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*Happy Hanukkah*



Art by John Domont



# Editorial

I encourage you to take notice of the front cover art of this issue and also the one for the next issue, Dec. 16. They were specially created just for you, dear readers, by artist John Domont. If you like the art, be sure to visit his Web site [www.domontgallery.com](http://www.domontgallery.com) and/or email John at [john@domontgallery.com](mailto:john@domontgallery.com) to thank him for his beautiful work.

Last year at this time, an atrocity took place in Mumbai, India. At that time and also because in my part of the world it was very cold and dark, I decided to create the following eight meditations for Hanukkah. This year, set aside a little time to contemplate these after the blessings over the candles and before the songs are sung or after the singing when the candles are burning down 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 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

(see Editorial, page NAT 4)

# About the Cover

## Hanukkah 5770

John Domont speaking about his art, light, and Hanukkah: *It is said that although this is the physically darkest time of the year, it is the time of greatest spiritual light! Hanukkah is the Season of Light – the experience of lighting candles is always an opportunity for joy and communion – to surrender to the light and the silence of these. The light penetrates me and touches my heart as I surrender to the raw moment. Life is an opportunity of learning and communing.*

*There is no place inside so dark that light cannot go. There is no unconsciousness that cannot be raised up with light, surrender and wisdom. Hanukkah celebrates life – this time, this season will return to us what we give to it. The deeper the commitment, the more sincere we surrender, the more we are flooded with life and her gifts.*

About the artist: In his late 20s, Domont worked exclusively for conservation groups photographing threatened habitats and endangered species around the world. He photographed so many different mammals in water habitats that water became a primary focus for his artistic endeavors.

In the process of abstracting the qualities of water, as transformed into its various aspects of light, color, movement, and energy, he began to experience a relationship with painting. By 1983, painting had become the primary focus of his work.

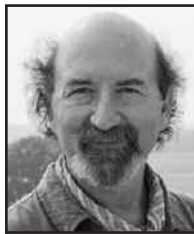
Domont's paintings are an expression of inspirations from nature and his relationship to the landscape. He strives to create harmony among the three forms of light available to an artist: surface light, the light of nature, and the light of spirit. His art is about presence and place.

Domont works in the Heartland, his home, where roads, pastures, fields, and forests are the essence of the landscape of the American Midwest. This countryside is both simple and nourishing. It is in the basics of the landscape that one can see and feel the beauty of the essential – the elements of land and sky, of nature and humanity coming together. Rather than portraying the realism of the country scene, Domont is in pursuit of the experimental expression. When one stands alone in a field with grain and sky, wind and color as companions, an experience of unity can occur.

Domont is interested in expressing the harmony of the seen and unseen. This experience of unity, which brings with it a sense of awe, supports and guides his work. His paintings are an attempt to honor the beauty and magic of living in our time and place.

Domont spends his days painting, photographing and writing poetry. During the past two decades, his paintings have

(see Cover, page NAT 15)



John Domont

# Shabbat Shalom

By Rabbi Jon Adland

November 20, 2009, Toldot  
(Genesis 25:19–28:9), 3 Kislev 5770

Next Thursday we celebrate Thanksgiving. Many of us will gather with family or friends for a meal, some football, a warm fire, and a quiet day of rest. Many of us will also take a few moments to give thanks before we eat our meals. Without question, this past year has been difficult for us in any number of ways making it so very important that we stop and give thanks for the beauty and blessings in our lives.

As I have for many years, at least more than 15, I will begin my Thanksgiving by participating in an interfaith Thanksgiving eve service. Seven churches, two Muslim groups, and Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation will gather to say thank you to God for bounty and blessings in our lives, our friendships, and pray for a better world tomorrow. This amazing interfaith service reminds us of the true meaning of this holiday.

This year there will be five interfaith Thanksgiving services over a period of days in various locations around Indianapolis – north, south, east, west, and downtown. At each service there will be a collection for the Interfaith Hunger Initiative (IHI) that benefits Gleaners Pantry Partner program and the school lunch program in Eldoret, which is in the Umoja Province of Kenya. Since the money is divided equally between the two programs, for every \$36 collected one child in Eldoret will receive school lunch for a year. Yes, it only takes \$18 to feed a child for a year. Pantry Partners' money will help Gleaners work with local pantries to keep them open at hours that truly benefit those who need them, such as the working mom or dad who can't get there during the day.

Hunger is increasing around the world and one billion people go hungry every day. We give thanks for the blessings in our lives, but let us also help others find blessing in their lives as well. It is not an unreasonable goal to think that the people of this world and the governments who manage the resources can find a way to eliminate hunger. The goal may be a decade or two away, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try to find a way today to keep 16,000 children around the world from dying each day of starvation or 18,000 children in Indianapolis from going hungry.

It is incumbent upon us to try, and Thanksgiving is a wonderful holiday to help us begin this journey and cause us to pause and reflect. Who are we as Jews and who are we as human beings if we don't do something to help fight hunger? There is plenty of food in the world to feed everyone, but we need to work together so that everyone shares in this bounty.

As you go around your Thanksgiving table to say thanks for the blessings in your life, let us also remember that we have the ability, the means, and the power to help bring blessings into the lives of others. We do try at IHC by working with the Interfaith Hospitality Network, serving a meal once-a-month at Dayspring, contributing to Gleaners, Second Helpings, IHI, Martin Luther King and Crooked Creek Community Centers, and more. I feel blessed to be a part of this community of people who say "yes" and make a difference. Let us give thanks and let us continue to help others find blessings.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for the strength we have to make a difference in the lives of those who are struggling. Light the other for the blessings in our lives, the hands we hold, the hearts we touch, and the friends we have.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ★

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# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Life is not always easy. Sometimes we go through difficulties and hard times. The trick is to realize that everything is from Hashem and ultimately good.

I twisted my knee, and it hurts me a little to walk. It happened last Thursday. I was dancing in a fancy night club in Yafo (Jaffa). What was a Chassidic rabbi doing dancing in a night club? It was actually the wedding celebration of my daughter Dina's sister-in-law, and the two beautiful girls I was dancing with were my granddaughters, ages 6 and 4.

What lesson did I learn from this? Recently we checked the mezuzahs in our house. The scribe who checked them told us that three of them were kosher, but not the best. However, I've been busy with all kinds of projects and neglected putting up better mezuzahs. mezuzahs bring blessing and protection to our house and all of our family. And since we are all one family, any and every mezuzah put up anywhere in the world brings protection to all of us. After I sprained my knee, every step that I took reminded me to take care of the mezuzahs. Now the mezuzahs are better, and so is my knee, *Baruch Hashem*.

Speaking about hard times, here is an email that I received recently:

*Rabbi Cohen:*

*My name is Mr. Smith (named changed to protect privacy). I received the National Jewish Post & Opinion. I am currently incarcerated in jail by lies and an unjust judge. I am awaiting an appeal. Please pray for me.*

*The reason my wife is emailing you is because I am very interested in learning more about the Lubavitcher Rebbe you speak about many times in your article. I love reading your articles and I love the Post & Opinion. Where may I obtain information?*

*Thank you for your time and God bless you. Mr. Smith*

Reading this was greatly encouraging. I work hard on these articles. Each one takes many hours. So I'm happy to hear that people read them, love them, and are inspired to learn more.

Where can you learn more about the Lubavitcher Rebbe? I suggest going to your local Chabad House. They will have a rabbi to answer questions, classes to learn the Rebbe's teachings, a library with many volumes of the Rebbe's teachings and letters, stories and videos of the Rebbe. If you don't have a local Chabad House, get in touch with Lubavitch and ask them to open one in your city or town (or even your jail). There are many jails today that Chabad visits regularly.

In addition, there is much to learn from the Internet. There you can read all of the Rebbe's teachings that have been published and you can download lectures explaining these teachings. Many of the

Rebbe's talks were originally televised, and many or all of these can be seen on the Internet.

Let us all pray for Mr. Smith. May Hashem help him and all of us to find true freedom and get out of prison soon. Even those of us who are fortunate to not be sitting in jail, don't have complete freedom. In one way or another we are all enslaved. Some are enslaved to food, some to money, some to alcohol or drugs, some to work, some to computers, some to television. Some people are slaves to how they look. An additional pound, a new wrinkle or gray hair makes them depressed. Some people are slaves to their pride. In order to feel superior they will go to great lengths to find true or imaginary faults in everyone that they know. Until we reach the complete and final redemption we are all in prison, more or less.

## Our body and the physical world can be one big prison, separating us from Hashem.

The Torah teaches us that before we were born, our soul was in heaven, one with Hashem. When we were born our soul came down to this world. Our body and the physical world can be one big prison, separating us from Hashem. What can we do to free ourselves?

Our sages taught that the only way to achieve true freedom is by learning Torah. By learning Torah, especially Chassidism, we can come to know Hashem. We can experience spirituality and holiness. We can discover new and beautiful worlds. The physical world has less and less hold on us.

The next step is to find and reveal the ultimate good hidden down here, right in the physical world. Hashem is our father, and he delights in our good deeds. The harder it is to fulfill the Mitzvah, the more *nachos* Hashem has from it. When we overcome the difficulties down here and live a life of Torah and Mitzvahs, this brings Hashem great pleasure.

