to end all wars" – eventually brought us World War II, Communism in Russia, and the subsequent Cold War. But its first curse was starvation in Central Europe.

Between 1919 and 1921 the American relief effort, headed by Hoover, fed a million and a half Jewish children primarily in newly independent Poland – disgorged from Germany, Austria, and Poland. The challenge was daunting because Central Europe was convulsed in warfare. The Russians were marching on Warsaw, while Russia, roiled by revolution, was pillaged by rival Royalists and Red gangs. This was like Katrina relief in the middle of a war.

The easiest part was getting the money to buy food. Uncle Sam, as usual, was the first to open his wallet. The U.S. Congress contributed 100 million dollars, and the U.S. Army contributed a fleet of railroad cars to transport food to out-of-the-way *shtetles* like Pinsk, Bielsk, Siemiatycze, and Brzesc.

Getting the food to starving Polish kids in this savage political environment had all the challenges of feeding malnourished Africa today. Hungry armies, murderous gangs, black-marketeers,

corrupt local officials, transport lack stalked the treasure trove of nutrition that the American Relief Agency brought into Central Europe through Danzig. Somehow, Hoover, who knew more about getting nourishment into hungry mouths than anyone on the planet, negotiated this gauntlet of obstacles. In most cases, the food supplies were shepherded directly to the schools by the American relief workers. Hoover wisely avoided government channels. He wanted to feed kids, not enrich corrupt bureaucrats. Millions were fed.

The Hoover Institution at Stanford University a couple of years back illuminated this bittersweet chapter in history – an era that has not found its way into our text books. Several years ago they released a report on Hoover's work by Elena Danielson. It tells us how she came upon an old "beautifully gold-tooled leather portfolio" in the archives. It contained presentations, proudly given to the "Great Humanitarian," upon his visit to Poland in 1921, by school kids. She went to Zachary Baker, curator of Judaica at the Stanford University Libraries – a Yiddish translator – for help. The portfolio was overflowing with letters from another world – a time and place called loosely, Poland 1921. The land of many of our forefathers – of *shtetles*, *hasids*, *cheders*, and Isaac Bashevis Singer, the Baal Shem Tov, and Sholom Aleichem. And finally, the very ground zero of the Holocaust.

Here are letters from school children, most of whom never reached middle age. They write thank you letters to the American businessman, Herbert Hoover, who culturally was as unlike them as a Hindu Maharaja, a continent away in India. They could not imagine the wealth and freedom of Herbert Hoover or the average American if they spent a lifetime of study in their *cheder* or study rooms. It was beyond their wildest dreams.

Their letters are perfumed with the innocence of youth and the warm gratitude of full stomachs. The children elaborately thank the American businessman. Then proudly demonstrating their newly learned ability, there's a scrawl of childish signatures and decorative artwork. Other cards and notes bear pictures of the children's school, festooned with American flags.

One letter, in Hebrew, is decorated with a drawing of a can of sweetened condensed milk. Such cans were used for drinking cups. Tin cans for cups; a poverty unknown to us was endemic in Central Europe. The cups came to symbolize the American effort.

A youngster named Ary Goldman adds a poem to his thanks and does not forget to ask for money to buy books. It is a blessing in disguise that we know not what happened to Ary and his schoolboy friends when Nazi and Communist armies carved up their country. His final verse says it all.

Send us "Money for clothes, for rice and other types of food, so that we may



Fun Coach

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Having fun together – more important than any game

Dear Fun Coach, sir,

I believe in fun and games and kids, really I do. I mean, I think it's really important to play with my kids. But, well, playing games with my kids is something else. Because when we play games, it gets all about winning. And, if you know what I mean, not about fun at all.

*Your friend and mine,
Shalom Bayit*

Dear Mr. Bayit,

One thing you learn from playing with children – especially the very young – is that the fun you are having together is more important than the game you are playing. This is equally apparent when you play with the very old. What good is it to win if it makes the other person not want to play with you anymore? Or if it makes the other player cry? Or get angry? Sure, you can blame it on their immaturity (or postmaturity), but, still, if your goal is to play together, the game has to end with your being together. In fact, that's how you have to measure the success of the game – the more together



be able to study the Torah without fear. — One of the students in the Pinsk Talmud Torah: Ary Goldman, 17 Sivan 5681, June 23, 1921."

Another group of youngsters presents a card vivid with orange cornflowers and declares, "We the Jewish children signed below of the town of Siemiatycze, the country of Bielsk, and the land of Grodno, kitchen no. 4 send our greetings to American children, from Poland to noble America in homage to Herbert Hoover. — On the day of July 4th, the year 1921."

Sometimes the past is as hidden from us as the future. This *mitzvah*, this good deed by a Quaker humanitarian unrecognized by the history books, is unknown to Jewish hearts.

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 or blogsite: www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com. His collected works *The Scribbler on The Roof* can be bought at Amazon.com or lulu.com/content/127641. ★

you are at the end of the game, the better the game.

This is less apparent when you play with your peers. You tend to think of the game as being the ultimate arbiter of your relationship: "Let the best man win" and all that. When, of course, neither the game, nor your relationship has anything to do with who is the best person. Both, in fact, the game and your relationship are about your being better, together. Not better *than* each other. Better *with*.

On the other hand, for the sake of the game, we have to play as if one of us, or one team of us, will prove to be better than the other. It's called "winning." To make winning seem as important and meaningful as we possibly can – again for the sake of the game – we add officials and official rules, trophies and prizes, records and world standings. It makes the game seem more real (when we know it's nowhere as real as we are), more significant (when we know we're far more significant than a game could ever be), more permanent (when we know that neither the game nor any of us can last forever).

So, again for the sake of the game, we play as if it's not just a game, as if it's in fact more real, more significant, more permanent than we are. Which is fine. And fun. Unless we're playing with people who are much younger or older than we are. Because what they have to teach, all over again, is that when it comes to games, the people who are playing are more important. If it's not fun, change the rules, change the goals or the way you keep score or the number of pieces you get or the number of players you have on your team or where you play it or how long you play or what side you're on. Or try a different game.

Sometimes, this is a very hard lesson. Because we want to make the game as real as we can. And we forget who we're playing with or why. And we hurt each other. But as difficult as it is, it's probably the most important lesson we can learn from playing with the elderly and youngerly. It's the reason we need to be playing with them whenever we can. To be reminded what games are really all about. Because otherwise, we forget. And the games get too important. And we play too hard. And we break.

Bernie DeKoven is a Fun Coach. He works with individuals and groups, institutions, organizations, by phone, email, chat, Skype and in person to help them recover the fun of life. Online at <http://deepfun.com>. ★

On this date in Jewish history

On December 1, 1935

Woody Allen, actor, director, and producer was born.

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



The Art of Observation

BY RABBI ALLEN H. PODET

Back to Berlin and Abraham Geiger College

We have returned from Germany, thoroughly exhausted, blissfully happy, with a silly grin plastered on our faces. The week, taken off in the middle of a school year, began with an invitation to come to Berlin for the ordination and graduation ceremonies of the Abraham Geiger College.

In 2001–2002, I was brought to Berlin to become the founding principal or *grundungsrektor* of a new institution, the Abraham Geiger College at the University of Potsdam. The AGC was the first seminary for the training of liberal rabbis on the continent of Europe since Hitler and the Holocaust. Since 2002, Valerie Jill and I have been back to Berlin several times to see our students, to whom we remain very close. They asked us to come to marry them, and eximious, now they wanted me to take part in their ordination.

When I was *grundungsrektor*, it was a time of high excitement. The creation of a rabbinical seminary in the very city and land that had been purged of Jewish life meant sleepless nights and full days. With the aid of Rabbi Dr. Walter Homolka, a former student of mine at London's Leo Baeck College and who is now rector of the AGC, and Dr. Anne Brenker, our super-efficient secretary then and the college's managing director now, we set about the business of establishing curriculum, deciding if and at what point our students should experience a period of study in Israel, setting standards that would win the respect of the eximious German academic establishment, procuring quarters for the school, recruiting professors of skill and competence, ...in short, the thousand and one details that are involved in an enterprise of such scope. We were all very aware of the moment in history that we were living through.

I had been, for the most part, shielded from the enormous economic burden of the college by Rabbi Dr. Walter Jacob, past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and a beloved figure on the U.S. rabbinic scene, and by Rabbi Dr. Homolka, a former vice president of the Deutsche Bank and a tireless, workaholic, type-A personality. Walter Jacob and I ordained Walter Homolka, an event that Walter Jacob considers one of the finest things we have ever done.

We determined at the outset that it was easier to lower standards than to raise them, and so we started with high demands of prospective students. We proposed a curriculum of a minimum of

5 years – in fact it stretched as far as nine in some cases – and took in only four students at the beginning, out of 17 applicants. The others were not rejected outright, but were encouraged to undertake further preparation and apply again.

Valerie Jill and I became inordinately close to our first classes. Our home became an open house for them since they were far from home, and we undertook to forge a close alliance with the University of Potsdam so that our students – and the AGC itself – would have credentials from the very prestigious German University System.

We have retained this closeness, and I would not have missed this ordination for the world. These are, after all, my students. I was there at the beginning of their rabbinic careers, when we had to engage tutors for them because some of them did not know German. We shepherded them through the German academic system prior to educating them in rabbinic studies.

...one gentile Jewish studies major...explained that Jewish studies involved her with every world culture and every civilization, a fascinating historic entity, a persistent and evolving group with profound intellectual achievements, a classical language and a faith that is the foundation stone of her own, and a multifaceted and living philosophy.

Words cannot express how we felt when I stood with them and Walter Jacob and Walter Homolka before the ark of the great Pestalozzi Strasse Synagogue for their ordination.

Berlin is very aware of the War, and of the Jewish community that once thrived here and even, in some areas, dominated the Berliner culture. Memorials are everywhere to be seen, and historical notes as to what happened here and what happened there. At the present time, as part of the need to confront the past fully in order to deal with it and, one hopes, transcend it, the most popular and recent exhibit in town is the Hitler exhibit at the Berlin Historisches Museum. There is no attempt at Grand Guignol horrors. This exhibit deals with

the everyday influence of the Nazi Party and its philosophy. A box of Trommel Brand matches, "Drum Brand," with a picture of a little blond Aryan drummer boy in shorts on the cover. The Trommel was a symbol of the Nazi Party.

Nazi beach towels, Nazi umbrellas, Boys and Girls Clubs, cute children's board games about how to take Poland, how to kill Jews, how to assert the superior German culture, martial uniforms for everyone. The effect is to show that no one man hypnotized an entire country. Lots of ordinary people, everyday citizens with children and dogs and church memberships, were the strength and backbone of the Nazi atrocities.

It is a very courageous examination. It leaves no doubt as to where the strength of the machine lay.

In Berlin we stayed with Professor Dres (meaning "doctores," or more than one doctorate) Wolfgang Loschelder, rector (ret) of the great University of Potsdam. It was Loschelder, as much or more than anyone else, who saw to it that the AGC became a formal and permanent part of the university he headed, and consequently of the prestigious and German university system. Valerie Jill and I have spent many days and nights with him and his wife, Christiane.

When Loschelder became an administrator, the classroom lost a great talent. Many evenings in his home, over a glass or two, we would discuss history, philosophy, or law (he is one of the acknowledged senior jurists in Germany) for many hours. His profound understanding and eagerness to teach remain among my fondest memories of Berlin.

One night, late, he casually turned to me with the information, "Meine name ist Wolfgang."

I knew his name was Wolfgang. I doubt there are many members of the academic and legal community who do not know his name is Wolfgang.

He was saying that he felt close enough to me so that he wanted me to use the intimate address, "Du" (you), with him. It was and is a great honor, and one with which I am uncomfortable. I remember when I was ordained, and my professors, suddenly my colleagues, expected me to address them on a first name basis. I learned to do so, but not without some discomfort.

With Wolfgang now, it was the same. It took a deliberate effort, but I appreciated the honor and did it.

You might say we were both rectors, I was rector of a tiny collection of a few graduate students and he of a mighty institution of thousands. Surely equals, yes?

As part of our connection to the university, I became an honorary professor in the German university system, was admitted to vote and decide on certain policy matters, and to teach both Geiger students and students in general at the university. At that time there were some 200 Jewish studies majors in greater Berlin at the three major universities, which all allowed

students at one school to take courses at another, a great benefit to our students. I could send a student to take a Mishnah course at Humboldt and a history course at Potsdam or a course in Hebrew literature at the University of Berlin. What a very civilized relationship, and a rational way to maximize resources. As a result of this arrangement, Geiger did not have to offer courses that were available elsewhere once our students were part of the system.

I taught at Potsdam and elsewhere a Mishnah course and one in Bible, analyzing the Hebrew text of the Book of Amos. Apart from my AGC students, the other students were not Jewish. Two young non-Jewish women in particular sat in the front row, where I could see their faces but my male Geiger students seated behind them could not. The women were so far superior to my Jewish students that I frequently saw them looking at me and rolling their eyes while the boys were blundering through a clumsy recitation. I had to keep myself from laughing.

I asked one gentile Jewish studies major why she was in this challenging field. She explained that Jewish studies involved her with every world culture and every civilization, a fascinating historic entity, a persistent and evolving group with profound intellectual achievements, a classical language and a faith that is the foundation stone of her own, and a multifaceted and living philosophy. The whole issue of identity and perseverance of identity is nowhere as clearly to be studied as here, she explained, in Jewish studies.

As a Jewish studies major at a German university, she is required to study both Hebrew and Yiddish and one other language, such as Polish, each of them to a considerable level of competence. There were at that time 200 such majors, and at present there are about 400 in greater Berlin. Abraham Geiger College had at one time a rabbinical student body of four, and at present has 20 including a cantorial contingent of four. Our standards have not diminished.

For our own students, it was important to me to forge a connection with the military chaplaincy. I have been a chaplain in the United States Navy for some 29 years, and the experience has enriched me beyond measure. I have met many people from varied walks of life, have served in hospitals and brigs, as a personal counselor, marriage counselor, guide, and friend to many that I would otherwise never have encountered. I have lived on ships, a submarine, air bases, and among people of every ethnos. I am grateful that because of my positive experiences, our students will have a similar opportunity. Not least, I want my students to encounter many ordinary Germans who know little or nothing of Jews, rabbis, or Judaism. I want them to learn to deal with them, to befriend them and to care for them, and to care about them, about

these ordinary Germans who people the military establishment. And I suppose I want these ordinary Germans to know my people as well. The bonds of military life are very powerful, even though they are hard to explain to those who have not experienced them. I should prefer that they went Navy, of course, but let's not make an issue of that.

It was also important to establish warm relations between AGC and Leo Baeck College in London and with Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. My credentials were ideal for that work. I had taught at Baeck and was then and still on its Board, and I was determined that there would be no turf wars but rather friendship and respect between us. Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Magonet, our close friend and the principal of Leo Baeck College (ret), would be invited most cordially to join with us in common actions and to give lectures here at Geiger. I held three doctorates, two of them earned (a German professorship requires what amounts to two doctorates), and I was a graduate of Hebrew Union College and a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the key accrediting institution to which I wanted my students to have eventual access.

Berlin has changed even in the year we were away, a city of constant evolution. The excellent public transport system is, if anything, better. Clean, fast, frequent city trains are everywhere available and accessible, and inexpensive. We bought a week pass for 26.20 euros (US\$39), and with this in our pocket, hopped without a thought on busses, trains, subways, and all other transport except taxis. A car is quite unnecessary in town. Aah, civilization.

We roamed around the Kurfürstendamm, a kind of Fifth Avenue, near our old neighborhood. Berlin is a town meant for walking. The streets are broad boulevards, and everyone walks. The town is built of neighborhoods: near our old residence are shops, doctors and dentists (cheap or free on the National Health Plan), too many bakeries each one more seductive than the last, shoe repair places, places that sell rubber stamps that Valerie Jill loves, pet stores, an amazing assortment of restaurants, mostly small, and of every ethnic kind. All are in walking distance, and it is easy and pleasant to put away lots of miles, which means that you won't gain much weight even without Weight Watching.

Niko's, our old favorite Greek restaurant on the Kurfürstendamm, is still there, and Niko recognized us and called us by name after all this time. My red Western hat, a sort of personal trademark, may have aided his memory.

I wore that hat everywhere, on this trip and previously. The U.S. Department of State was publishing warnings about how dreadfully dangerous it was to be identifiable as American at the same time as Germans on the streets were cheerily yelling, "Hi, Yank!" and

complimenting us on the hat and asking where they could get one.

When I functioned as rector, I represented the AGC at many congregations in Switzerland, Vienna, Prague, all over Germany, and Amsterdam. This was partly to generate interest in finding posts for the eventual employment of our students and partly to publicize the college itself. I also met with the vice president of the Bundestag or Parliament, the minister of education, and other officials, all of whom were unfailingly helpful and eager to promote the college and its mission.

Among other dignitaries, it was my job to meet the American ambassador, who was charming and friendly and who promised to help us in any way he could. Well, it develops that he could indeed. One of my students, Alina, was a lovely redhead (at the time) with the voice of an angel. I wanted to bring her to my American congregation in Jamestown, NY, as a special treat for her and for them. We figured out an appropriate time gap for the trip, I sprang for the ticket, and we applied for her visa. She was, after all, a dependent of and a student of the college, with a commitment to a multi-year rabbinic program, and with my personal and institutional guarantees and those of the college and, if need be, the university.

She was refused, without reason.

When I called the Embassy, the young man who took my inquiry – a second secretary, I suppose – assured me that there was no difficulty even though she was technically still a Ukrainian national, since her German citizenship papers had not cleared yet.

Well, it turned out that she was refused, with no official reason. But the secretary, much embarrassed, confided to me that since she had no blood family in Germany, might it be that she would not return from America? Perhaps she was a Ukrainian terrorist? Or someone seeking a job who would stay illegally in America?

I appealed of course to the friendly, charming ambassador, the helpful one.

He refused to take my calls, or even to acknowledge them, even when I made it a matter of official enquiry by the college. I suppose that the State Department had had time to find out that I was a mere American citizen, with no special political clout, and certainly unworthy of their special attention, or even of their courtesy for that matter. It is not the first time I have heard such tales about the State Department and its treatment of our citizens. In fact, I worked at the State Department for a time, and should have been better prepared for this reception.

So we "ate" the round-trip ticket for Alina. It was not especially tasty.

The trip home took off from Tegel Airport, very convenient to central Berlin. Berlin has three airports, Tempelhof, a familiar name from old WW II movies and pretty much closed; Tegel, a small

airport, very efficient, very well planned, and scheduled to be closed. And Schönefeld, large and inconvenient. A new airport is being planned, far out of town, which I am told will be enormous in spite of the horrible experience of Americans and others with enormous airports such as JFK and O'Hare.

We landed in JFK with the usual delays, flying around endlessly looking for a landing slot. Valerie Jill was using a wheelchair, and we were taken in tow by a very competent airport employee who shepherded us through customs and elbowed some rude flight attendant to make room for us on the elevator. When I offered her a tip, she handed it back and informed me that airports are very expensive and she couldn't hardly buy anything without a lot of money. Welcome to New York.

She solicited a letter of reference to her boss, and we dutifully emailed one.

I estimate the trip, even with the AGC paying for my ticket and with accumulated travel points on our Mastercard buying Valerie Jill's ticket, was quite expensive. Valerie Jill seemed to find it necessary to buy German chocolate and regional marzipan delicacies for sundry people there and here, and to invest in German horse magazines and riding literature to the point where I was sure our luggage would be over the weight limit. Thank God she never found a genuine German saddle she could not live without. (She came close once or twice.) The airline staff at Delta were kind, however, and the airline food was even good, well beyond our expectations, especially since the magazine horror stories have mentioned Delta specifically.

Having been a central part of Geiger College at its creation has been a notable event in my life. I entertain some small regrets that we could not stay and make a life there as rector of the college, an offer which we very seriously considered. But it was our decision that our life is here, and so we shall be bound by bonds of love and concern to the college and our students, to Anne Brenker and Walter Homolka and Walter Jacob and the Loschelders and our other friends, but the decision to return was the right one.

We will never forget these moments. Rabbi Walter Jacob's father, Rabbi Benno Jacob, ordained the last rabbi in Berlin before his school was closed down by Hitler. And now here we stand to ordain the first liberal rabbis since that time, products of our college, here in this land, the birthplace of liberal Judaism, a rebirth in this place. The emotions are beyond imagining. I have now made about 26 lecture tours to German-speaking areas, and have been the founding rabbi of synagogues in Vienna and elsewhere. And I have come to think that much of that was preparation, surely engineered but certainly not engineered by us, for what we did in Berlin.

Our blessings are greater than we can say.

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com. ☆

Jews' News

U of Memphis renames Hillel

By MARK HAYDEN

Memphis, Tenn. – The bonding of music and harmony kicked off a rededication ceremony and concert for the renaming of the university's Hillel here in Memphis recently.

Daniel Pearl World Music Days named after the slain *Wall Street Journal* reporter has grown in scope to more than 101 countries, was created to inspire tolerance and respect for others. The Memphis concert consisted of 15 musical performers who came to honor Pearls' memory and to celebrate the rededication of the University of Memphis Hillel after local philanthropist Morris S. Fogelman.

Fogelman was instrumental in purchasing the land for the new building 25 years ago.

Mark Hayden is a freelance writer in Memphis. He can be reached at marktn58@aol.com. ☆

Jews in Sports

Yeshiva U of LA scores championship

By MARK HAYDEN

Memphis, Tenn. – A perfect 4-0 record for the Yeshiva University Panthers of Los Angeles made their long trip home from Memphis worthwhile recently as YULA took the tier I championship of the Cooper Yeshiva High School Invitational here.

Jack Gindi's 34 points led his Panthers to a 54-45 win over the Stern Talmudical Academy Lions in a mostly see-saw affair until the midpoint of the third quarter. YULA's strangling defense and superior passing skills proved too much for Stern and the rest of the 16-team field.

Tier II champions were the Chaim Knights of Toronto. Host Cooper High School Macs took seventh place after a rough 1-3 weekend.

The Cooper Invitational, which hosted its first Canadian team this year, is listed as the second largest yeshiva tournament in North America. Ranked behind one played at YU in New York the Memphis tournament is slated for its fifth annual championship late next year.

Mark Hayden is a freelance writer in Memphis. He can be reached at marktn58@aol.com. ☆



Hanukkah

begins this year at sundown on December 1, at which time we begin lighting the candles of our Hanukkah menorah (or *hanukkiah*) for eight consecutive nights. The shamas candle is placed in its elevated or unique position on the menorah each night and the other candles loaded from the far right to the left in the quantity corresponding to the night (first night-one, second night-two, etc.). The shamas is lit, the blessings are recited, as stated below, (remember to include the third one – the *sheheheyanu* – on the first night only), then the other candles are lit in sequence of the new night first in reverse order (left to right). All the candles should be allowed to burn down completely each night and fresh ones placed for each new night. Happy Hanukkah!



The First blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק
נֵר שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה.

Baruch ata Adonai elohanu melech ha olam asher kid-dishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.

Blessed are you, Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the world, who makes us holy through your mitzvot, and commands us to kindle the Hanukkah lights.

The Second Blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Adonai elohanu melech ha olam, she asa nisim l'avoteinu, bayamim ha-hem, bazman ha zeh.

Blessed are you Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the world, who worked miracles for our ancestors in days long ago at this season.

The Third Blessing –First Night Only

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהִחְיָנוּ, וְקִיָּמָנוּ, וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Baruch ata Adonai, elohanu melech ha olam, sheheheyanu, v'kiyimanu, v'higiyanu, lazman ha zeh.

Blessed are you Adonai, Ruler of the world, who has kept us alive and well, and has brought us to this season.



Hanukkah Songs

I Have a Little Dreidel

I have a little dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

Chorus:

Oh dreidel, dreidel, dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play!

It has a lovely body
With legs so short and thin
And when my dreidel's tired
It drops and then I win!

(Chorus)

My dreidel's always playful
It loves to dance and spin
A happy game of dreidel
Come play now, let's begin!

(Chorus)

Who Can Retell

Who can retell,
the things that befell us,
Who can count them?
In every age a hero or sage,
Came to our aid.
Hark! In days of yore in
Israel's ancient land,
Brave Maccabeus led the
faithful band.
But now all Israel must as one arise,
Redeem itself through deed and sacrifice.

Who can retell,
the things that befell us,
Who can count them?
In every age a hero or sage,
Came to our aid.

Sivivon, Sov, Sov, Sov

Sivivon, sov, sov, sov
Hanukkah, hu chag tov
Hanukkah, hu chag tov
Sivivon, sov, sov, sov!

Chag simcha hu la-am
Nes gadol haya sham
Nes gadol haya sham
Chag simcha hu la-am.

(Translation)

Dreidel, spin, spin, spin.
Hanukkah is a great holiday.
It is a celebration for our nation.
A great miracle happened there.