Suddenly the world is a prison no longer. It is Hashem's special garden. This is freedom; this is redemption. Each of us is a small, but important, part of the world. And by achieving our own personal freedom and redemption, we bring closer the redemption of the entire world.

Mr. Smith is right now in jail, but it seems that this unpleasant experience has helped him to find the road to real freedom. We believe that the Lubavitcher Rebbe is Moshiach, that he is bringing peace and redemption to the entire world. By following the Rebbe and learning the Chassidus that he taught us, we can and must bring true freedom to ourselves and thus to all of the world. We want Moshiach now!

*Rabbi Cohen lives in K'far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at [bzcohen1@neto.bezeqint.net](mailto:bzcohen1@neto.bezeqint.net). ★*



# Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

## Kislev began Nov. 17

Many people may have a vision of what they want to do in their lives, yet they hold back, fearing rejection and failure. Because they are doubtful of their capacity to be successful, their self-esteem plummets. If this is true for you, take heart. Kislev is here. Kislev is the month of going forward actualizing one's dreams and it is also a great time for travel.

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

We are able to take risks in Kislev because it is actually a time of deepening faith and trust in God. Kislev is a time of clarity. Kislev is a time to receive important guidance about one's life purpose.

The whole month of Kislev is shaped by the holiday of Hanukkah, the holiday of miracles that occurs at the end of the month, the darkest time of the year. During Hanukkah, 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.

## Kislev is the month of going forward actualizing one's dreams and it is also a great time for travel.

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, and 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, but come for the purest place within us. To know what we really want inside, we have to listen to what God wants for us.

By simply 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 Hanukkah, we see even the ordinary aspects of life as miraculous. By the way, Kislev, according to the Talmud, is a time of unexpected money.

What is fixed this month is sleep. So Kislev is a time to allow yourself 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 that we usually live in and see clearly. When we sleep, we should sleep, but when we are awake, we should be fully awake.

*Excerpted from Kabbalah Month by Month.*

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

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

## On this date in Jewish history

On December 2, 1763

Touro Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in America, in Newport, R.I. was dedicated.

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





## Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

### Fighting destruction and violence: A Hanukkah commitment

I did something this week that I haven't done in a long time. And while what I did was not a crime, it made me feel like committing one by the end of the day. I spent the afternoon shopping for Hanukkah gifts at the mall.

I started out feeling calm and confident that I could whip through the stores in a few hours and snatch up the perfect presents for all my little loved ones. But within 10 minutes, my confidence turned to frustration, then anger, as I walked through aisle after aisle of games like *Mortal Kombat*, *Devil's Destruction* and *Ultra Violent World*. I was particularly "inspired" by *Grand Theft Auto* which encourages children to use handguns, grenades, assault rifles, submachine guns and rocket launchers to hijack cars, demolish property and kill policeman just for the sport of it.

Call me old-fashioned, but isn't something terribly wrong with our culture when our best-selling toys encourage and even glorify aggression, destruction and violence? Shouldn't we try harder to deliver a more hopeful message to our children and grandchildren in this fragile and chaotic world?

I am certainly not the first to ask these questions. Ample scientific research indicates that toys and games that promote aggression and violence harm the development and behavior of children. The studies conclude that a direct correlation exists between children

who play violent video and computer games and poor school performance, belligerence and physical fighting.

Going back more than 2,000 years, "Jewish research" came to a similar conclusion about the effect of violence and destruction on the human psyche. In times of warfare, the Torah forbids us to destroy any fruit bearing-trees when we conquer a city (Deuteronomy 20:19). We are commanded not to let our ego and our relationship to the world become distorted by our physical conquest of it. The significance of this idea is profound: In the midst of taking the spoils of war, we are required to maintain respect and regard for the earth.

**When we consciously refrain from destroying our habitat, when we preserve rather than waste...we turn away from the negative within us and move toward the good.**

Talmudic rabbis expanded this ban against destruction (called *bal tashchit* in Hebrew) to include a prohibition against tearing garments, destroying buildings, breaking vessels, clogging wells, diverting water, killing animals for convenience, wasting fuel and eating extravagant foods instead of simpler ones. Why so many additional restrictions? Because the rabbis understood a great deal about human nature: They realized that we do not easily set limits on ourselves and must be taught and trained NOT to be destructive.

*Bal Tashchit* teaches us not to destroy because destruction leads to more destruction. When we consciously refrain from destroying our habitat, when we preserve rather than waste our precious resources, when we maintain rather than damage our material possessions, we turn away from the negative within us and move toward the good. In seeking to preserve rather than destroy the world around us, we fulfill the Divine purpose for which we were created – to tend and care for the earth (Genesis 2:15).

While the Talmudic rabbis did not contend with games like *Mortal Kombat* or *Devil's Destruction*, they understood the negative influence of destruction and sought to curtail it. Wouldn't it be wise this Hanukkah if instead of buying our children toys that promote violence, we buy ones that promote peace, harmony and collaboration? Games like *Peace Games* which promotes positive, peaceful relationships through community service and social action or *In the Orchard*, which encourages children to work together for a common goal. The internet is a good



## Wiener's Wisdom

By RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### Defending your life

Here is Hanukkah. And we retell the stories of the occurrences that took place 2,174 years ago. We remember the salvation of a people and their faith that resonates to today. Truth be told, if it were not for Hanukkah, there would be no faith to cling to.

The last jar of oil represented the last best hope of humanity to forever enshrine in their memory the beginning of life. The flame that burned enabled countless generations to cling to the possibility of a future filled with greatness and connection to a concept of Holiness and fulfillment. The light that emanated from the Candelabra still brightens our path to the understanding of the uniqueness in each of us.

Hanukkah is also a time to consider the value of life. Each of us is constantly fighting battles of survival. We go through life as though it were some exercise such as weight lifting or jogging or dieting. When will we be able to stop and understand that life is more than self-gratification or unnecessary indulgence? When will we be able to put aside "I can't" to "I can?" When will we begin to defend our lives as though they matter?

**Hanukkah is also a time to consider the value of life. Each of us is constantly fighting battles of survival.**

I recently watched a movie titled *Defending Your Life* in which humans, upon death, are sent to a staging area to begin the process of explaining their experiences during their lifetime. It was

place to start for ideas and resources for similar games.

Mahatma Gandhi said it best when he said: "If we are to reach real peace in this world... we shall have to start with the children." Let's give peace a chance this Hanukkah by choosing toys and games that reflect this commitment.

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

rather amazing to watch the principal players engaged in describing details of their lives from childhood to the time of their death.

As you can imagine, there were scenes of childhood disappointments and adult frustrations. We have all had them in some form or another. Whether it was the neighborhood bully taunting us or the awkwardness of adolescence or the insecurities of dating and seeking acceptance, each of us has traveled that road once or twice.

What would we say in defense of our lives? Who would we call to explain our experiments in growing up, defining them as innocent blips in the test of life's experiences? Were there so many "I can't's" instead of "I cans?" When we are asked to answer for our deeds and

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### EDITORIAL

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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.

On this last night of Hanukkah, if there is a person or situation not thought about on the previous nights, simply enjoy the brightness filling the room caused by the light from all eight candles and imagine that person or situation receiving that light.

Happy Hanukkah!

Jennie Cohen 12-2-09. ★

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## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### The U.S. House of Representatives: A new definition of courage

The health care bill has passed the House and has been delivered to the Senate. In the course of action, the Senate must first approve a bill, and only then will there be a conference committee, which will try to create one bill that can be sent to the president for his signature.

The House bill passed, but with a much smaller margin than the actual number of Democrats in the House, and when it did, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi congratulated all of the members who voted to pass the bill, and called many of the younger members, "courageous."

It is the use of the word "courageous," in this context, that I would like to call to your attention. There are no asterisks in speeches, and so if you were surprised to hear the speaker use it over and over again, you had to figure it out yourself. It seems to be directed at first-term representatives, who came to the House with President Obama, but who will have to run again, next year, in an environment that is dangerous to their career. That very well may be, but why is that act "courageous," and would we expect them to vote for their "careers or for what they thought was right."

We find ourselves in this position because we have compartmentalized love for our constitutions' intent. The history seems to suggest that, like the men who were there in the beginning, the writers and the framers of that constitution had no reason to believe politics would be a career path. It was in the beginning, not a highly sought after job, and dangerous at that. Sentiments ran high, and in those days, sentiments often translated into violent action.

In the midst of a more dangerous America, we often allow ourselves to imagine the past as idyllic. It wasn't. A very few people lived long lives, and part of the reason was violence, toward those in power and everyone in general.

We know that the first rule of government and every other organization is self-perpetuation, and we also know that one of the first real groups that get together after each exhausting national election is one focused on staying in power. It makes sense, but in the House of Representatives, it translates into Representatives always in motion, always raising money, always trying to assess the heartbeat of the constituents to put them in office.

While we agree that the Republican victories in New Jersey and Virginia do

not constitute an accurate picture of what will happen in 2010, it is clear that the independents who were so important in the Democratic victory in 2008 are restless and worried, and further, that if the economy continues to tank and jobs remain scarce, these very same Democrats will be a barometer of how America feels about the current administrations and all their programs.