Maoz Tzur – Transliteration

Maoz tzur yeshua-si
Lecha na-eh li-sha-beyach
Tikone bais ti-fee-lasi
Vi-sham todah ni-za-beyach
Li-ase ta-chin mat-beyach.

Mee-tzar ham-na-beyach
Az eg-more vi-sheer meez-mor
Hanukkahs ha-meez-beyach
Az eg-more vi-sheer meez-mor
Hanukkahs ha-meez-beyach.

Popular English Translation (Rock of Ages)

Rock of ages, let our song
Praise Your saving power;
You, amid the raging foes,
Were our sheltering tower.
Furious they assailed us,
But Your arm availed us,
And Your word,
Broke their sword,
When our own strength failed us.

(Translation)

O Rock of my salvation,
with delight we praise You.
Restore the Temple where
we will bring offerings.
When You will eliminate our enemies,
Then I shall sing at the rededication.

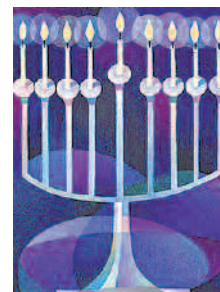
Hanukkah, Hanukkah

Hanukkah, Hanukkah
Chag yafeh kol kach
Ohr chaviv, mi-savis
Gil li-yeled rach.

Hanukkah, Hanukkah
Sivivon, sov, sov
Sov, sov, sov! Sov, sov, sov!
Ma nayim vi-tov.

(Translation)

Hanukkah is a great holiday.
Surrounded with lovely light.
Fun for little children.
Dreidel, spin, spin, spin.
How wonderful!



Let's Play Dreidel!

From two to eight people can play, but it's most fun in groups of four to six. Everybody gets an equal number of pennies (or nuts or counters) and puts one in the center for the pot. Each player gets a turn to spin the dreidel. If it lands with the נ (nun) up, the player gets nothing; with the ג (gimel) up, the player takes all the coins from the pot; with the ה (heh) up, the player takes half of the coins from the pot; with the ש (shin) up, the unlucky player gives one penny to the pot. When the pot empties after a gimel, each player puts a penny in and the games goes on. Play can continue until a predetermined time limit, at which point the player with the most coins wins, or until one play has all the coins that all of the players began with.

Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah

Hanukkah, oh Hanukkah,
come light the Menorah
Let's have a party, we'll all dance the hora
Gather round the table, we'll all have a treat
Sivivon to play with, and latkes to eat.

And while we are playing
The candles are burning bright
One for each night, they shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago.
One for each night, they shed a sweet light
To remind us of days long ago.

Light One Candle

By Peter Yarrow

Light one candle for the Maccabee children
With thanks that their light didn't die
Light one candle for the pain they endured
When their right to exist was denied
Light one candle for the terrible sacrifice
Justice and freedom demand
But light one candle for the wisdom to know
When the peacemaker's time is at hand

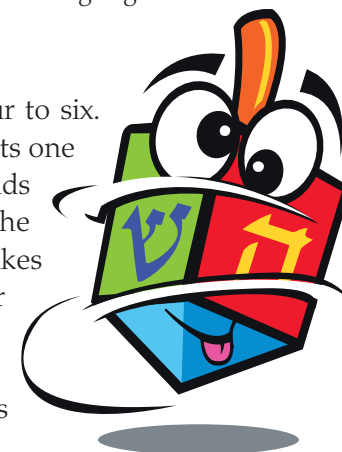
Chorus:

Don't let the light go out!
It's lasted for so many years!
Don't let the light go out!
Let it shine through our love and our tears.

Light one candle for the strength that we need
To never become our own foe
And light one candle for those
who are suffering
Pain we learned so long ago
Light one candle for all we believe in
That anger not tear us apart
And light one candle to find us together
With peace as the song in our hearts
(chorus)

What is the memory that's valued so highly
That we keep it alive in that flame?
What's the commitment to those
who have died
That we cry out they've not died in vain?
We have come this far always believing
That justice would somehow prevail
This is the burden, this is the promise
This is why we will not fail!
(chorus)

Don't let the light go out!
Don't let the light go out!
Don't let the light go out



Happy
Hanukkah



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

The enemy within

The Jewish people have survived for thousands of years. This much we know. There is historical evidence of that fact. How come? You know that any odds maker would have us in the dust bin of history by now. But we did it. By pulling together against all odds. Syrians, Greeks, Romans, Crusaders, Nazis and Arabs couldn't destroy us. Now, back in our own land, Israel, there is a real danger of pulling the Jewish people apart and in the effort, destroying the very land we have sought so long to be ours once again.

Israel has an unusual elective system. In an effort to give all its citizens a voice, Israel has created a political mess. If you, your brother Max and cousin Ari want to form a political party, then the three of you and a bunch of assorted cousins, friends from the neighborhood and some non-aligned hangers-on can form a political party and get one or more seats in the Knesset. Okay, so I exaggerate, but not that much.

In the present set-up, there is no way that a single political party can control the Knesset and therefore the premiership. Now, in many ways this is not a bad system. The British have been doing pretty well with a similar system for the past 200 years or so, But Israel is, well, just different. One small, self-centered group can bring down the government and bring the governing of the nation to a standstill.

Here, in a word, is the problem: The Haredim. The ultra-Orthodox. They for the most part do not even believe in the State of Israel. Like fundamentalist Christians, they are waiting for the Messiah to come and create a land for the Jews. Hello! We have one. Bought with blood and sweat and yes, money. Money paid for every inch of land for which there was a legitimate claim.

And for the most part, that is what they do: They wait. They do not work. They study. They have incredible numbers of children. For which the State pays them. So they do not have to work. They do not serve in the army. Why? Religious principles? No. Many, many Orthodox Israelis serve and serve bravely.

In a recent op-ed piece published on the web site YNet, two of them held forth. They could not serve, they wrote, because they were exposed to "Swearing and nonreligious practices." Hey guys: Think of the boys and girls from disparate cultures drawn to the Jewish State for its freedom, the fact that it is the Jewish State. They seem to survive and even thrive in the multicultural environment of the IDF.

The fear is that because of their growing demographic numbers and the fact that they "block vote" – what the Rebbe says is what goes – Israel will become a Halachic State. Anyone committed to a democracy as envisioned by Ben Gurion and Jabotinsky could not live in such a state.

I have always loved the way that Israeli politics are conducted. Loud, argumentative, in-your-face debates. A cross between a synagogue board meeting and a bar room discussion. Not any more. The self-serving Religious Party, throwing its weight around with its grand total of eleven seats in the Knesset manages to hold the entire process hostage.

Their attitudes on everything from marriage to dietary laws are from another age. Look, those who desire to live as "The Other" are entitled to do so. But not at the exorbitant cost to the State that this minority foists on the majority. Their large families, often intermarried, put an incredible burden on the overstressed medical system. They have a large percentage of children disabled at birth cared for by the State. Money is not important to them – why should it be when the State covers most of their costs.

Where in Torah does it say that "thou shall throw stones at busses and cars driving on Shabbat"? You don't want to drive? Fine. Englewood, N.J., is dead quiet on Saturdays because of the large percentage of Orthodox Jews who live there and walk to shul. But, those who do drive do not have to worry about being pelted with rocks on their way to the doctor or the golf course or into Manhattan.

There is another reason why they do not work. Their children graduate from their religious schools with no clue as to how to survive in a modern society. Untrained in science, history (other than Torah history), mathematics, languages or philosophy, there are no careers for them outside their own world.

They can be kosher butchers or bakers or even candlestick makers. But not scientists, inventors, Nobel laureates or any of the other professions for which Israel is famous. As I said, fine. Let them live their own separate lives. But, if they do not want to contribute to the State in any way shape or form, let them then fend for themselves.

This is not meant to be cruel or even anti-religious. It is my own personal rant in favor of leveling the playing field. Of taking power away from those who have no right to it. People who live this way and take these advantages because they say, God told them they could. And if God is on your side, you cannot lose. But the State of Israel can – and is.

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



An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Gotta serve somebody

Most people will be forgiven for not imagining that the late Theodore Sorensen, President John F. Kennedy's close confidant and speechwriter, born in Nebraska to a father whose first name was Christian, might be Jewish. But in the eyes of *halacha* he probably was.

Mr. Sorensen, who died on October 31 at the age of 82, was born to a Russian-Jewish mother, Annis Chaiken, although he was raised as a Unitarian. He was responsible for much of the soaring oratory associated with President Kennedy, who once called the celebrated speechwriter his "intellectual blood bank." Sorensen had an extensive role (some say a full-fledged ghostwriting one) in producing Kennedy's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Profiles in Courage*, and the president included him in important foreign policy discussions, including those revolving around the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, a truly hot point in the Cold War.

Although Sorensen was not a self-promoter, his death brought focus to the considerable role he played in the Kennedy White House and, thus, in American history. And, for those who take pleasure in (or are suspicious about, or just find curious) the influence that Jews – recognizable as such or not – have come to wield on world affairs over the ages, he was but another good example.

He was an example of the particular prominence of Jews in progressive causes. In his teens, Sorensen registered with the military as a conscientious objector and in his later years he relentlessly championed liberal ideas and ideals, working with Nelson Mandela on voter registration in South Africa and with President Obama's presidential campaign. He served, too, as a board member of the International Center for Transitional Justice, which seeks to pursue accountability for human rights abuses.

Such activities well fit the stereotype of the American liberal Jewish activist, which engenders pride or disdain depending on the observer. What is striking, though, is how noticeable Jews are on the other side of the American political spectrum as well. The Kristols and Podhoretzes, *peres et fils*, are examples that most readily come to mind. But there are many others. New York Times columnist David Brooks famously observed that for some people, "con" in the word "neocon," is "short for 'conservative,' and neo is short for 'Jewish'."

So how exactly does one make sense of the fact that Jews, presumably channeling

some deeply-ingrained ethnic inclination, end up moving and shaking both ends of the political seesaw?

One approach is to simply note that Jews tend to be cerebral (a generalization, to be sure; many of us don't seem to do much thinking at all) and so there will always be a good sized pool of bright and motivated Jews from which influential political players and activists of varied stripes will emerge.

But there is something else at work here, and it has less to do with brainpower than with a sense of Jewish mission, of wanting to better society. To effect, in the phrase fashionable these days in some Jewish circles, *tikkun olam* – the "perfection of the world."

And that drive, holy at its roots if not always in its fruit, has long taken Jews in different, sometimes diametric, directions. Wherever on the political/social spectrum they may end up, though, what drives them there – often without their realization – is sourced in a desire...to serve G-d.

Yes, G-d. The Torah makes clear that the Jew is intended to be an instrument of the Divine, to help bring the rest of the world to recognition of His glory. That is true *tikkun olam*, as the phrase is used in the *Aleinu* prayer. Every Jew is hard-wired to want to do the will of the Creator.

The shame lies in the obliviousness of most Jews to how, in fact, they can create a better world. To be sure, Jewish tradition requires empathy and charity; as it does personal responsibility and morality – "liberal" and "conservative" ideals alike. But the Torah's bottom line is that the observance and study of its laws comprise the ultimate path to perfection – our own personal perfection and that of the entire world.

Many Jews would – and do – scoff at that contention. G-d, if they think of Him at all, is there to be beseeched for sustenance, health and success. But making a better world, they insist, requires political or social activism; observing often challenging or arcane laws and studying ancient texts could not possibly lead to world peace, security and human welfare. Of course, the scoffers will happily use their computers without a thought to how this or that click here or there manages to yield this or that effect. But to imagine that the Engineer of the universe may have programmed His creation to respond to Jews' observance of the Torah's laws somehow taxes their imagination.

And yet, the seed of that truth lies waiting somewhere in every Jew's soul. Sought out and nourished, it will grow.

The nourishment might be said to lie in a paraphrase of a thought often associated with Theodore Sorensen (although he insisted the words were those of his boss, the 35th president): "Ask not what your Creator can do for you. Ask what you can do for your Creator."

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Rabbi Shafran is director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America. Communications and subscriptions: shafran@agudathisrael.org. ★



As I Heard It

BY MORTON GOLD

Let's keep it sacred

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with joy" (Psalm 100). Often, however, many people do not have much to feel thankful when (or if) they attend services at temple or synagogue. The same observation may be applied to "joy." Both sentiments are best expressed through music more effectively than through words. This is an era when words are dominant. (See rap, which to my taste may be described as words without music!) In a time not too long ago, approximately until the last quarter of the last century, the reverse was true. It is not that I do not like words. On the contrary, I do, but like seasoning, I can absorb them best in small quantities. As for "joy" particularly expressed through music, that is another matter.

The Hassidim in the 18th century, unlike their contemporaries, were simple, unschooled and unlettered folk. They wanted to express their feelings of thanksgiving and joy through music. They did not know the words, but they could sing and even dance to express their feelings. Like many worshippers today who cannot read Hebrew but who want to "participate" in communal worship, the practice of the early Hassidim offers a way out (or in if you wish). I wish to underline the fact that I love listening to Hassidic music when it is performed by Hassidim.

I am not against communal singing at services, only the amount, and particularly the quality, of the music being sung. It does not bother me even if some worshippers who are tone deaf do the singing, unless I happen to be seated in front of or beside them! Our rabbis discovered that responsive reading only goes so far in fostering feelings of thanksgiving or joy at services. Singing, on the other hand, especially by the congregation, accomplished that end.

The difficulty (for me) is that the essence of a music-religious transcendent experience was negated or even eliminated in the process. As a religiously committed Jew and also as a musician, I am appalled and embarrassed by what I see and hear at many of the services I attend. The role, the function of the *hazzan* has either been severely reduced or eliminated. He or she is now the song leader at services. The ditties are interrupted only with a few lines of chanted text here and there. Melodies, even composed melodies with their own texts (e.g., Erev Shel Shoshnim) are now extensively used in the Kedisha, simply because people may be familiar with the tune. Hassidic sound-a-likes even composed ones (Carlebach) dominant

the service. Our temples are complete with modern amenities. Only the music we employ does not reflect either the glory or spirit of the written word.

Informality is now the way of the world. In the unlikely event you were invited to have tea with the Queen of England (or the monarchs of Sweden, the Netherlands, and such), would you come wearing jeans or your favorite sweats? I think not. Yet our people show up at the place where the King of Kings causes His name to dwell in anything but their Shabbos best. (If it would make some people happier, substitute Queen of Queens, and Her for His in the preceding sentence.)

We have any number of educated and talented musicians who would like to create new and usable music for our services, music that would and should elevate and inspire the worshipper, music that would be composed for the hazzan, mixed choir and organ. Yes, I wrote organ, not guitar. It is my belief that the guitar is suitable, even admirable for use in camp or outdoor services. It goes with the atmosphere of informality. It goes with the notion that anyone can be the song leader (i.e., the hazzan), good voice or otherwise. In fact, the less trained the song leader is, the better. He (she) is just like us. Let him not wear any special garb or lead the service from the pulpit. If one carries this to its logical conclusion, let us do away with the prayer book and we can write our own services.

If fact, let us restrict formal prayers to a few communal songs, take out the Torah, do a lot of irrelevant talking (i.e., discussion), have the Torah read, put the Torah back and have a decent snack afterward. The only element missing here is the heart and soul of a Jewish service. To quote from the concluding service on Yom Kippur, "the gates are closing." While it is late, there is still time to bring back that which I believe is now lacking at too many of our services: namely a sense of the sacred. No amount of ay-ay-ays can achieve this.

Songs in the Key of Hanukkah

Normally I am more than willing to cut the performers of a CD some slack especially if I believe that (like pornography) it has some redeeming social quality. I can find nothing to recommend on the following CD. Since this is still the Hanukkah season, I would have to wait another year before I evaluated it. You have been forewarned, so read on if you want.

Erran Baron Cohen Presents *Songs in the Key of Hanukkah* featuring Jules Brooks and Y-love, released by New Live Records (NL39122). Mr. Cohen is not adverse to claiming his association with this CD in a variety of roles. There are ten tracks of various (Kh) (Ch) Hanukkah(h) songs on this CD. The holiday is spelled in a variety of ways these days and the treatment of these songs is in that spirit. The songs are partially played by various instrumentalists as well as "back-up"

folk. (I nearly wrote artists here. It is good to proof read.) Any "rap" treatment is given by Y-love, and the majority of the solo "singing" is done by Jules Brooks.

The songs performed may surely be the traditional Hanukkah songs. However the irreverent modern commercial treatment is assuredly not. It is not a question of whether these arrangements are good or poor. Actually in the context of commercial music, they are all quite good. What I would question is if these arrangements and their performances are appropriate or not. That is a question that well meaning people may disagree. The songs will probably be entertaining for unsophisticated listeners (i.e., the kids who like such as "Lady" Gaga or even Matisyahu). For these consumers these renditions will be great.

There was a time when these arrangements would be deemed to be disgraceful, poking fun not only at the songs themselves but also for those for whom they were a source of the sacred. I suspect that the rendition of the children's song "I Had a Little Dreydl" with different lyrics would probably be more suitable for use in a strip club. I could go on like this, but I would only be irritating some of my readers. It is not only that I believe that these arrangement to be inappropriate at best. The singers have no voices to speak of. The fact that one can "carry" a tune does not also mean that one has to have any kind of a voice or know anything about using it. The fact that many of these performers are no worse than one may find in other successful CDs is irrelevant.

It means that many people, especially adolescents, have no basis for judging quality. They do not know what a trained voice sounds like. They want to hear and/or see those who most closely sound (and look) like they do. To sum up: If you like to listen to "rap" and hear things like Electronic Hocus Pocus, Studio Trickery, Studio Stuff made by Mr. Cohen, then by all means this CD is for you. On the plus side, there is a booklet that contains the texts of the songs.

Aside from lacking all semblance of Jewish religious association, the treatments of these songs are lacking in taste as well as *tam*, a Yiddish word with shades of meaning that vary from taste to quality. (Erran, pick one.) If the likes of these goings on is what the Maccabees and many of our ancestors fought for, then we should simply eat some latkes and forget about the blessings and the songs that follow them. One doesn't have to be Jewish to enjoy eating latkes. Come to think of it, one doesn't have to be Jewish to enjoy these songs either. The words may have a Jewish association, but the surrounding *mishigas* assuredly do not. My thumbs and all other fingers are pointing down. Way down!

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor and recipient of the 2010 Kavod Award from the Cantors Assembly of North America. He may be reached at: drmortongold@yahoo.com. ☆

'Twas the Night

(continued from page NAT 3)

"Let's go, Moish and Mendel!
make quick, Moe and Yussle!
Please give a rush, Malkah!
hey, Hymie, please hustle!"

Then they raced like the wind!
And they galloped so *shnell*,
all his clothing blew off,
and his *gatkes* as well!

Soon he was so *kalt*
that his *tushie* turned bluish!
He moaned and he hollered
in English and Jewish!

So, don't act embarrassed,
and please don't be rude
when that frostbitten *zayda*
arrives in the nude!

Quick! Wrap him in blankets!
Don't beat 'round the bush!
And tie a hot water bag
on his cold *tush*!

Quick! Feed him some chicken soup
heiss as can be!
And give him some *shnapps*
and a *glez'l* hot tea!

'Cause he brings you a houseful
of Chanukah wishes
as warm and *geshmock*
as plate of hot *knishes*!

And he brings them from our house
so friendly and bright,
so your house will keep glowing
with Chanukah light.

Plus joy sweet as *tsukker*,
and peace and good-cheer
and everything *fraylach*
each day of the year!

And none in your family
will be a *shlemazel*,
for life will bring each of you
simchas and mazel!

And all through the future
your hopes will come true,
and *himmel* will bless
your *mishpocha* and you!!!
Submitted by Arnold Parris ☆





Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Detroit 1-8-7

An episode of the new ABC urban police drama, *Detroit 1-8-7*, begins in the blood-splattered room of a missing suburban teenager, Seth Cantor, whose widowed, hard-working mother returns home, fears the worst, and calls police. The mother insists that Seth is a "good boy" who does not "do drugs" and has a girlfriend with the (possibly Jewish) last name of Langer. She does add, though, that he enjoys classic gangster movies. But traces of drugs are found in the ravaged room, as well as indications that body parts were severed there.

The police start investigating Seth's workplace (the country club) and also his friends. One friend, Trevor, has a grandfather, Max Elkin, who is a "surviving member" of the Purple Gang, which "disappeared in the 1970s," and was known for smuggling drugs from Windsor, Ontario. The police officers discuss the infamous and feared gang with more than historical interest. An African American cop describes it as a "major Jewish mob in Detroit for decades." Her colleague adds his recollection that Al Capone "stayed out of Detroit" because of this gang.

It turns out that Seth's friends, nice suburban teenagers all, and, it would seem, predominantly Jewish, have become latter-day smugglers. One father, whose son, Adam, helps him at his tool-and-dye business, is so horrified by the scenario that he declares that the police "can keep him." Yet that (Jewish?) father is hardly a moral presence, for our sympathies are with the fearful son who seems all the more bereft of a guiding parent. There just don't seem to be any figures with moral gravitas among these young people or among Jewish parents.

Adam and his friend Cliff don't hold up well under the pressure of police scrutiny, and accuse one other of killing Seth, but the police wisely sense that they are turning on one another out of fear.

Trevor, who is Max's grandson, kills himself by overdosing on drugs. In the end, Grandpa Max affirms that suicide is "more honorable than surrender." He does think that Trevor "was a good kid," and declares, "I loved him." But he offers an abiding critique of Trevor and his friends: "Young people nowadays – they're not prepared for adversity. They're soft. They want everything to be easy."

This episode will go down in the annals of depiction of the Jewish elderly in the popular media. It has the dubious distinction of depicting the *zaide* (Jewish grandfather) as mass murderer. The police suspect that Max executed two people for the mob in the 1970s, and



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that the bodies were not found because he cut them up. Maybe Max takes the death of his grandson harder than he thought possible for one so "prepared for adversity." He declares that he killed Seth and chopped up his body because Seth was talking about leaving the drug-smuggling crew. "You make a pact, you stick with it," Grandpa Max reflects. "I killed Seth to teach my grandson how men should behave."

So an alternative concept of "Jewish covenant" is presented through Zaide Max by writer Nick Bentancourt. The "covenant" here is not that of loyalty to God's moral teachings, that of being a "light to the nations," but the gang code, pure and simple. It is not to preserve the "Torah of life," but a culture of death in which suicide is admirable if one can thus avoid deserved prosecution and punishment by the legal system, or, even better, spare the gang from justice. There is no question that Max is not much of a Jew. But why did veteran actor Jerry Adler rush to play the part with such aplomb?

Why, indeed, did Nick Bentancourt, or the show's producers, come up with this plot to begin with? True, about five to seven years back, there was a faddish interest in the old Jewish gangsters, with some books appearing on the theme and some researchers and authors cruising the writers' circuit. But at this juncture of time and TV seasons, this episode of *Detroit 1-8-7* recalls the Jewish gangs all too needlessly glorified in order to offer a macabre depiction of a Jewish elder. To what end?

Mad Men

The 2010 installment of *Mad Men*, the Emmy-winning ad agency drama, operated largely without Jewish characters or references to Jews. Given the strange past portrayals of Jews, and especially of Jewish women, this was rather refreshing.

This season's first episode, penned by series creator Matthew Weiner, cited, for comic relief, the foolishness of setting up test markets for ham sales in a Jewish neighborhood. In a more serious vein, it referred to Andrew Goodman, who was killed in 1964 Mississippi for volunteering to register African American voters. It even provided a Yiddish word, *tzuris* (trouble). Harry Crane (Rich Sommer), the TV ad man in the firm, tells his colleagues that a California trip was no vacation because he "had a lot of *tzuris* with Lucy and Desi."

Another episode by Brett Johnson and Matthew Weiner introduced a rather *nebishy* but solid character, Danny Siegel (Danny Strong), a cousin of Jane Siegel (Peyton List), the ex-secretary trophy

wife of company principal Roger Sterling (John Slattery). Precisely because Roger is tiring of his marriage and hoping to resume his affair with (newly married) shapely office manager Joanie Harris (Christina Hendricks), he takes every opportunity to placate his rather needy wife.

Danny impresses neither of his interviewers, brilliant but treacherous ad man Don Draper (Jon Hamm) or up-and-coming ad woman Peggy Olson (Elisabeth Moss), with his portfolio that consists either of trite slogans (dubbing each product as "better than ordinary..." or "the cure for the common...") or of favorite ads written by others. More annoying is his constant name-dropping of his Roger Sterling "connection."

Still, Danny displays a certain earnestness. "I'm a 24-year-old kid," he says. "I want to be in the ad game. I know I've got a lot to learn, but I'm a hard worker."

Danny can also be annoying, at first, or even second or third, impression. When he asks a secretary where he can find "a place to eat around here," she snaps back that she does not work for him. Though he asks politely enough, she correctly detects a certain sense of entitlement in his tone.



Pictured (l-r): Vincent Kartheiser, Christina Hendricks, John Slattery, Elisabeth Moss, and Jon Hamm. Photo credit: AMC/Mad Men web site.