I am not a seer, certainly not in politics, but I am, at the same time, an advocate for limited terms in both the House and Senate. We are all witness to senators and representatives who simply stay beyond their time, and even when charges are leveled against them, they stay, often because they are politically savvy and could, if pushed, take some others with them. Many of those "others" help to keep them in office. Apparently, it is not easy to get convictions. If it were, the ex-governor of Illinois would not remain un-indicted.

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**The history seems to suggest that...the writers and the framers of that constitution had no reason to believe politics would be a career path. It was...not a highly sought after job, and dangerous at that.**

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We would do well to keep in mind that in this past election, Mayor Bloomberg spent an estimated \$100 million to maintain the position he was supposed to give up and then fought to change. His opponent, a Democrat, spent 1/30th the amount of money and came very close to winning. The sitting mayor spent over \$170 per vote. That's a great deal of money to buy a job.

Nancy Pelosi, who came to office because she has a secure seat, will ride out any voter rebellion, and clearly that is why she thinks doing what you were supposed to do, promised to do, deserves a medal for courage.

What about the rest of us, who year after year, tolerate mediocrity, theft and fraud, and a great many poor decisions? We, Mrs. Speaker, are, in the end, paying dearly for all this mess. Perhaps you should refer to us in some term of distinction. At this minute, I cannot think of one term the electorate would be happy to hear. We deserve better.

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## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### J Street fantasies

One thing we Jews are really good at is forming organizations. We love them. Every time some self-designated community leaders in the U.S. Jewish world decide it is time to take all the compatible organizations with their overlapping fields of interest and bundle them together it is a disaster.

We Jews are known for our individualism, our, if you will, our stiff necks. If an organization forms for a particular purpose, one of two things will happen. Either another organization will be formed to take an opposite and opposing view, or another organization (or perhaps two or three) to promote a different slant on the same problem.

So now, after years of a lobbying organization in Washington in essence representing the views of the Israeli government to the American voting public –The American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) – we have a group formed with an opposing view.

I have been watching the machinations of this organization for the past year. I read their statements and papers; I read, watch and listen to their interviews. In other words, I have been through the looking glass. Everything they publish, speak about or debate should begin with the words "In a Perfect World..."

There is certainly nothing wrong with Jewish Americans debating the best way to bring peace and security to Israel. There is nothing wrong with reaching out to Palestinians for discussion on their rights and their future. But face it. The Jews here in America, while we may have an emotional tie to the Jewish State, while we may have relatives there and have visited Israel ourselves umpteen times; the fact remains: We don't live there. We don't vote there. We do not pay those exorbitant taxes. We do not have our lives threatened by fanatical Arabs who seek only our destruction.

There is an organization, AIPAC, that carries the message of the Israeli government through the houses of Congress and to the White House. Good. Compare their thin group of personnel to Saudi Arabia, who maintains a cadre of 150 lawyers in Washington in addition to their numerous lobbying organizations.

If you look at the broad brush strokes of the J Street policy statements, there is little you could disagree with. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Fine. Which Palestinians? The mass of folks in the so-called West Bank that simply want to live their lives, make a living, improve their lifestyle and educate their children? No problem.

Hamas? Hezbollah? Al-Aqsa? These organizations are dedicated to the

destruction of the Jewish state. They are financed by Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. No more than the U.S. and Britain could have peace with Hitler can Israel ever, ever contemplate peace with these organizations. As long as Israel exists, they have a reason to exist. They stop being a threat to Israel and the Jewish people when their finances are cut off and they die of starvation.

Where does J Street stand on the amorphous phrase "settlements"? Are they prepared to say that in the State of Israel, the Jewish state, that there are neighborhoods that are "Judenrein"? Those esteemed members of J Street live in integrated neighborhoods (one would assume) where white, black, brown, Jews and Gentiles mow their lawns and drink their lattes in symbiotic brotherhood. Would they deny that to their brothers in Israel?

They want two "equal" states, living side by side. "In a Perfect World..." As the U.S. and others try to bring Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement together with the Israeli government to discuss peace, there are of course two major elements left out. Hamas and Hezbollah. The elephants in the living room. And suppose they are brought to the table. A sovereign state of Palestine with defined borders. Ah, J Streets' dream come true.

Okay, a state which Fatah wants declared unilaterally in the U.N. right now. Does this state have the right to form international alliances and treaties? Say, one with Iran? And, shades of 1962, can Iran then establish military bases and missile sites within the borders of this "Sovereign Nation"?

My friends, we do not live in a "Perfect World." Would that we did. But, with congressmen and senators in Washington afraid to allow convicted terrorists to live in maximum security prisons in the U.S. for fear that they may escape or attract their brethren here to create havoc in our cities (aren't they supposed to be plotting that now anyway?). Why would we accept a state where part of their government would probably consist of representatives dedicated to Israel's destruction?

So, next time you get a letter from J Street or meet a Jew who thinks their philosophy with regard to Israel makes sense – just ask them: Do you believe that Israel should be a Jewish state? Where in that Jewish state would it be illegal for Jews to live? Would you be upset if Jews were not allowed to live in a given neighborhood in Washington or Chicago or Paris or Rio De Janeiro?

Yes, we Jews are fond of organizing in as many groups as the alphabet will allow. Some are dedicated to good works, some represent us on the national and international stage. And some are just down right silly.

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. ★





## Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

### Major vs minor fun

*Hello again, Mr. Funsmith.*

*First of all, how are you already? And before I forget, thanks for your insightful, dast I say, brilliant comments about that whole Fun IQ thing. Fun. Fun way to think about fun. Intelligent, even. So, I thought, since we're corresponding already with such productivity, that I'd ask maybe if you could delve a little into this "deep fun" thing you spend the whole article talking about. When it comes to deep, what kinds of fun do you think are really deep, if you know what I mean, and I really hope you do.*

*Your avid reader, Ch. Chochom.*

First of all, I'm fine, thanks. You? Second of all, my dear Mr. Chochom, I again have to thank you for the insightfulness of your questions and the almost surprising relevance and timeliness of the aforementioned.

So, let's consider two different funonemena.

We'll call one "Major" and the other "Minor."

Major fun is, well, Major. Fun that is so much fun that we are willing to risk life and limb to taste it, even if only for a second. It's the fun of sky diving, bungee jumping, rock climbing, snow boarding. Major fun is the kind of fun that is so intense, so engaging, so total, that you really know, when you have it, that what you are having is fun.

Minor fun is the chewing gum kind of fun, even the washing dishes kind of fun that comes with the warm water and emerging sparkle and the meditation-like expanse of timelessness that ends when the sink is empty. It's the kind you are barely aware of as being fun. Like the watching TV kind of fun, or the eating potato chips kind, or the day dreaming kind. Minor fun is generally pleasant, mild, kind of euphoric, kind of like flow. Minor fun is what we have when we're doodling, making paper clip chains, twiddling thumbs and other twiddlables, getting comfortable, feeling well-fed. Minor fun is smelling something good, seeing something pretty, hearing something nice, tasting something tasty.

The problem is that it's the Major kinds of fun that get all the press. Major fun is the fun that people write books about, that people risk their lives for, the kind of fun that people spend most of their time wanting, the kind of fun that soft drink commercials are made of. The other, the Minor kind of fun, goes for the most part unnoticed, barely felt. And all the commercial dollars that go into making it perfectly clear how this car or these shoes or those sunglasses lead inevitably to the ultimate expression of all-consumingly

Major fun – leave us, for the most part, in the shadows of despair, feeling that everything else we do is dreary, funless. Which has the effect of raising the fun threshold to the point that hardly anything ever feels fun enough. Which is fine for the commercial powers, but not so good for us, the fun-seeking many, who buy and buy in to the belief that Minor fun is not fun enough to be considered fun at all.

Which is precisely why so many of us think that we aren't having fun. Which is precisely why so many of us really aren't having fun – because even when we are, we think we're not, if you know what I mean.

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...maybe the only way  
for us to find our way  
back to happiness is  
for us to spend a lot  
more time paying a lot  
more attention to fun  
of the Minor kind.

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Sometimes, Minor fun can get close to Major. Like when you taste something exceptionally, surprisingly delicious. Or when you really, really make love. Then you find yourself feeling all those kinds of things they talk about when they talk about *flow*. You get timeless. You get completely engaged, totally in the "now." You get larger than life.

But most of the time, Minor fun stays Minor, in the background, barely noticed.

I'm thinking that Minor fun is something we might really need to pay a lot more attention to. I'm thinking that for every 10 minutes of Major fun we spend maybe 10 days having the Minor kind. I'm thinking that when we go without Minor fun long enough, like maybe 10 minutes, we start getting into some really Major misery.

I'm thinking that when we were at our most natural, we were having Minor fun most of the time. But downtown and in the office and family room, what we hear most of the time isn't so much fun. Horns blaring, copiers copying, the TV.

I'm thinking that Major fun, as fun as it is, isn't enough fun to last us through the hours and days and weeks of hardly any kind of fun at all. And that maybe the only way for us to find our way back to happiness is for us to spend a lot more time paying a lot more attention to fun of the Minor kind. We need to take back the fun that we are given on a daily basis: the fun of crunchy cereal, of cold milk and hot coffee, of birdsong and dog wag, of smiles and waves, of warm blankets and light reading, of bringing someone breakfast in bed, of holding someone, of being held.

We can start with making a list, an enumeration, of the things we do for no reason. The things we do for fun. The things that give us pleasure. The pleasures

## The best of our faiths

BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO



The Fort Hood tragedy, where an Army psychiatrist went on a rampage killing 13 people, may be understood as the act of one deeply troubled individual that has nothing to do with religion. All our religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – teach compassion, justice and peace and inspire people to perform some of the most extraordinary acts of generosity. Among the greatest principles shared by Abrahamic faiths is: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Individuals or groups may distort those teachings to promote violent ideologies and political agendas. Dr. Nidal Hassan was no more representing Islam than Baruch Goldstein, whose rampage killed worshippers in Hebron in 1994, represented Judaism, or Scott Roeder, who killed women's clinic medical director Dr. George Tiller in Wichita last year, represented Christianity.

Yet, the tragedy of Fort Hood has everything to do with religion. All of our religious traditions contain texts that can be understood as exclusive declarations of the truth and mandates for triumphalism. It all depends on how you interpret them.

we give and get. The slight things that bring us moments of light. Beginning, for example, with your very desk and the hitherto little-known art of Fun Shui, achieved through the cunning and often haphazard placement and/or removal of photos, toys, plants, miniature fountains, candy jars, pithy sayings, and so forth, as practiced in office cubbies around the official world. Continuing, I suppose, with the wearing of comfort clothes to go with the eating of comfort foods, the frequent exchange of greetings, jokes, and email, the use of humor, smileys, and other signs of ongoingness. Sure, we can include the big things, the Major ones: the thrills, the conquest of fear, the touch of deep, connecting laughter, the moment of transcendent love. In fact, bringing the Minor together with the Major enriches our understanding of both, our embrace of all.

*DeKoven of Indianapolis, Ind. calls himself a "funsmith" because it's the easiest way he can define the last 40-plus years of his career. In brief, he helps people make things more fun: work, school, games (of course), marriage, parenthood, exercise, healing, toys, recovery, retirement, life, etc. He does this by helping people look at things from a fun perspective, which usually turns out to be something people under stress would never think of. And he happens to know a lot about this particular perspective. Which is what he hopes you will conclude from reading more about him on <http://deepfun.com/about.html>.* ✨

Scriptural passages have been quoted to support everything from slavery to persecution of people of different faiths, from oppression of women to homophobia.

Scripture also has been quoted to advance human rights, from feeding the hungry to sheltering the homeless, from social responsibility to world peace. Advocates for civil rights and social justice have sought to ground their commitments in biblical sources.

What does this have to say about our sacred texts? Just as the Constitution is as good as its interpreters (it was once used to justify keeping women and blacks from voting), so religion's sacred documents are as good as the people into whose hands they are entrusted.

What we face, in part, is a problem of abysmal ignorance about our faiths. Sacred scriptures are more revered than studied and understood. We desperately need to acknowledge and examine those passages within our holy texts that can be and have been interpreted to preach hatred of others. Denying that these passages exist, ignoring their potential for harm, suggesting that the richly complex and historically embedded documents of our faiths speak only of love, light and peace is to perpetuate the problem.

Paul Tillich, the great 20th-century Protestant theologian, reminded us that "religion can make good people better and bad people worse." Any tradition may be hijacked by its worst representatives. It behooves the rest of us to rescue our faith traditions and to speak out against those who would interpret them to promote hatred, bigotry and violence.

*Sasso and her husband Rabbi Dennis Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis for more than 30 years. This column originally appeared in the Indianapolis Star on Nov. 19, 2009.* ✨

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## Seen on the Israel Scene

By SYBIL KAPLAN

### Variety of interesting stories

When we lived in Overland Park, Kansas, I did my weekly shopping at the local supermarket, Price Chopper, or the one with the large kosher sections, Hen House, supplemented by the Wal-Mart neighborhood store. One of the stock items I bought was toilet paper most frequently four packs but sometimes more. This was a very private purchase that went into my grocery bag.

Coming to Israel, we discovered toilet paper sold in huge quantities – 32, 38, 40. Not having a car, we, like other people, lugged them home on the bus for all to see as there are no bags big enough to cover them. What a choice I had! Pink hearts, green hearts, solid yellow and solid pink-salmon. One day I asked the vendor, why no blue? He answered in all seriousness, blue and white are Israel's colors. You can't have toilet paper that color!

Well, while waiting for the bus the other day, by the *shuk* (market), what did I see? Blue butterflies and tulips on white background toilet paper, 32 to the package, so of course, I quickly bought it and *schlepped* it home on the bus, proudly exclaiming to Barry. Guess what I found?...

In November was Balfour Day and commemoration of Kristalnacht, and because of my having Government Press Office credentials, we were invited to the screening of the Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman's Award from the Jerusalem International Film Festival.

*Human Failure* is a fascinating documentary of what happened to all the property of Jews – registration, cataloging, assessing, monies added to national treasury and methodical efficiency showing in some cases who bought things at auctions. Archivists and historians, as well as several victims and their families, are part of the story, which relates the fate of not only the possessions but the homes, offices, stores, and factories.

Director Michael Verhoeven came to Jerusalem from Germany for the screenings and to answer questions from the audiences....

One morning we went to the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs for one of their wonderful lectures. Willy Lindwer, a Dutch documentary filmmaker and television producer who lives in Jerusalem, had done a documentary on Marek Edelman, the last member of the Jewish high command of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt. Filmed in 1987, Edelman died Oct. 2, 2009 in Warsaw at the age of 90.

Edelman lived all of his life in Lodz although his wife and children lived in Paris since 1962. The documentary shows Edelman narrating what happened in the Warsaw Ghetto, day by day. Initially,

350,000 Jews had been sealed in the ghetto in 1940. By winter 1943, only 60,000 remained. Knowing the inhabitants were to be deported, a group decided to create a revolt, feeling that to fall in battle was an honorable thing; the Jews had arms for 300 against a well-armed group of 7,000 to 8,000 Nazis. Ultimately, around 40 escaped; when the documentary was made in 1987, there were eight to ten alive, most living in Kibbutz Lochamei Haghetat. It was a powerful presentation about a complex personality, problematic from many points of view....

Over the years, I have compiled and edited eight kosher cookbooks and when the word got out at my synagogue, I found myself working on number nine. Three weeks after the cookbooks were available, the synagogue had a "launching." Two congregants baked huge cakes using their recipes from the cookbook; coffee and soft drinks were there. Congregants and friends purchased about 40 cookbooks that evening while I autographed many of them.

The president gave a very nice thank you speech to me and presented me with a framed copy of the cookbook cover. I explained how we had put the cookbook together and thanked all who helped and then the American movie, *No Reservations* was presented. It really was a very nice and homey evening....

Thanksgiving is strictly an American holiday and people abroad are always asking us, do you celebrate Thanksgiving in Israel? Actually, a good number of Americans do celebrate it but on Friday night. Whole turkeys are hard to find and have to be preordered but I settled with large wings. Barry made his stuffing like a casserole (I mean, how do you stuff a wing!); we bought canned American cranberry sauce; I baked a real pumpkin pie (found the shell in the super market and brought with me some canned pumpkin). Actually, Israeli pumpkin, sold by the piece, works very well, and I use it often for pumpkin dishes. Sweet potatoes are plentiful, so that was it....

### Standing Together

Someone once said every Israeli is a soldier and every soldier is an Israeli. Nowhere has this idea been more evident than in a project David Landau started 25 years ago with his family.



All Photos by: Barry A. Kaplan.

David comes from Queens, New York; his wife, Sorra, is from Brooklyn and a midwife. They made aliyah in 1977 with three children. After a year in the *merkaz klita* (absorption center) of Mevaseret Tzion, outside Jerusalem, they heard "about an important place to build up" and moved to Kiryat Arba, the Jewish suburb of Hebron.



After living there 26 years and raising their eight children, who now range in age from 21 to 39, six years ago they moved to the Jewish community of Efrat – 15 minutes south of Jerusalem – to build a one-floor home for themselves and when their 18 grandchildren visit. There, David founded the Shomrei Efrat Kollel to post young men who had completed their Army service around Efrat, to continue religious studies and work as guards. He then moved the kollel to Kever Rachel (Rachel's Tomb) for a couple of years.

In the meantime, 20 years ago he founded "Super Clean Chickens," a home delivery service for chicken, turkey, glatt meat and fish.

Five years before, he had noticed the looks on the faces of the soldiers at Kever Rachel; "they looked scared. I realized their sacrifices, so I started going out every once in a while in a bullet-proof van taking them pizza and drinks."

Then he and his family got the idea to set up a barbeque near a roadblock and share their food with soldiers. Soon people heard about what David was doing and wanted to come.

Someone sent pizza bags to keep the pizzas warm. Then someone told him about a donut machine that could make 200 mini donuts in an hour. In 2005, he bought the donut machine.

In its fourth year, National Donut week begins in Israel this year on Dec. 7. Funds raised by schools, organizations and communities will be used for supplies to manufacture donuts in the "Donut Mobile," a traveling donut bakery, which will deliver fresh, hot donuts to 60,000 soldiers on bases around Israel for Hanukkah.