It is clear that Roger is not impressed with Danny: "I told him to be himself. That was pretty mean, I guess." Yet, hoping to keep pulling the wool over his wife's eyes, Roger inquires as to whether his colleagues have set a starting date for Danny. Don blurts out that the date for that would be "the first of never." Roger laments he will have to spend between \$500 and \$1,000 on gifts for his wife Jane if Don doesn't hire her cousin. Yet it is clear that he would not push for the hiring of this unimpressive relative.

As it turns out, Don makes the mistake of drinking excessively before an important ad presentation and blurts out one of Danny's clichés, which is enthusiastically embraced by the clients.

What is Hanukkah?

BY ELLIE SANDLER

Hanukkah, often referred to as the "Festival of Lights" or the "Festival of Dedication" is the holiday commemorating Jewish victory in the struggle for religious freedom.

When a small band of Jews, called the Maccabees, were compelled to battle a much larger Syrian-Greek oppressor in 165 BCE, the Jews emerged victorious, resulting in the recapture of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Holy Temple.

When the Temple menorah was relit, there was only enough sacred oil to burn for one day. Yet, according to tradition, the oil miraculously lasted eight days until more purified oil could be found.

It is custom to mark the holiday by lighting the Hanukkah menorah, adding an additional candle with each night of the eight-day festival. According to Maimonides, the preeminent Jewish scholar, it is fitting for each member of a household to kindle the Hanukkah lights on one's individual menorah.

Though the holiday is considered a minor festival, Hanukkah has taken on increased significance in modern times. The holiday has become an occasion to exchange gifts, sing Hanukkah songs, play the Hanukkah game "dreidel," and eat Hanukkah treats such as potato *latkes*, an Ashkenazic tradition, and *sufganiot* (jelly donuts), a Sephardic tradition.

(see Sandler, page NAT 19)

Peggy chides that because Don used "the kid's slogan," he must pay Danny for the idea. But Danny insists that he wants a job rather than the \$50 or \$100 honorarium. So Don reluctantly hires him.

In subsequent episodes, we see Danny as a reliable and hard-working member of the team. But when the firm is in jeopardy at the end of the season, Don and Peggy have to let him, and several others, go. By then, Don seems rather sad to do it, but Danny has shed his sense of entitlement and "connection" enough to leave graciously and with understanding of the difficult situation.

Such were the "Jewish" elements of *Mad Men* in the Summer/Autumn 2010 season just completed, demonstrating that gentle spicing will more than provide enough flavor until tart garnishes can be introduced with thoughtfulness and tastefulness.

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. ★



Jewish Activist

BY RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW

Arlo Guthrie, Thanksgiving, and my yarmulke

On Thanksgiving Day, a little before noon, my phone rang. I knew at once who it was: my old friend Jeffrey Dekro (founder of The Shefa Fund, which gathered millions of dollars of Jewish money to invest in American inner cities and to reconstruct New Orleans), calling me and several other members of a long-ago, long-scattered men's group, reminding us to turn on the radio.

Every year at noon on Thanksgiving, WXPB Radio in Philadelphia plays Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant," about a Thanksgiving dinner in Stockbridge, Mass. in 1967; about obtuse cops; and about nonviolent resistance to a brutal war.

And every year, this seemingly non-Jewish set of rituals stirs in me the memory of a moment long ago when my first puzzled, uncertain explorations of the "Jewish thing" took on new power for me. And when I came to understand the power of a yarmulke (the skullcap many Jews wear at prayer).

Sharing this story has become a ritual for me. Welcome to the campfire!

In 1970, I was asked by the Chicago Eight to testify in their defense. They were leaders of the movement to oppose the Vietnam War, and they had been charged by the U.S. government (i.e., the Nixon Administration and Attorney-General John Mitchell, who turned out to be a criminal himself) with conspiracy to organize riot and destruction during the Chicago Democratic National Convention in 1968.

I had been an alternate delegate from the District of Columbia to the Convention – elected originally as part of an antiwar, antiracist slate to support Robert Kennedy. After he was murdered, we decided to nominate and support the chairperson of our delegation – Rev. Channing Phillips (*alav hashalom*), a Black minister in the Martin Luther King mold. Our delegation made him the first Black person ever nominated for president at a major-party convention. The following spring, on the first anniversary of Dr. King's murder, on the third night of Pesach in 1969, his church hosted the first-ever Freedom Seder.

AND – I had also spoken the first two nights of the Convention to the antiwar demonstrators at Grant Park, at their invitation, while the crowd was being menaced by Chicago police and the National Guard. The police finally did explode in violence on the third night of the Convention, when the crowd tried to

march peacefully toward the Convention as it began voting on presidential candidates.

Although the main official investigation of Chicago described it as a "police riot," the Nixon Administration decided to indict the antiwar leaders. So during the Conspiracy Trial in 1970, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, Abby Hoffman, et al., figured I would be reasonably respectable (as a former delegate) and therefore relatively convincing to the jury and the national public, in testifying that the antiwar folks were not trying to organize violence but instead were the victims of police violence.

As the trial went forward, it became clear that the judge – Julius Hoffman, a Jew – was utterly subservient to the prosecution and wildly hostile to the defense. (Some of us thought he had become possessed by the dybbuk of Torquemada, head of the Inquisition. How else could a Jew behave that way? We tried to exorcise his dybbuk. It didn't work.)

Judge Hoffman browbeat witnesses, ultimately literally gagging and binding Bobby Seale, the only Black defendant, for challenging his rulings – and so forth. Dozens of his rulings against the Eight were later cited by the Court of Appeals as major legal errors, requiring reversal of all the convictions the prosecution had achieved in his court.

So when I arrived at the federal court house in Chicago, I was very nervous – about the judge, much more than the prosecution or my own testimony.

The witness who was scheduled to testify right before me was Arlo Guthrie. He had sung "Alice's Restaurant" to/with the crowd at Grant Park, and the defense wanted to show the jury that there was no incitement to violence in it.

So William Kunstler, z'l, the lawyer for the defense, asked Guthrie to sing "Alice's Restaurant" so that the jury could get a direct sense of the event.

But Judge Hoffman stopped him: "You can't sing in my courtroom!"

"But," said Kunstler, "it's evidence of the intent of the organizers and the crowd!"

For minutes they snarled at each other. Finally, Judge Hoffman: "He can SAY what he told them, but NO SINGING."

And then – Guthrie couldn't do it. The song, which lasts 25 minutes, he knew by utter heart, having sung it probably more than a thousand times – but to say it without singing, he couldn't. His memory was keyed to the melody. And maybe Judge Hoffman's rage helped dis-assemble him.

So he came back to the witness room, crushed.

And I'm up next. I start trembling, trying to figure out how I can avoid falling apart.

I decide that if I wear a yarmulke that will strengthen me to connect with a power Higher/Other than the United States and Judge Hoffman. (Up to that moment, I had never worn a yarmulke in a non-officially "religious" situation. I had written the Freedom Seder in 1969, but was in 1970 still wrestling with the

question of what this weird and powerful "Jewish thing" meant in my life.)

So I tell Kunstler I want to wear a yarmulke, and he says – "No problem." Somewhere I find a simple black unobtrusive skull-cap, and when I go to be sworn in, I put it on.

For the oath (which I did as an affirmation, as indicated by much of Jewish tradition), no problem.

Then Kunstler asks me the first question for the defense, and the Judge interrupts. "Take off your hat, sir," he says.

Kunstler erupts: "This man is an Orthodox Jew, and you want to force him to violate his religious obligation?"

I am moaning to myself, "Please, Bill, one thing I know I'm not is an Orthodox Jew." But how can I undermine the defense attorney? So I keep my mouth shut.

Judge Hoffman also erupts: "That hat shows disrespect for the United States and this Honorable Court!" he shouts.

"Yeah," I think to myself, "that's sort-of true. Disrespect for him, absolutely. For the United States, not disrespect exactly, but much more respect for Something Else. That's the point!"

They keep yelling, and I start watching the prosecutor – and I realize that he is watching the jury. There is one Jewish juror. What is this juror thinking?

Finally, the prosecutor addresses the judge: "Your Honor, the United States certainly understands and agrees with your concern, but we also feel that in the interests of justice, it might be best simply for the trial to go forward."

And the judge took orders! He shut up, and the rest of my testimony was quiet and orderly.

It took me another year or so to start wearing some sort of hat all the time. For years, it was a Tevye cap. For years, and some of the time now – a beret. Sometimes a rainbow yarmulke. Sometimes in a rough winter, an amazing tall Tibetan hat with earflaps and wool trimming that I found in a Tibetan Buddhist harvest festival that came right during Sukkot (when else??!!).

And whatever its shape, the hat continues to mean to me that there is a Higher, Deeper Truth in the world than any judge, any attorney-general, any president, or any pharaoh.

It's my – our – "Alice's Restaurant." Or maybe "Alice's Restaurant" is Arlo's yarmulke. Watch and hear Arlo singing the song at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_7C0QGkiVo.

Why listen to it? Not just nostalgia or historical curiosity about the long-gone 1960s. Here we are, so many years later, in the midst of another brutal, unwinnable war, in the midst of many other restrictions on our civil liberties, in the midst of other judges who bow down to super wealth and superpower, in the midst of damage to our Earth we couldn't even imagine in 1967. It's not just judges we need to go Beyond. It's Big Oil, Big Coal, Big Banking, the bullies of Talk Radio, all the Big Guns.

Beyond them. We all need a hat, a

Use words to construct, not destroy – to inspire, not discourage



BY RABBI YISRAEL GETTNER

The Indianapolis Star poses question to local clergy:

Q: Elections often turn ugly toward the end, and the one just completed was no different.

Now that the campaigning is over, how can politicians and their supporters draw on faith to overcome hurt feelings caused by negative advertising, mudslinging and accusations of wrongdoing?

A: The hurt from destructive words cannot be overcome quickly or easily. Jewish sources have compared such words to feathers scattered in the wind; how could you possibly gather up every feather? In today's world, how do you recapture that vindictive e-mail sent in haste and passed on to countless other people?

We should use words to construct, not destroy – to inspire people, not discourage them. Judaism instructs us not to spread negative statements about someone, even if they are true. A famous rabbi once pointed to people preparing a telegram. "Notice how carefully they consider each word before they put it down. That's how careful we must be when we speak."

Therefore, the concern over negative campaign advertising and mudslinging must come at the beginning of the election season. At the conclusion, it's already too late. Candidates place themselves in the public arena and are inevitably subject to scrutiny. However, if others engage in negative campaigning, we have the choice to ignore them, in spite of what campaign managers might advise. To engage in it ourselves is to go against what should be our conscience and our faith. There are times when we must say, "I do not approve this message."

Remember, you will never regret saying something that you did not say.

Rabbi Gettner is the spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Torah in Indianapolis, Ind. This is reprinted from the Indianapolis Star on Nov. 6, 2010. ★

song, a "men's group" – something that renews our inner sense of the Unity Beyond. And laughter.

Arthur Waskow, director, The Shalom Center www.shalomctr.org; co-author, The Tent of Abraham; author of Godwrestling – Round 2, Down-to-Earth Judaism, and a dozen other books on Jewish thought and practice, as well as books on U.S. public policy. The Shalom Center voices a new prophetic agenda in Jewish, multireligious, and American life. To receive the weekly online Shalom Report, click on – www.shalomctr.org/subscribe. ★

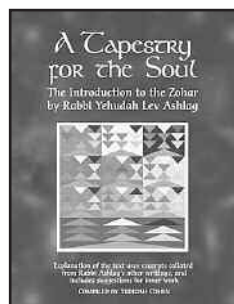


Book Review

REVIEWED BY EDWARD HOFFMAN, Ph.D.

Authentic Kabbalah for our time

A Tapestry for the Soul: The Introduction to the Zohar. By Rabbi Yehudah Lev Ashlag. Compiled by Yedidah Cohen. Nehora Press, 2010, 296 pages, \$18.95.



Ever since its appearance in late 13th-century Spain, *Sefer Ha-Zohar* (The Book of Splendor) has entranced Jews and other interested spiritual seekers with its inspiring poetic images and dazzling vistas of the universe. Based loosely in organizational format on the Five Books of Moses, the *Zohar* is a highly surrealist and yet intensely metaphysical work, filled with references to dreams, visionary states of consciousness, near-death experiences, the nature of the afterlife, the mind-body relationship and physical healing, the spiritual power of music, the Hebrew letters as divine forces, and of course, the ten *sephiroth* and the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

The *Zohar* is also a highly abstruse work, and extremely difficult for novices to enter even at a simple level. Many Kabbalists have sought to explicate its wisdom, and among the greatest in modern times was Rabbi Yehudah Lev Ashlag. Born in 1885 Warsaw, he became drawn to Hasidism but did not affiliate with a particular dynasty; throughout his life, he maintained an undeniable maverick streak like his Hungarian contemporary Reb Ahrele Roth.