David then bought a truck and a trailer and "Standing Together" was moving forward. Soldiers expressed a need to charge their cell phones, so a friend rigged up a box with 36 outlets attached to the trailer. During the war up north in 2007, there was a need for socks and underwear and that expanded to soap and toothpaste which the trailer then carried.

David coordinates his project with Libi, which is part of the Army and is run by four officers and six volunteers at

Tel Hashomer army base. (Libi is a fund for strengthening Israel's defense by funding projects which improve the quality of life and enhance the well being of soldiers.) If soldiers on a base make a request, David passes it on to Libi, they check it out and if it is okayed, David goes out to secure whatever it is.

David tries to go out to Army bases twice a week and provides ice cream, pizza and drinks. The night trip usually starts at 9:30 p.m., taking out pizza to a base with volunteers who return about midnight or 12:30 a.m.

"The idea of someone coming to them, bringing pizza to a *chayal* (soldier), shows them someone cares," says David.

He also takes out tourists and Dr. Elazar Jazz, leader of a band, who volunteers his time to bring up the spirit of the soldiers and others.

On the day we went out with him, we met at the entrance to Jerusalem by the gas station at 11:35 a.m. and headed in the SUV pulling the trailer filled with a generator; a freezer filled with fruit ices on sticks and energy drinks. There is also an espresso machine – "a cup of coffee for a *chayal*."

"Espresso is different and special," says David. Sometimes hot soup is also available.

After passing the road to the community of Maaleh Adumim, we meet up with a busload of leaders and members of the Beir Meir Yeshiva boys' summer program. We head south on the four-lane highway, seeing Bedouin tents, camels, goats, sheep and a totally vast desolate area, much of it below sea level. Then we turn off onto a winding road for ten minutes, arriving at an Army base in the middle of nowhere.



After checking in, we drove from unit to unit. The yeshiva boys gave the soldiers stickers advertising "Standing Together" and David and my husband and myself handed out the cold drinks and ice creams and visited with the soldiers. The soldiers were so nice, so welcoming, so friendly. They welcomed the yeshiva boys showing them their tent and their equipment. They let one of the boys wear one of their fully-equipped vests and attempt one of the training exercises. They then put camouflage cream on the faces of a few boys and explained its use.

"Every time I go out, I get such a high from it," David exclaims. He would ideally like to have this working all the time even though lots of volunteers are involved.

David would also like the summer and year course students, synagogue and organization missions, touring groups (see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 15)



## Notes from the Antipodes

BY RODNEY GOUTMAN

### A confusion of festivals

Writing this column soon after Armistice Day, which in America is called Veterans Day, I was again made conscious of the great failure of hope expressed at the end of World War I that it would be “the war to end all wars.” My recent trip to Cyprus and the Holy Land reminded me how easy it is for local conflicts to morph into global ones.

The animosity of Greek Cypriots to what they see as the Turkish invasion of their island is as strong as ever. And it became obvious that if simmering communal hatreds were not handled judiciously, military conflict could well re-ignite there.

On another matter, I was often regaled by comment that Israel should never trust Turkey. That nation’s recent Islamist path, and hence its bitter verbal attacks on the Jewish State especially since the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, were tendered as evidence of this. When I mentioned, however, that the Greek motherland has also often displayed enmity toward Israel, an eerie silence prevailed.

Along with countless others, I celebrated Simchat Torah at the Kotel in the Old City of Jerusalem. There, it was a combination of sound, sight, and emotion in a seamless blend of religious fervour from Jews of so many races and cultures. The spectacle of dancing with the Torah in this atmosphere was electric and incomparable.

All this enthusiasm and pietism, however, is always counterbalanced by the reality that this miniscule patch of territory is a tinder box of conflicting forces which could explode into warfare with monumental national and international implications. At the time, a beefed-up presence of Israeli police and border guards was ready to quell any disturbance fuelled by Islamist agitators on the Temple Mount as had occurred only a few days earlier. Rioting Palestinian youths had targeted a group of European Christians tourists on the pretext that they were Jews with designs on the Islamic holy sites.

Some days later I visited the *moshav*, or farming settlement, Sde Nitzan, on the western edge of the Negev Desert. It became the border with the Gaza Strip when Menachem Begin withdrew Israel from the Sinai as agreed in the Camp David Accords with Egypt. The moshav lies at the mouth of the Philadelphia Corridor, one of the three principal entrances to the Gaza Strip. My guide was an old friend who, starting 40 years ago with his wife and other pioneers, transformed the sand dunes of the region into an important Israeli food bowl and horticultural hub for the daily export of local produce to the

markets of Europe. However, the area is also a war zone, and for years its farmers and their families have had to endure missile and terrorist attacks from their Islamist neighbors. This reality, unfortunately, is omitted from the justly maligned Goldstone Report, which has become Holy Grail in the United Nations.

On a lighter note, this area was the route crossed by the troops of the Australian Light Horse during the Middle East campaign of World War I when these troops were on their way to attack the strategic stronghold of *Be’ersheva*. The Allied victory over the Ottoman Turks there, in turn, provided the opening for the liberation of Jerusalem on the eve of Hanukkah 1917, and then the wresting of the Holy Land from Moslem sovereignty. It is doubtful whether, without the victory at Be’ersheva, a Jewish state in Palestine could have been declared 31 years later.

### ...Mr. Obama’s elevation to the pantheon of Nobel Peace Prize winners had more to do with the festival of Purim

The Australia-Israel connection generally stands on three firm pillars. The first is botanical. It is no freak accident of nature that many Australian visitors to the Holy Land feel a great familiarity with the local flora. Native Australian trees, particularly Eucalypts, and smaller shrubs, were dispatched to Palestine in the late 1870s to be cultivated at Mikve Israel and used to bind the soil and dry the swamps of the original settlements of the *New Yishuv*.

The second is the aforementioned military one, which was further nourished in World War II. And finally, there are the diplomatic links, fostered in the wake of Australia’s being the first to formally support the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. This occurred at the end of November 1947 in the General Assembly’s alphabetical vote on whether to partition the former British mandated Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

In conclusion I remember that my thoughts, when leaving the ancient city of Jerusalem after my Simchat Torah experience, were rudely interrupted by news that Barack Obama had been declared the year’s Nobel Peace laureate. People around me, even his staunch supporters, were also stunned, most concluding that he had as yet not achieved even a minimal triumph in the field of international affairs. Certainly, his current ventures into the fraught Israel-Palestinian impasse have further heightened scepticism and fears on both the Israeli and Palestinian streets.

Indeed it was felt that Mr. Obama’s elevation to the pantheon of Nobel Peace Prize winners had more to do with the

(see Goutman, page NAT 15)



## Adventure Rabbi

BY RABBI NILES ELLIOT GOLDSTEIN

### The miracle right under our nose

At this time of year, when the sun sinks faster and the nights grow longer and colder, Jews around the world commemorate, through narrative and ritual, the ancient story of Chanukah – a tale of our forbears’ triumph on the battlefield and of the miracle of oil when the Temple was re-consecrated. For eight nights, we illumine our homes with light. We exchange gifts. We sing songs that celebrate our survival.

But our goal shouldn’t simply be to survive – it should be to thrive. We should go further and celebrate a different, deeper kind of miracle.

For years, the mantra of the Jewish establishment has been “Continuity, Continuity, Continuity.” But Jewish history proves that it has been *discontinuity* that has often led to the most profound, imaginative, successful and long-lasting outcomes for our faith and our community. It’s been the iconoclast impulse – the drive to rebel and take risks – that has served as the dynamic life force of Judaism.

### But our goal shouldn’t simply be to survive – it should be to thrive. We should go further and celebrate a different, deeper kind of miracle.

Though a lot of contemporary Jewish leaders are worried about our future, our own past suggests we’ll be just fine. It’s not about numbers, and it never has been. Devotion, not distribution, has been our hallmark as a people. In recent years, the heads of two of the major Jewish movements debated in the press about which one could claim more affiliated members. In the face of one billion Catholics and one billion Muslims around the globe, do several thousand Jews really make much of a difference one way or the other?

Two thousand years ago, in the small village of Yavneh, a group of rabbis boldly transformed the Temple-based religion they’d inherited into the Judaism we observe today. While a tiny minority of the general population, the Jews of Muslim Spain generated a Golden Age during in which some of the greatest and most innovative Jewish thinkers, mystics and poets emerged and influenced

medieval society for generations. In the 16th century, a handful of kabbalists in the Galilee reshaped the Sabbath liturgy into the form that is familiar to Jews now, whether we live in Fargo or Fez.

Size doesn’t matter. What matters is creativity, courage, and commitment. And while commitment has always been a problem (and is, arguably, even more of one today), pockets of dedicated Jews are actively engaged in new and creative approaches to Jewish life all across the country, from Jewish wilderness adventures to the recovery of lost but still potent rituals and practices.

So why is our leadership obsessed with data, with calculating how many potential Jewish babies are lost each year because of intermarriage or how many Jewish adults slip away as a result of assimilation? Have our mental images of the past made us that insecure? If we had a better grasp of

(see Goldstein, page NAT 12)

### WIENER

(continued from page NAT 4)

misdeeds, will we be able to stand defiant and say that what we did we do because we believed in what we were doing? Or will we be forced to admit that we could have done better and perhaps with more time things would have been different.

There is a classic expression (author unknown) that states:

*When you die  
God and the Angels  
Will hold you accountable  
For all the pleasures you  
Were allowed in life  
That you denied yourself.*

We were all created in the image of God and yet we are all unique. But we all represent the oneness of creation. Together, as one human family, we are united in our quest for justice and mercy. We search for the light that will guide us in making this world good. Our responsibility lies in being helpful and charitable. More than that, however, we are obligated to enhance our lives by reaching out to not only touch someone but to accept the gifts we sometimes shun aside needlessly.

In the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, the authors relate a story about “I can” and “I can’t” in which they describe a lesson for all of us. We need to learn to bury the “I can’t” so that our lives will have meaning. We bury the “I can’t” so that when the time comes to defend our lives, we will have realized that life is to live.

Only then can we appreciate that burying “I can’t” enabled a band of zealots the opportunity to take control of their lives so that we are able to enjoy this season. Hanukkah is filled with “I can,” and because of this outlook we will not have to worry about defending ourselves because we didn’t turn our backs on the gift of the burning light of our endurance.

Rabbi Irwin Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. Send comments to [ravoyitz@cox.net](mailto:ravoyitz@cox.net). ★



# Jewish Humanists

BY EDWARD J. KLEIN

## Colloquium 2009

The Society for Humanistic Judaism's Colloquium 2009, "Challenging Convention: Secular and Humanist and Jew," was held on Oct. 23–25 in Farmington Hills, Mich., at the Birmingham Temple. This was the eighth colloquium – the first occurred in 1995 – and the second one since the death of Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine.

Rabbi Adam Chalom opened the colloquium with two observations, "Don't look to the past for permission; pursue the truth wherever it leads," and a question, "Is organized religion a force for evil or good?"

The keynote speaker was Jacques Berlinerblau, associate professor of Jewish civilization at Georgetown University. Sardonicly echoing fundamentalist attacks on secular Jews, he described the latter as broken, unreconstructed and unperfected "deformities in the seed of Abraham." (His ironic comments drew laughter from the audience.)

He sees two types of secular Jews: the organized, those who are linked but not shackled by Judaism; and the non-organized, the vast majority of secular Jews. His manifesto for us includes: Shock the professors (for visibility, in order to be more than a blip on the screen of Judaism); learn the techniques from Chabad (whose outreach is so successful); reject denominationalism (post-denominationalism is inclusive Judaism); understand and relate to other Jews; trust secular rabbis and get them out there (again for visibility, to make people aware of our movement); the need for money (no bread, no Torah); the need for buildings (I suggested he use the term "edifice complex," which he liked a lot); and reclaim the term "secular."

Lori Lipman Brown, former director of the Secular Coalition for America, said that secular Americans must have a voice to promote secular government. She finds "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance to be divisive and urges secularists to work with theists on our shared values.

Ron Aronson, distinguished professor of the history of ideas at Wayne State University, asked us to stop being polite to people who pray (for us) and to stop being invisible, noting that the number of atheists in the United States is now 36 million and that the percentage of atheists in Canada is even higher. He likes the term the "new new" atheist (post-atheist), which should have a positive message.

Rabbi Greg Epstein, the Humanist chaplain of Harvard University, spoke about the one billion people in the world without God. Can one have purpose in life without God? He noted that none of the Golden Rules mentions God, but that reason and science cannot visit you in the hospital, pointing to the need for community. While we should pursue happiness, we should settle for "happyish" and dignity.

Unfortunately, Greg's book, *Good Without God: What a Billion Non-Religious People Do Believe*, was released the day following the colloquium.

Caryn Aviv, Marsico lecturer at the University of Denver, spoke about "post-denominationalism," Jew-Bus, Conservadox, non-halakhic-neo-khasidic, flexidox, much of which is belonging without believing. We must reach out to young Jews as well as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, whom Aviv prefers to call "queer" Jews. She does find secular Jewish culture "sexy," noting the large number of websites and publications catering to young and LGBT Jews.

Rabbi Sivan Malkin Maas of Israel told us that cultural Judaism has become mainstream in Israel and that secular Jews can claim the Bible and tradition as their own. She warned us to watch out for Torah idolatry. Three hundred thousand Israelis are considered religiousless. Many secular Jews are antireligious, but believe that the "real" Judaism is that of the religious. Twenty-two percent of Jews in Israel do not use rabbis to marry but go outside the country to get married. Many couples live together and there are no statistics for them. Rabbi Mass called the Israel Museum, a museum of world Jewish culture in Jerusalem, "The Third Temple."

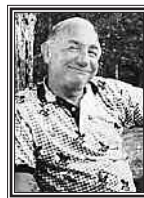
## Rabbi Sivan Malkin Maas... warned us to watch out for Torah idolatry.

At Colloquium 2009, two women were ordained as secular humanistic rabbis in the movement. Both Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld of Deerfield, Ill., and Rabbi Karen Levy of Toronto, Ontario, gave heartfelt ordination messages.

Rabbi Chalom, in wrapping up the colloquium, said that nothing divides Jews more than "God, Torah and Israel." Respecting beliefs is dishonest – rather one should respect the person. Secular humanistic Judaism has an important message, with books, pamphlets, and personal testimonies, as well as courses given by the Institute all over North America. We should be following traditions with honesty and integrity, but not imitating them. Every generation has told us that this is the "last" generation of Jews and this traditional statement has been wrong every time. In parting, Rabbi Chalom gave us two new terms for us to use to spread the "gospel" of secular humanistic Judaism: Be a "Humangelical" and "Humangelize."

*Edward J. Kein is a madrikh (vegvayzer-leader) of the Queens Community for Cultural Judaism, Queens, NY. He is pursuing his masters in secular humanistic Judaism at the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, and has recently applied to the Institute's rabbinic program.*

*This will appear in an upcoming issue of the Canadian Jewish Outlook. ★*



## Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

## On Hanukkah, daughter's dream and father's scheme

It was the second night of Hanukkah and the house was full of her excited grandchildren, who shrieked and wailed and chattered like the construction crew that worked on the Tower of Babel. Was it totally random, the old lady wondered, or was there a script for this bedlam? I shouldn't be so cranky, she reasoned. But twelve kids – some exultant with their gifts, some complaining – could shatter the glass in the windows.

And such lavish Hanukkah gifts. In my day, thought Bubbe, I'd be lucky to get a piece of fruit and a silver dime.

The gifts had been distributed, the latkes consumed, and both adults and kids had taken the ceremonial peck at her cheek. So, soon it would be time for the Hanukkah finale, the traditional "then and now" seminar with Bubbe; an old family custom.

The kids clustered around her. "Tell us how it was when you were a girl, Bubbe," as though they believed she had ever been anything but a short, round lady who smiled more than she talked. A Jewish Queen Victoria with a decidedly un-English accent who they were forced to call on the phone every weekend.

Last year she told them the story of her voyage in the filthy hold of the SS Wilhelm to the glittering new world of the Lower East side. The year before, she'd left them shocked and wide-eyed over the tale of her older brother's abduction by a band of drunk Cossacks. And every word was true and every word was a lesson.

Instruction. Wasn't that Bubbe's role, like smiling and offering the drooping cheek to pursed lips? These kids should know how it was back then.

Beginnings are as useful as endings. Didn't she still have a sharp mental picture of her brother and their Polish village? Didn't her mouth remember endless meals of cabbage and potatoes? And who could forget her entire family stuffed in an East side tenement that only glittered when ice silvered both sides of the window pane?

"So tell us a story, Bubbe. C'mon, c'mon," they persisted.

"Okay," she agreed, "but first a cup of tea and a slice of lemon and two Sweet'n Lo's." Quickly they obeyed.

She sat at the dining room table; they crowded around, two of the little ones to a single chair.

"I'll tell you about my best friend, Dora. She was 16, like me. We had both been in America since we were six. So we considered ourselves Americans – not Greenhorns. We even had boyfriends, not boyfriends

like you mean now, but, ya know, special friends. My best girlfriend Dora had a boy downstairs in the tenement who she watched out of the corner of her eye. You know how it is. You look at him. He turns shyly away. But you hope he looks back.

"Anyhow, Dora loved Jacob Plesovsky. He was 18 and already he was peddling ladies dresses around town. Like I say, he'd never taken her out. Who had money for that – but they had talked plenty. I think they had a plan.

"Daughters dream, but fathers scheme, as they say. One day her father waits 'til everybody's out of the room and he sits Dora down across the dining room table for a talk. And he tells her she's gonna have the best second night of Hanukkah ever; because on the second candle of Hanukkah, little Dora is going to be a married woman. Dora is so *fetumult*, so mixed up to hear this, that for a minute she thinks her papa has gone to the Plesovskys and made a deal. How did he know about her plan, which she had only revealed to her best friend? Me. Then through a fog, as though her father is shouting from a passing ship, she hears the name Adam Grossman."

## Instruction. Wasn't that Bubbe's role, like smiling and offering the drooping cheek to pursed lips? These kids should know how it was back then.

"Papa, Jacob Plesovsky, that's who I want. You got the wrong boy." But daughters dream and fathers scheme.

"Listen," says Papa, "This boy you'll love in a couple of years. He has a good job in the textile district and he's handsome. Grayish blue eyes and light brown, wavy hair. No moles, no blemishes. And as the Americans say, he is high-spirited. They'll never tie him to a tailor's bench. Now, that's that! Go help your mama with the supper dishes." Dora's futile tears mixed with the dirty dish water in the sink.