Upon achieving early prominence as a Talmudic scholar and *halachic* adjudicator, Rabbi Ashlag turned intensely to Kabbalah. Precisely how he mastered the Jewish esoteric tradition remains unclear. In his own account, he studied privately beginning in 1919 with a mysterious businessman who died the day after imparting his final lesson. With a strong idealistic bent, Rabbi Ashlag also absorbed the writings of Western philosophers including Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer during Europe's tumultuous years following World War I. Unusual for a religious Jew of the time, he joined socialist and communist Warsaw street demonstrations clamoring for revolutionary economic change.

In 1921, Rabbi Ashlag made the sudden decision to settle in the Holy Land. He seemingly felt that his life-purpose was over in Poland and that only in the Land of Israel could his soul find challenge to

grow. He went straight to Jerusalem's famous Beit El Yeshiva for inspiration, but experienced bitter disappointment in seeing how this once-renowned academy of Kabbalah had fallen in rigor. Rabbi Ashlag then underwent an epiphany: He would devote the rest of his life in the Holy Land to revealing the magnificence of the *Zohar* and Rabbi Isaac Luria's teachings. Iconoclastically, too, Rabbi Ashlag saw a tremendous need to promulgate the esoteric tradition to all contemporary Jews – not just a tiny elite.

Over the next three decades, he produced several highly influential works including the first translation of the *Zohar* into modern Hebrew, a major treatise on the ten *sephiroth*, and his magnum opus titled *HaSulam* (The Ladder), comprising a 21-volume commentary on the *Zohar*.

Rabbi Ashlag's voluminous writings on the *Zohar* were composed in Hebrew, of course – and therefore remain largely inaccessible to most American readers. Yedidah Cohen is therefore to be commended for producing this lucid guide to Rabbi Ashlag's *Introduction to the Zohar*. She and her late husband, Mark Cohen, co-edited an earlier, English anthology of Rabbi Ashlag's writings, which they titled *In The Shadow of the Ladder*, and this sequel succeeds admirably. In essence, it is a compilation of Rabbi Ashlag's Kabbalistic writings drawn from many works, arranged here to accompany his *Introduction to the Zohar*.

The Zohar has entranced Jews...with its inspiring poetic images and dazzling vistas of the universe.

Presented in the format of 18 cogent lessons, Adidah Cohen addresses such intriguing topics as the nature of God, the multi-dimensional human soul, the nature of evil, the human body, the purpose of the higher worlds, and of course, the ten *sephiroth*. Her text well documents Rabbi Ashlag's erudite commentary on the *Zohar* – providing helpful citations to his many theological explanations derived from the Talmud and other timeless Judaic works. In addition, she offers insightful suggestions – based on Rabbi Ashlag's teachings – to enhance our inner development.

A Tapestry for the Soul is a must-have volume for all interested in authentic Kabbalah for our time. I look forward eagerly to Yedidah Cohen's future presentations of Rabbi Ashlag's inspiring writings.

Edward Hoffman, Ph.D., is an adjunct associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University. He is the author of numerous books including most recently *The Kabbalah Reader* (Trumpeter/Random House). Email: elhoffma@yu.edu. ★



Book Review

BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Saga of surviving refugees from Shoah in Israel

The Man Who Never Stopped Sleeping. By Aharon Appelfeld. Kinneret, Zmora – Bitan, Dvir – Publishing House. 2010. Pp.236. In Hebrew.

Aharon Appelfeld, the indefatigable Holocaust author and survivor, continues to compel our undivided attention with his magical rendition of a frightful theme in an inexhaustible manner that truly distinguishes him. His latest work, *The Man Who Never Stopped Sleeping*, takes a new creative turn for Appelfeld as he chooses to focus with both a critical and sympathetic eye on the postwar demanding saga of the surviving remnant of refugees who contended with the complex dynamics of acquiring an Israeli identity in a new land with its own distinct culture. All of that in face of an ever-beckoning past with its alarming reminder of a different kind of life prior to the interrupting Shoah's watershed drama.



The young and able-bodied among the refugees are recruited by Jews from Mandatory Palestine (A reference to the Bricha organization) to be trained and transformed physically and psychologically in anticipation of the birth of the Jewish state, and the inevitable war with the vehemently opposed Arabs. Irvine-Aharon, the book's protagonist, an almost-17-year-old who shares autobiographical features with the author, and as he reveals some of those fascinating features for the first time, he shows why he is known by those around him as "the sleeping boy." He spends some of what should be his wake-up time in a state of sleep, a psychological defense mechanism enabling him to cope with the war trauma he has experienced and subsequent difficulties he has relating to people. In that unique state of escapist sleep, the troubled teenager manages to communicate with his lost family and past life, thus keeping him connected to a vital part of his life even as he learns disturbing facts of what transpired in his forced absence. Victoria, for example, who was his mother's maid, now claims to be the lady of the house and refuses him entry, for she declares that he no longer belongs there.

Already part of the education the "chosen" refugees receive, the aim was to separate them from their fellow Jews who could not qualify to undergo the necessary radical changes to become "new Jews," free from the supposed handicaps of the Diaspora Jews. However, those "inferior" refugees kept our protagonist alive when he was unable to care for himself as he gratefully remembers. This liberating process that the leader Ephraim is in charge of, involves acquiring a Hebrew name to reflect and reinforce the transition to a *kibbutz* life, which reconnects them to their ancestral homeland as returned *chalutzim* (pioneers) who speak only Hebrew and are capable of farming and fighting. At kibbutz Misgav Yitschak in the Judean Mountains, the recruits are instructed from the war-filled biblical Book of Joshua concerning reconquering the land of Canaan. Religious practice is discouraged as an outmoded Diaspora experience.

Not everyone is able to adapt to this imposed communal living, and Mark, the protagonist's roommate in Naples and the kibbutz, even commits suicide. Irvine-Aharon hears early what his uncle Arthur tell him in his sleep – that this approach to Judaism which he defines as "muscle Judaism" is wrong, because the Jewish spirit is primarily about spirituality. Irvine-Aharon's father was intent on studying at Berlin's rabbinical seminary but instead became an author though no one published his books for a long time. Father wishes for his son to follow him in his literary pursuit.

The account of the refugees' problematic path to mastering Hebrew is a clue to Appelfeld's own journey of painful adaptation. Expressed is the view that those survivors who were not yet 18 years old (some who even lacked basic preparation) should have been spared the tragic fighting and dying that happened in 1948, yet the urgent hour's demands could not be overlooked.

On the book's back cover, Professor Yigal Schwartz, the book's editor, properly shares, *The Man Who Never Stopped Sleeping* is a must read for those who love Appelfeld's work. It is a mature and impressive work in its own right and also an important piece in the giant artistic contemplative puzzle that the great author has been dedicated to for over 50 years. Appelfeld, winner of the Israel Prize, was recently described by a prestigious publication in the U.S. as "one of the world's most inspiring 50 authors" (Zoberman's translation). I fully concur.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, was born in 1945 in Chu, Kazakhstan, to Polish survivors from Zamosc, Sarnay and Pinsk. From 1947 to 1949 he lived with his family at the Wetzlar Displaced Persons Camp in Germany. He grew up in Haifa, Israel, and came to Chicago in 1966. ★

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Valuable insider's presentation

The Prime Ministers. By Yehuda Avner. Milford, Connecticut: Toby Press, 2010. 754 Pages. \$29.95.

Because of its length and weight, this is a heavy book to pick up. Because of the intriguing story it tells in lucid prose, the book is hard to put down. Part autobiography, part history, part analysis, part commentary, and part opinion, this lengthy volume tells the remarkable story of four Israeli prime ministers and what happened on their watch. The vantage point of author Avner is that of active participant. He served in the prime minister's office as advisor and speech writer to Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, and Menachem Begin. He also held diplomatic assignments in the Israeli Consulate in New York, in the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., and in London as the Israeli ambassador.

Born into a religious family in Manchester, England, Avner joined Bnei Akiva, a religious Zionist youth group. When he graduated from high school, he went to Palestine in 1947 ostensibly to take a one-year course for overseas youth leaders, but he decided to stay in Palestine permanently. He served in the Israeli armed forces during the War of Independence and then settled on a kibbutz, only to be sent back to England to become Bnei Akiva's general secretary. In 1953, he was married in London and, a year later, he took his wife to his kibbutz, only to leave for Jerusalem after a year. In 1959, he was appointed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work on Foreign Minister Golda Meir's African initiative, designed to provide Israeli assistance to the newly independent African nations. In 1963, by which time Avner and his wife had four children, he became Prime Minister Eshkol's English speech writer. This began a lengthy career during which Avner served four prime ministers with great distinction and with increasing influence.

In describing each of these experiences, Avner provides insight into the character of the prime ministers as he describes how they dealt with the issues they encountered. This involves recounting history, especially the relationships between Israel and its Arab neighbors as well as between Israel and the United States. Since Avner often accompanied

the prime ministers on their trips to serve as a note-taker and speech writer, his presentation is based on his unusual vantage point.

While Avner's admiration for each of the prime ministers he served shows, it is clear that his favorite was Menachem Begin to whom half the book is devoted. More of Begin's speeches are presented verbatim than those of anyone else. Also, more of Begin's respectful relationships with many dignitaries, beginning with his predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin, are detailed than those of the other three prime ministers that Avner worked for. Avner valued Begin's courtliness and his passions, especially for his wife and for Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the leader of the Zionist Revisionists, whose ideas and ideals inspired Begin. Detailed accounts are given of Begin's interaction with Jimmy Carter and Anwar Sadat, including the Camp David accords that led to the Nobel Peace Prize for Begin and Sadat. There is also a fascinating description of the encounters between Begin, Reagan and some of Reagan's advisors.

Since Avner was a participant-observer in the events from 1947 to 1992 when Begin died, his singular perspective makes this book indispensable for anyone interested in Israel. This is truly a valuable insider's presentation that places readers in Avner's debt for his skill in providing a human picture of Israeli history.

Take time to finish postponed tasks

...unfinished business.... By Lee Kravitz. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010. 224 Pages. \$25.

In 2007, Kravitz, a graduate of Yale and Columbia Journalism School, was fired from his job as editor-in-chief of *Parade Magazine*, a position he had held for seven years. At the time, he was 54 years old, happily married and the father of three children. His wife's earnings and his severance pay provided enough financial resources for him and his family to get by for a year. He confronted the choice of reeducating himself and seeking a new job or making himself "a happier and more appreciative person."

After reviewing the contents of ten storage boxes that had not been touched for 13 years, Kravitz realized that there were many instances of unfinished business – tasks that he had postponed and eventually set aside because he was too busy. He decided to devote the year to eliminating these "loose emotional ends." He recalled what he had learned from Judaism as a youngster – the obligation to make amends for the sins committed against other people. He remembered the Yom Kippur requirement

to ask forgiveness from the person he had wronged and to resolve not to repeat the sin. His book describes the journeys he took to complete the unfinished business. Throughout the narrative, Kravitz refers to aspects of his firm Jewish identity – his six months on a kibbutz, his bar mitzvah, his love for Yiddish, and his grandmother's joy at learning that he was marrying a Jew after he had dated many non-Jews.

Kravitz began with his aunt Fern to whom he had been close as a child but with whom he had no contact for more than 20 years. She had been institutionalized as a schizophrenic, and her location was a family secret. She was 66 years old when he managed to track her down in a facility near Cleveland, and he was amazed that she recognized him even though she didn't know where she was. Also, he was chagrined to learn that Fern had just one visitor in the 14 years she had been in the institution. He visited her several times, even making a birthday party for her, and, moved by the example he had set, Fern's brother, Kravitz's uncle, also went to see her. A cousin who lived in Cleveland promised to see Fern once a week and Kravitz kept in touch with her by mail. He felt that he had done a *mitzvah* and was ready to turn to other unfinished business.

The second person Kravitz sought out was Andre who was his teammate on their high school baseball team 40 years ago. In 2007, Kravitz learned that Andre's daughter had been killed while teaching in Iraq. He procrastinated about writing a condolence note but now, as part of his effort to deal with unfinished business, he made contact with Andre and reestablished their relationship. Still another successful atonement was repaying a \$600 debt that he had contracted 30 years ago. At about that same time, Kravitz was close to a Pakistani friend who was his roommate but they had broken off contact. Now Kravitz arranged to meet his friend and they were happy to see each other. Other reunions were with a high school teacher who had greatly influenced Kravitz and a high school classmate who had become a monk and was now a bishop in an austere California monastery.