Bubbe paused to let the truth sink into youthful minds. "Yes, her father had selected her husband."

At first, silence. Then a chorus of revolt. "So what happened to your friend? And what about Jacob?"

"Well, they didn't die of a broken heart. I don't know what became of Jacob. I think he ended up working in a men's clothing store in the Bronx."

The children muttered rebelliously about slipping out of bedroom windows at midnight and running off to some renegade rabbi for a quickie. "That's what we'd do now," said two of the smaller mutineers. "And what about Dora?"

"Dora – she did okay," said the Bubbe as her eyes wandered over a room full of twelve  
(see Roberts, page NAT 15)



# Parsha Perspective



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

## A new leadership recruiting poster

For much of our professional lives, we worked as congregational and community organizers. We had an axiom in that work: "Whatever the problem, whatever the solution, do leadership development!"

That maxim reflects an understanding that the current leadership is often working itself into an early organizational grave, because it's typically a miniscule group of maximum workers, doing everything for everybody. And no matter what challenges an organization is facing, the answer to the question, "What would it mean to have a surplus of committed, competent leaders?" is always positive.

But invariably the one thing that falls through the cracks in congregational life is leadership development, the strategy and tactics necessary to swell or even maintain the ranks of leadership.

Joseph is a *chacham*,  
a man of abiding  
wisdom....He has the  
eternal verities of the  
Abrahamitic tradition  
to call upon.

When existing leaders acknowledge this simple principle, they tend to leap to the question of leadership recruitment: "How can we recruit many more people into leadership roles?" they ask. And then, ironically, the leadership development process seems to falter for lack of an effective recruiting strategy and workable tactics because, as they say, "We've tried everything and nothing works – people here are just too apathetic."

What's wrong with this picture?

The focus is on methods of recruiting instead of the substance of leadership roles. We're usually trying to figure out how to find people who will fill positions that often, if not invariably, entail onerous burdens in the form of endless time-consuming drudgery or serving as the lightning rod for organizational tension and conflict.

It's not exactly the ideal recruiting poster for congregational leadership!

What we're not offering potential leaders is an inspiring vision of what we can be and do as a congregational community. What we're not offering potential leaders is

the opportunity to lead rather than simply occupy a formal office that saps one's time and spirit. What we're not offering potential leaders is the opportunity to be a model of a life well-lived, not only for oneself and one's family, but for one's congregational community, country, and people.

Where do we begin to change that leadership-recruiting poster?

One place to begin is by getting a better understanding of what leadership has meant in our tradition. In *parasha* (weekly Torah reading) *Mikeitz*, we can learn a great deal about leadership from Joseph.

Joseph is a *chacham*, a man of abiding wisdom. He has more than facts, information, and knowledge at his command. He has the eternal verities of the Abrahamitic tradition to call upon. So despite the extraordinarily punishing events of his life – being sold into slavery and imprisoned – he isn't pushed from pillar to post. He understands where he comes from, who he is, and his mission in life. He sees things not only as they are, but also as they should be, according to the Creator's purpose. He not only has *chochma*, but *binah* and *da'at* – not only wisdom, but also deductive intellect and empirical knowledge.

Joseph, as a high public official in Egypt, understands the importance of having a wife and family. With limited options available to him, he marries Asnat, the daughter of a priest of an idolatrous cult. He nonetheless brings up his children with such commitment to his own tradition that to this day we bless our children in their names, Menashe and Ephraim. Moreover, Joseph is willing to be openly and visibly a Hebrew, choosing to separate himself from the Egyptians when eating (Genesis 43:32).

Joseph is sufficiently attuned to the possibility of Divine Providence in the events of his life that, despite the pain he endures, he is free of petty vindictiveness and martyrdom. Despite the irony that his brothers got rid of him to avoid the possibility that their father's favorite son would ever be able to lord it over them, threatening to undermine their family, which brought about the possibility of that very result, Joseph nonetheless harbored no bitterness. He sought only to ensure that they were cured of their erroneous ideas about him and posed no threat to his father's youngest son, Benjamin. Although in a position to lord over them when they came down to Egypt, he did no such thing.

What's the basis of Joseph's behavior?

He sees the larger purpose of his life – beyond his own comfort and convenience – to serve God. So Joseph has more than *yichus*, family lineage – he has the character that such an inheritance potentially affords.

As viceroy over Egypt, Joseph understands himself as a lord, but not as we usually think of that term in English. His brothers, reporting back to their father of their encounter with him, describe him as *adonei ha-aretz*, the lord of the land (Genesis 42:30). But the Hebrew word *adon*, lord, is



## As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

## A happy musical experience

Normally I tend to frown on the mixing of ethnic elements. The reason is that the Jewish element frequently becomes lost in the acculturation of musical styles. However, and this is a very large however, if the Jewish element is still recognizable and is not completely overwhelmed or submerged (or even nonexistent) in the process, a case can be made for the combination of a style, or genre, folk element and so forth to coexist with the Jewish one.

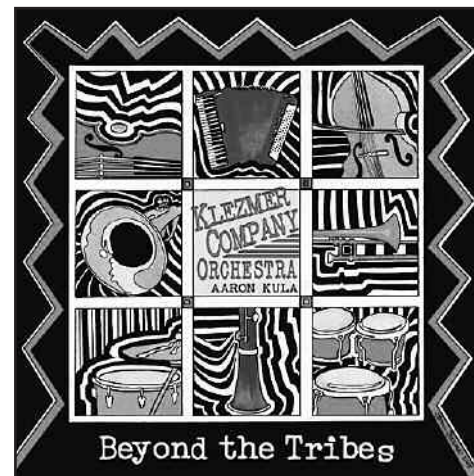
Songs such as Irving Berlin's "Russian Lullaby" or George Gershwin's "Summertime" or "It Ain't Necessarily So" are examples to that which I am alluding. If one changes the lyrics to Yiddish or Hebrew in the above the effectiveness of the music would not be lessened. In my opinion these songs are kosher style, while I would consider such things as a Reggae seder out and out *treif*. Thus it is that one can listen to the CD called *Beyond the Tribes* and do so with much pleasure.

While Jazz and especially  
Hispanic influences are  
evident, the Jewish  
element is present as  
well. In fact they coexist  
surprisingly well.

This disc features the Klezmer Company Orchestra under the direction of Aaron Kula. While Jazz and especially Hispanic influences are evident, the Jewish element is present as well. In fact they coexist surprisingly well. The group features "jazz and classical musicians to create a multidimensional musical idiom that relies on both written orchestration as well as extended improvisation. The KCO is an innovative ensemble that draws its inspiration from Arabic, Latin, European and American cultures."

from the root *alef-dalet-nun*, which implies not mastery over another, but serving as a pillar or bearer, emphasizing the supporting quality of responsibility over the mastering quality of authority. Joseph as a leader seeks not primarily to dominate, but to support and defend the interests and well-being of the people.

(see Parsha Perspective, page NAT 15)



There are 12 selections in all that utilize an orchestra of 21 instrumentalists. Illustrating the diversity in styles the following will serve as representative examples. No. 2: Bet Hamikdash A La Salsa. In this selection Yisroel Schorr's melody (Y'voney Bes Hamikdash) is arranged "a la Salsa" by Chaim Rubinov. From the symphonic world, there is the melody (Nigun!...Frere Jacques) used by Gustav Mahler in his First Symphony. Here Mr. Kula creates a "stylized klezmer dance." I will never listen to the original in the same way ever again. It may still suggest the fabled shetl to be sure but only after a few glasses of slivovitz.

Another acceptable example of ethnic diversity in music is the use of Israel's Marc Lavry's song "Boah Dodi," which originally was written for voice and piano and is here arranged by Kula. The original was published in Tel Aviv in 1950. Then from the pen of the dean of composers writing for the Yiddish Theatre is Joseph Rumshinsky's song "A Child's Prayer." Kula based his arrangement on the 1912 sheet music donated to Florida Atlantic University by the National Yiddish Book Center.

Another outstanding track is the "Second Avenue Hoedown" based on a song originally played by the clarinet virtuoso Dave Tarres. I could go on, but I would observe that each of the selections has something of merit to note. While all the performers are skilled in their craft, I would be remiss if I did not single out the core soloists for special merit. They include: Aaron Kula, accordion/conductor; Elena Correla, soprano; Jackie De Los Santos, bass/guitar; Zachary Eldrige, drums; Randi Fishenfeld, violin; Teresa Flores, percussion; David Levitan, trombone; Stanislav Pomerants, clarinet; and Chaim Rubinov, trumpet.

In conclusion I will state that after listening to this CD, you would have a happy musical experience with or without having a Cuba Libre or some Plum Brandy before, during or afterward! For more information on the Klezmer Company Orchestra, visit: [www.klezmercompany.com](http://www.klezmercompany.com).

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## Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

### Theodore Bikel's Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears

One thinks of Theodore Bikel as larger than life, as he belts out a song or talks to God in *Fiddler on the Roof*. But now we have a different Theodore Bikel, in his current one-man show. Portraying the noted Yiddish writer Sholom Aleichem through song and story, Bikel offers us a muted, endearing performance. The show, written and performed by Bikel and titled *Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears*, now enjoys its off-Broadway premiere. It honors the 150th anniversary of Aleichem's birth in the Ukraine. The show, presented by The National Yiddish Theatre –Folksbiene, runs through mid-December.