All in all, Kravitz completed 10 journeys to take care of his list. He describes them in this book, expressing the feeling that his year was well spent, especially since it brought him closer to his wife and children. He highly recommends that all his readers tackle their unfinished business. His well-written, highly personal narrative replete with candor should indeed inspire others to follow his path.

Freud's ambivalent Jewish identity

The Jewish World of Sigmund Freud. Edited by Arnold D. Richards. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2010, 204 Pages. \$45.

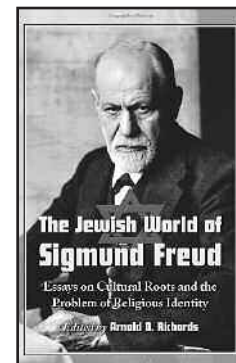
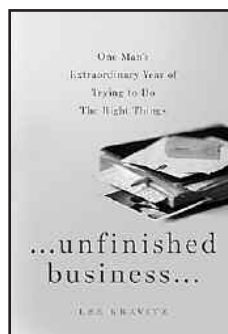
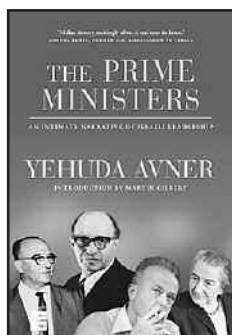
In 2006, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Freud's birth, a conference was held at the Center for Jewish History in New York on the subject of Freud's Jewish World. This book contains 14 of the papers given at that meeting. Editor Richards brought to his task combined qualifications in psychoanalysis and Jewish scholarship. He is a practicing psychoanalyst and training analyst who edited the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association from 1994 to 2003. In addition, he served as a board member of YIVO since 1986 and as chairman from 1987 to 1990.

Most of the presenters at the conference do not share Richards's dual skills. By and large, they are psychoanalysts, classicists, or Jewish scholars. Their failure to emulate Richards who combines two disciplines under one skill is reflected in their papers. Their high degree of specialization results in jargon, producing such words as: prosopographical, parapraxis, aphoristic, pathography, phonetic, faradization, sociality, originary, aniconic, asymbolia, and consubstantial. In addition, there are errors such as "hoards of patients" for "hordes of patients;" "premiss" for "premise: and "Hapsburg in one place and "Habsburg" in another.

These quibbles aside, the authors tackle the tough issue of explaining Freud's ambivalent Jewish identity. Although he was opposed to religious observance, he clearly saw himself as a Viennese Jew who was part of the Jewish people and who interacted primarily with other Jews. This may not have been completely a voluntary choice since there was considerable anti-Semitism and ghettoization in Vienna. Freud lived in a district where 18% of the population was Jewish, twice the percentage of Jews in the total population of Vienna. He reflected the common identity of Viennese Jews – "politically Austrian, culturally German, and ethnically Jewish."

The picture of Freud in Vienna, his family, his education, and the beginnings of psychoanalysis is followed by two papers that deal with Freud's testy relationship with a Viennese journalist who was critical of psychoanalysis and an examination of Freud's rejection of electrotherapy. Deviation from the central theme of the book is apparent in these two presentations. By contrast, the next paper by Harold P. Blum returns squarely to Freud's Jewish world. Blum is a highly regarded psychoanalyst who has written more than 150 psychoanalytic papers as well as several books. He concedes that anti-Semitism was "rampant in Vienna during Freud's lifetime," and he claims that this was

(see Teicher, page NAT 19)





My Kosher Kitchen

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Cookbook review and recipes for Chanukah

Quick & Kosher: Meals in Minutes by Jamie Geller, Feldheim Publishers, \$34.99 hardcover, December 2010.

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

The triple-tested recipes have very clever chapter headings – "If You've Got 20 Minutes," "If You've Got 40 Minutes," and "If You've Got 60 Minutes." Among the recipes in the 20-minute category are: Beef and Green Bean Stir Fry, Fines Herbes Goat Cheese Omelet, and Mozarella Mushroom Burgers. In the 40-minutes chapter are: Aromatic Baked Flounder over Capellini, Chicken Marsala, and Honey-Glazed Skewered Beef.

If you've got 60 minutes, you can really expand your talents with Beef Bourguignon with noodles, Smoked Salmon Crepes and more.

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

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

Personally, as a busy woman who cooks practically every day and entertains a lot, I found the book extremely useful on a practical level with many old ideas as well as new, creative dishes to try. Don't neglect to read the glossary with clever definitions.

Give this book as a gift to any kosher cook, and she'll love you for it!

Here are some recipes from the book for Chanukah and a *motse Shabbat* after New Year's Eve evening.

Jumbo Potato Pancake (6 wedges)

3 potatoes
1 tsp. rosemary

2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. black pepper
1 lightly beaten egg
3 Tbsp. melted pareve margarine

Preheat oven to 375°F. Peel and shred potatoes on large hole of grater or in food processor. Toss potatoes, rosemary, salt, pepper, egg and 1 Tbsp. margarine in a bowl. Heat 2 Tbsp. margarine in 6-inch nonstick ovenproof skillet. Spread potato mixture over bottom of skillet to make one large pancake. Cook for 10 minutes. Place in preheated oven and bake 30 minutes more. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes. Cut into 6 wedges.

Samosa Latkes (6 servings)

3 shredded potatoes
1 finely chopped medium onion
1/2 cup thawed frozen peas
1/4 cup matzah meal
2 large beaten eggs
1/4 tsp. curry powder
1 tsp. salt
1 cup canola oil
sour cream
1 10-ounce jar chutney

Line a cookie sheet with paper towels. Mix together potatoes, onion, peas, matzah meal, eggs, curry powder and salt in a bowl. In a large nonstick sauté pan, heat 1/4 cup oil for 1 minute. Ladle 1/4 cup batter per latke, spreading to form a 3-inch round. Make 3 latkes at a time. Reduce heat and cook 4 minutes on each side until golden. Place on paper towels to drain. Continue making 3 latkes at a time until all batter is used. Serve with sour cream and chutney.

Since New Year's Eve is Friday evening, why not see the secular New Year in with a few friends on *motze Shabbat* (Saturday evening). Here's a fun dessert to serve.

Chocolate Fondue

2 16-ounce bags semisweet chocolate chips
2 cups heavy cream
2 tsp. vanilla extract
rinsed, hulled, dried strawberries
sliced bananas
marshmallows
pound cake cut in 1-inch cubes
cubed brownies, chocolate chip cookies, and dried fruits (optional)

Place chocolate chips in a fondue pot. Heat cream in a small saucepan over low heat to low simmer but do not boil. Pour cream over chocolate chips, add vanilla and stir until chips are melted. Serve in fondue pot over low flame with strawberries, bananas, marshmallows, cake and other dippers.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, lecturer, food columnist, feature writer and author of nine kosher cookbooks. She lives in Jerusalem. ★

Chanukah eating and partying

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Jewish law does not prescribe any specific feasting or elaborate meal for Chanukah as it does for other holidays. One possible explanation for this is because the holiday, which is not in the Bible, but in the Apocrypha (books of Jewish religious literature not incorporated into the Hebrew Bible) commemorates a victory in a long war.

Abraham Chill, in his classic, *The Minhagim*, suggests that the Assyrians only wanted to annihilate the Jews spiritually, so for Chanukah meals one should set the table more elaborately than on an ordinary weekday. He also adds that a Sephardic sage suggested that in the Chanukah story there is no connection to food (such as banquets in the Purim story).

Another unique aspect of this holiday is the fact that in the Books of the Maccabees there are no women mentioned. Finally, all of the myths about the oil are Talmudic and become the only source from which Jewish people could create culinary traditions.

Nevertheless, the myth of the oil lasting for eight days gave rise to the use of oil in food products. European Jews served goose and *gribenes*, the skin of the goose after the fat was rendered. They also served noodle and potato *kugels* (puddings), and *latkes* (pancakes). Israelis serve the *sufganiyot*, jelly doughnuts. Middle Eastern Jews traditionally serve fried pastries in oil to symbolize the miracle of the oil, and Jews from other parts of the world also serve varieties of fried pastries.

In order not to get caught in the "December dilemma" of competing with the Christian holiday many Jewish people have intentionally played down the significance Chanukah has come to achieve. Often families concentrate on a family dinner, lighting candles and minimal gifts.

Following the guideline of Judah Maccabee himself who only declared that the holiday should be celebrated eight days "with mirth and gladness," Chanukah parties can take on a variety of styles for the eight nights.

More eating and partying

Chanukah has started, and the weekend *Jerusalem Post* had a very amusing article titled, "Festival of light tends to make us heavy." People gain an average of two kilos (4.4 pounds) during Chanukah from eating *sufganiyot* and *latkes*. The average jelly doughnut contains 500-600 calories; potato pancakes have 150 to 200 calories each. The nutrition and diet recommended baking doughnuts in the oven and exercising....

Speaking of *sufganiyot*, the variety available in Israel is mind-boggling!

Bakeries are making new-style *sufganiyot* filled with: ricotta cheese, poppy seeds, home-made marmalades, chocolate, strawberry jam, blueberry jelly, sweet coffee, champagne whipped cream, berries, espresso, anisette, coconut milk, Kahlua, lemon meringue, butterscotch and halvah. Some are covered with pearls of sugar, and sugarless; miniatures are filled with halvah creme, cinnamon, and mocha; bite-size are dusted with sugar and spiced with chocolate. Frostings include: chocolate, white chocolate, chocolate and almond cream, cinnamon and white chocolate, pistachio cream, vanilla chestnut, sherry, cardamom, coconut and chocolate coconut, M&Ms, and apple cinnamon....

Chanukiyot of all shapes and sizes are appearing in store windows – not just for sale, but store owners light a *chanukiya* in their stores during the week...The main streets of Jerusalem are decorated – with lit *chanukiyot* on the light poles....

Near closing time in Machaneh Yehudah, the Jewish market, dealers were doing last-minute business on apples, onions, potatoes, wicks, oil, *chanukiyot* and more varieties of *sufganiyot* than you could imagine...The Ministry of Jerusalem announced it is distributing fir trees for those who celebrate Christmas on December 23 from 9 to 12 at Jaffa Gate....

Reprinted from a previous Chanukah issues of this newspaper. ★



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Dear Seth Ben-Mordecai,

As a student of Hebrew, I read your column regularly in the *Jewish Post & Opinion*. In the Oct. 7, 2009 column, you say that the Greek hepta and the Latin septa derive from an Indo-European ancestor meaning “six.” I always thought these meant seven. Kindly explain.

I am writing a masters paper on the Origin and Development of the Hebrew Alphabet. I have read Naveh, Sass, Sanders, Powell and Goldwasser. Any thoughts you have would be appreciated.

Edward J. Klein, Jamaica, NY
Madrikh@PeoplePC.com

Dear Edward,

Thanks so much for writing, Mr. Klein. You are absolutely correct! Both words mean “seven,” as did the Indo-European root they derive from. Thanks for alerting me to my error.

As for the origin and development of the Hebrew Alphabet, a recent article by Professor Orly Goldwasser in *Biblical Archaeology Review* is useful and interesting. You can find it at: www.bib-arch.org/bar/article.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=36&Issue=2&ArticleID=6. A rebuttal and reply can be found at: www.bib-arch.org/scholars-study/alphabet.asp.

Also, I'd recommend reading what you can find about the Ugaritic alphabet. That alphabet is written in cuneiform wedges that were invented to stand for the letters of the Semitic alphabet – an alphabet that the inhabitants of Ugarit were already familiar with, as they adopted the same order in use for the Semitic alphabet.

Again, thanks for your letter. I hope you continue to enjoy the column.

Seth Ben-Mordechai ★

Dear Rabbi Wiener,

Your column in the *Post & Opinion* dated Oct. 13, 2010 brought tears to my eyes the first time I read it, and even now, I am deeply moved by the thoughts you have shared, not just with your readers, with me. My husband and I saw our own parents grow old. Now we are at the time when our children point out our inadequacies, as if we didn't realize our own short comings. It's not easy. Perhaps when I show them your column they will stop, take another look at us and understand.

Rita B. Stein, Hollywood, Fla.

Dear Ms. Stein,

I thank you for your words and truly understand the anxieties and frustrations

that accompany us as we get older. My congregation consists primarily of retired individuals and I see their pain and agonize with them as they endure illness and loneliness.

I urge everyone to remember that they are not alone. The closeness we achieve with each other enables us to not only share the burdens but allows us to understand that we can overcome the hardships and continue to enjoy life.

I pray that you will find the comfort you seek and that God will be there in your time of need. May the blessings we celebrate at Thanksgiving continue to be fulfilling.

Rabbi Irwin Wiener, D.D. ★

Israel Action Network

When I first read that the Jewish Federations of North America are launching the Israel Action Network, a \$6 million project to fight “efforts to delegitimize and demonize the state of Israel” (JPO, Nov. 10), I thought: *that's a waste of money*.

Don't get me wrong. I am no fan of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement. Its international proponents often fail to explicitly recognize Israel's right to exist. They are usually one-sided in assigning blame for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and for some the language and tone of their arguments and actions are nothing more than barely disguised anti-Semitism. Some of these players are, as Kathy Manning (Federations CEO) suggests, “bearing false witness against Israel.”

I don't know what the leaders of the Israel Action Network have in mind, but I hope they take into account the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' recent statement on civility: *A frank and civil exchange of ideas helps to inform our decisions, provoke new ways of thinking, and sometimes even change our minds*.

There are those – in and outside the Jewish community – who call for targeted boycotts or divestment to oppose not Israel itself, but the continued occupation of the West Bank. It is possible to advocate a strategy of refusing to buy olive oil from groves in a settlement defined as illegal by the Israeli government without being anti-Semitic or anti-Israel. Labeling all those who disagree with you as dangerous to Israel doesn't seem like a particularly sophisticated strategy, and I hope that the Network will, in their words, succeed in being “fair and balanced.”

I fear that every dollar spent trying to convince other people that Israel is okay will be wasted when West Bank settlers publically flaunt Israeli law, when Palestinian olive groves are uprooted to make way for the separation barrier or loyalty oaths applicable only to non-Jews are passed by Knesset (not to mention the violent enforcement of gender-segregation on public buses by the ultra-Orthodox).

I fear that if we remain silent when Israel fails to live up to our highest

Jewish and democratic principles, if we don't allow for multiple ways to legitimately support Israel, if we immediately assume that all those who criticize Israeli actions are anti-Semites out to destroy the state, we will not only look like the boy who cried wolf, but will succeed in ostracizing many within our own community.

I, for one, would feel a whole lot better if the \$6 million were spent on shoring up the institutions of Israeli democracy, supporting Israeli-Palestinian grassroots efforts at peace-making, and providing a forum for the full range of ideas to be civilly discussed without name-calling. Unfortunately, that kind of approach is less likely to raise millions than one based on fear and the sense that it's always the other guy.

Sue Swartz, Bloomington, Ind. ★

Jewish prisoner wins lawsuit for kosher meals

Dear Editor,

For the past year and a half I had a federal lawsuit against the Indiana Department of Correction for kosher meals to be served to Jewish prisoners. On Nov. 1, the A.P. Press posted my victory. An article ran in the Nov. 5 *Indianapolis Star*. Jewish lawyer Ken Falk of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana took my case. I would like for the community out there to know what the community inside is doing to better Jewish lives as well. Approximately two years ago they took our kosher diets from us, so I put together a suit, and with my rabbi's help and the ACLU, we won and the federal judge rewarded our efforts with the return of kosher meals to be served at every state facility. My rabbi, Avi Grossbaum was a great help on this matter as well.

Maston Willis, Miami Correctional Facility, Bunkerhill, Ind.

Summary of Indianapolis Star article:

A federal judge has ruled the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) is violating the law by not offering kosher meals to prison inmates whose religious beliefs require them. Maston filed a class-action lawsuit last year after the IDOC began substituting vegan meals for kosher meals it formerly served, citing costs.

American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana attorney Ken Falk says the change affected 90 to 120 inmates. Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson this week ruled in favor of inmate Maston Willis, finding that the department's handling of the issue had violated his religious rights. The judge set a hearing for Nov. 30 on the scope of a possible injunction. ★

SANDLER

(continued from page NAT 14)

On the Jewish calendar the holiday begins on the eve of the 25th of Kislev, which corresponds this year to Wednesday evening, Dec. 1, 2010. ★

TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 17)

reflected in Freud's writing, including his case histories. His clear examination of the case histories demonstrates how better understanding can be achieved about Jewish identity “in Freud, his patients, and their treatment.” This is a significant contribution to the reader's understanding of the book's subject.

Most of the following papers focus directly on Freud's Jewish identity, basing the comments for the most part on two of Freud's more contentious contributions: *The Moses of Michelangelo* (1914) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1930). Freud claimed that there were actually two Moses characters. One was an Egyptian and one a Midianite. It was the Egyptian Moses who brought monotheism and other values to the Hebrew slaves. Freud's version of the story is that the Hebrews rejected Moses's contribution and murdered him. Eventually, the Midianite Moses persuaded the Israelites to accept monotheism. Needless to say, Jewish scholars do not accept this story.

Two papers deal with Freud's move to London in June, 1938 and his life there until his death in September, 1939. Critically ill with cancer of the gums and mouth, Freud persuaded his physician to consult with his daughter, Anna Freud, and then to administer a lethal dose of morphine. This assisted suicide took place on Yom Kippur.

Despite the varying caliber of the papers in this collection, the book as a whole makes a useful contribution to our understanding of Sigmund Freud and his relationship to his Jewish identity.

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. ★

ROGER

(continued from page NAT 20)

share personal stories and experiences. Hosted by Michael “Mickey” S. Maurer of Carmel, Ind., it is a live talk show that is similar in format to Bravo TV's *Inside the Actor's Studio*. In 2009, Mickey's Corner with soprano Sylvia McNair won an Emmy Award. The shows are taped and can be viewed at: www.jccindy.org/page.aspx?id=195038.

About Michael S. Maurer

“Mickey” is a successful attorney, entrepreneur, civic leader and philanthropist in the Indianapolis community. He has been involved in the industries of film production, radio broadcasting, cable television throughout Indiana and Michigan, newspaper publishing, and banking.

Cantor Roger recently celebrated 31 years at Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation and 30 years of marriage. ★



Music Jews

CANTOR JANICE ROGER

Mickey & Michael: The Great American Interview!

In his introduction on the evening of Nov. 11, Michael "Mickey" S. Maurer said, "You ain't seen nothin' yet," as he was greeted with warm applause from a packed house. It was a very special event: Mickey interviewing Michael Feinstein, the ambassador for the Great American Songbook. The evening provided wonderful music and delightful banter for a more-than-appreciative audience that filled the room at the Jewish Community Center in Indianapolis, Ind.

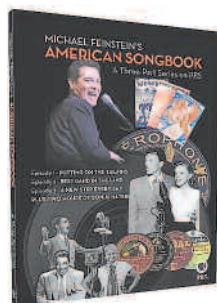
Born in Columbus, Ohio, Feinstein began his journey at the piano playing "Do, Re, Mi" from *Sound of Music* on a piano that his parents had just purchased. When his mother asked who had taught him how to play the song, she didn't believe when Feinstein answered, "no one." He continued to play by ear and at age 20 Feinstein moved to Los Angeles because, as he put it, "a voice inside of him said to go there." Playing a variety of



jobs in bars, restaurants and at parties, Feinstein got a break when he was hired to play a party at Chasen's Restaurant given for Frank Sinatra. He learned to play obscure Sinatra songs, "from movies he wishes he had never made" and even accompanied the chairman of the board that evening. The rest is history, as they say, and the evening of Michael and Mickey was, to quote Ira Gershwin, "'S wonderful, 's marvelous."

Feinstein is an engaging performer, creating intimacy and connecting with the audience. His mellow voice and beautiful falsetto are complemented by the facility with which he plays the piano. Riffs, trills, jazzy chords all roll off his fingers with incredible control and agility, sometimes even snippets of other tunes showed up as Feinstein accompanied himself in song after song from the opening number. He played "How About You?" through standards like "The Nearness of You" and even the repertoire of Indiana's native son Cole Porter, about whom he quipped, "he must have been Jewish" and briefly quoted a phrase from "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" which seemed lifted from traditional Jewish chant. When Feinstein sang "You're the Top," Mickey suggested the lyrics needed some updating – which, of course, he had done – and Feinstein sang the new texts as if they were part of the original.

The Great American Song Book is Feinstein's passion. In 1977, June Levant (the widow of Oscar Levant) introduced Feinstein to Ira Gershwin, who was 80 at the time. For



six years, Feinstein was his assistant, and he catalogued the Gershwin archive – which gave him unprecedented access to Gershwin's work. Ira also taught Feinstein about the repertoire of the Tin Pan Alley composers. Feinstein's enthusiasm for the standards of American popular music led him to create a foundation for the "Education and Preservation of the Great American Songbook." It is Feinstein's mission to pay "tribute to the men and women who wrote the great canon of American song."

Mayor Jim Brainard of Carmel, Ind., approached Feinstein to house his own collection as well as the music and memorabilia of others in the soon to be opened Carmel Center for the Performing Arts. Because Feinstein sees Carmel as a model city, the Center as an extraordinary complex, and Brainard as a visionary, he couldn't say no to the offer. In addition, Feinstein will serve as the artistic director for the Center – a once-in-a-lifetime appointment. For Feinstein, being in Indiana is like coming home. It is his hope that people will have access to the works of American popular music composers because "the music can't survive if it is not shared." In addition to the Feinstein collection, he also has contributions from the estates of Henry Mancini, Hy Zaret, and Sammy Kahn, among others. The Foundation welcomes donations and will catalogue, document, and display its holdings of music, pictures, and recordings at the Palladium.

In addition to a wonderful evening of music, Feinstein shared his experiences with many celebrities. He credits Ginger Rogers for introducing him to the work of Fred Astaire; Rosemary Clooney was described as generous and funny – she advised him, "Smile when you sing...people can hear it." Feinstein spends Passover with Barbra Streisand at Marilyn and Alan Bergman's home – their *matzah* is made by Spago! Of Liza Minelli, he quipped, "we're joined at the hip." According to Feinstein, she has vision and was most influenced by her father, Vincent. He met Nancy Reagan when he played a party at the White House, and Prince Edward got him into Buckingham Palace.

Feinstein gave the following advice to aspiring performers, "Find a place where you can work. You have to learn how to interact with your audience. You must be motivated by passion and devotion to music. Above all, don't be afraid." He added, "The harder I work, the luckier I get." Feinstein ended the evening with a fun rendition of Irving Berlin's "I Love a Piano." For the audience, even though the "Song Is Ended – The Melody Lingers On" and, for this writer, "They Can't Take That Away From Me."

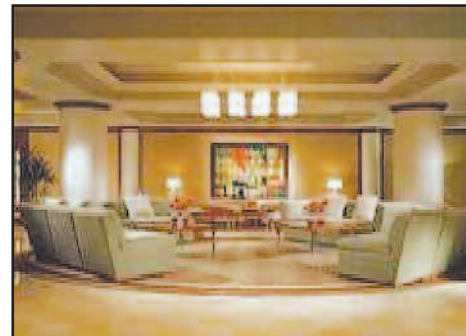
About Mickey's Corner

Mickey's Corner is always entertaining and informative as "Mickey's" guests (see Roger, page NAT 19)

Travel

BY HAROLD JACOBSON

Staying in New Jersey on a trip to New York City



There are at least five reasons to stay in Livingston, New Jersey's Westminster Hotel even if your ultimate destination is New York City. First, this four diamond luxury establishment has a tariff rate one half less the cost of similar hostelry in Manhattan.

Second, accessing the Westminster, which lies 20 miles west of New York City, is easily accomplished in 40 minutes via rental car or limousine service from Newark or LaGuardia airports. Hourly bus service into Manhattan's Penn Station is available within walking distance from the hotel.

Once ensconced in The Westminster's verdant setting bordering nine neighboring New Jersey towns, guests will experience the third reason – a quiet, pollution free, leafy environment in an upscale section of New Jersey where you can walk or jog on Livingston's suburban streets and admire the town's lovely homes and estates.

The Westminster itself offers a fourth reason – 183 large, luxurious and beautifully appointed rooms and suites with an accent on environmentally friendly linen usage, energy-saving light bulbs and organic in-room amenities. The public and guest rooms are lavishly furnished with paintings by local artists. The hotel also has a beautifully designed, tastefully decorated indoor swimming pool on its main floor.

The fifth and perhaps best reason is the hotel's personnel, a staff dedicated to the highest service traditions. A complimentary breakfast served from 6:30 a.m. is one such tradition. Another is the free shuttle service to local corporations housed in the area and to the famous Short Hills Mall, a five-minute ride from the hotel.

Jewish visitors to the area will find five different synagogues in the Livingston, N.J. area, representing Modern Orthodox, Conservative, "Independent" and Reform congregations. Kosher food is also available in the area at the Maple Kosher Meat Market. The phone number there is 908-688-2080. ★

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