Theodore Bikel portrays the noted Yiddish writer Sholom Aleichem through song and story.

Whether the show itself calls for this down-sized performance – or whether it's the reality of an aging Bikel – is difficult to say. In any event, we are introduced to a smaller, quieter, bent-over performer. While Bikel still has his deep melodic voice, it is far softer, more contained.

As Bikel carries Sholom Aleichem (born Sholom Rabinovich) through his childhood, young adult years, and migrations between Europe and America, he embroiders the tale with appropriate songs. Highlights are “Oyfn Pripetshik” (The Fireplace), in which young boys are seen studying the Torah at Cheder, and “Der Bal Agole” (Coachman), an amusing comment on old-time transportation.

Bikel sings the tunes in Yiddish, then smoothly moves into his own English translations. This is fortunate, since the overhead translations flashed on a screen are in Russian, not English. While Bikel's translations save the day for those who do not speak Yiddish, English supertitles would have been helpful.

Directed by Derek Goldman, the show is disarmingly simple in its staging, and makes for an intimate audience experience. Robbie Hayes' minimal stage set is a series of arcs, with two instrumentalists (pianist

Tamara Brooks and accordionist Merima Kljuco) seen in the background. Occasional scenes are flashed on the screen, emphasizing that shtetl world that formed the essence of Sholom Aleichem's stories.

For those of us in the States, Sholom Aleichem's best-known stories are those of Tevya, the milkman. Tevya went on to become the hero of Jerry Bock/Sheldon Harnick's *Fiddler on the Roof*. Such songs as “Tradition, Tradition,” “If I Were a Rich Man,” and “Sunrise, Sunset” have become famous around the world, as has the musical itself.

While Bikel has created an appealingly underplayed little piece, it is disappointing that he offers no “Fiddler” songs – the musical conduit that carries most Americans (Jews and Gentiles) back to the world of Sholom Aleichem.

#### Who are *The Right Kind of People*? Bigotry spelled out in a New York co-op

Does anti-Semitism still exist in this country today? Has it taken on a new, more subtle form? Charles Grodin tackles the subject in his current play, *The Right Kind of People*, now playing in Stratford, Conn., at the Square One Theatre.

Grodin is probably best known for his role as the beleaguered husband in the Elaine May film *The Heartbreak Kid*. But Grodin is actually a multi-talented man of the performing arts – as performer, director, writer, humorist. And now Grodin has taken on the cutthroat world of the New York co-ops. He claims that this piece is based on his own experiences, as well as those of friends, as they attempted to buy or sell co-ops in pricey New York buildings.



Pictured (L-R): David Victor, Janet Rathert, Joseph Mallon, J. Kevin Smith, John Cassidy, and Frank Smith in *The Right Kind of People*.

*The Right Kind of People*, set in a fancy Fifth Avenue building, deals with the smugness and nastiness of its board members, as they wield their power. Amid the many petty concerns of this board are elevators, strollers, dogs. Should the black servants be allowed to ride the front elevator, or be confined to the building staff's rear elevator? Should pet dogs be limited to certain sizes and weights? Should infant strollers be limited in size?

But, more seriously, the play focuses on bigotry, which underlies major board decisions. Who should be allowed to enter this rarified world? Clearly, money alone is not enough, since only super-rich can apply in the first place. Bigotry in these

decisions can be aimed at blacks, gays, divorcees, teen-agers – and particularly Jews. “I am certainly not anti-Semitic,” one character exclaims righteously (or words to that effect), “but it's a question of whether these people would be comfortable here.”

The main character is a young man, a theater producer, who manages to buy in and become a board member due to his uncle's influence. But he soon discovers the underlying message, which he finds hard to swallow. Ultimately, he gives up his board membership and his co-op, moving with his young family to Connecticut.

Because it is a Grodin play, one expects to find humor, but, alas, this piece is terribly earnest – in fact, didactic. And, because most of the “action” takes place at board meetings, there is little action, despite the skilled direction of Tom Holehan in this Connecticut production.

Yet Grodin has chosen an interesting subject for his drama – and, one suspects, a very real topic in the world of New York City real estate. Perhaps in a rewrite – with less earnestness and more black humor in Grodin's style – this could be a far more effective play.

#### Queen Esther rules the stage at Lincoln Center

*Esther* has been described as “electrifying” – and rightly so. The revival, now at the renovated David H. Koch Theater (home of the New York City Opera), soars across the stage. The newly renovated theater – lush, elegant, and vast in size – is a perfect venue for the piece. Hugo Weisgall's opera, staged originally in 1993 by the New York City Opera, now enjoys a triumphal return.

That Weisgall's atonal piece would be so captivating is surprising. One would expect this very modern music (with its 12-tone scale) to be off-putting, but not so. The very lack of melodic arias works to its advantage, adding to its dramatic force. One is never distracted by charming tunes but is hit again and again by its powerful story, so fraught with potential tragedy.

The story of Esther comes straight from the Old Testament. Xerxes, the King of Persia, has banished his wife Vashti for defiance to him and now seeks a new queen. (Librettist Charles Kondek has taken liberties with the Biblical tale. The King is no longer Ahasuarus, as in the Bible, but becomes Xerxes, an actual historical figure. He has total power, like



Lauren Flanigan (l) as Esther. Photo is © Carol Rosegg.



Lauren Flanigan (l) as Esther and James Maddalena (r) as Mordecai in *Esther*. Photo is © Carol Rosegg.

all eastern potentates of early times.) All the young beautiful women of his kingdom are arrayed for his selection. Among them is Esther, one of the many Jews captured in Jerusalem and brought to Persia. Naturally, Esther wins the day. It is love at first sight, to coin a phrase. Meanwhile, the Jews of the Kingdom are about to be wiped out, on orders of the wicked Haman. Esther bravely pleads their case (while acknowledging her own identity) and saves their lives. Esther, her King, and her own people, presumably, live happily ever after. No wonder Jews down through the ages have celebrated this holiday (to be known as Purim) with exuberance and raucous celebrations.

*Esther* is staged brilliantly, thanks to the vision of director Christopher Mottalano and the work of his design team. Jerome Sirlin's set opens with a startling image. A row of bodies, hanging from ropes, are silhouetted across the rear stage, backed by a fiery sky. Sirlin's work continues on that level, as scenes play out in the royal court and elsewhere. Robert Wierzel's lighting and Joseph A. Citarella's costumes meet those high standards, and Jennifer Muller's superb choreography turns the tale into epic proportions. The Jewish people, clad in gray rags, sweep in waves across the stage or are huddled stage-front as peril mounts.

Lauren Flanigan creates a vulnerable, human Esther, growing from a simple young girl, obedient to her uncle's orders, to a woman of queenly stature. As actress and singer, she handles the difficult music even as she creates a larger-than-life character. She is well matched by Stephen Kechulius, who is a strong Xerxes. Roy Cornelius Smith and Margaret Thompson give considerable juice to their roles as Haman and his wife Zeresh. One is reminded of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as they plot their moves. In all, a fine cast that meets the difficult demands of the opera.

This modern *Esther* not only reaches back in time, but carries echoes of the Holocaust. More than that, *Esther* sends forth a universal message. The persecution of minorities, the torture of innocents (see Backalenick, page NAT 15)





## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### The Good Wife

*The Good Wife* stars Julianna Margulies as Alicia Florrick, wife of an incarcerated Illinois state's attorney whose career collapsed in scandal, including adultery with prostitutes. Alicia, the mother of two teenage children, must return to work as an attorney to help the family survive the vast legal expenses, even as she must work through the shame and trauma. It does not help that she has returned to the work force after many years, and now faces the humiliation of being regarded as a dispensable junior associate, without any of the advantages or privileges of seniority.

In an episode written by producers Robert King and Michelle King, Alicia, who is not depicted as Jewish in this series (at least so far) has been asked to help the daughter of the law firm's founder, Jonah Stern, who is being sued for over a \$1 million. It becomes clear through the table talk of opposing counsel that the large amount is due to Stern's wealth.

Anna Stern (Natalie Gold), the daughter, has been known as a party girl and a drug-user. She has been to drug rehab at least once. Yet Alicia and her investigator, Kalinda (Archie Panjabi) are surprised to find her in a Hasidic community where she has clearly become a *baalat teshuvah*, a returnee to Orthodox Jewish life. She has married an ultra-Orthodox Jew named Isaac (Daniel London). She tells Alicia that while in rehab in Westchester, she met her husband who was a volunteer yeshiva student with an "amazing LP collection." We are expected to believe that the couple found enough in common in this to marry and to establish an Orthodox Jewish home. Indeed, Kalinda, the investigator, suspects that Anna will return to being a party girl within the year.



Julianna Margulies (center) as Alicia Florrick in *The Good Wife*. Credit: CBS.com.

Isaac comes across as rather stiff, angry and suspicious. When Alicia asks whether Anna's dad, Jonah Stern, might help, her husband interrupts, "We don't want it [his help]. We're not in touch with him." Isaac is also a bit insensitive. After asking Alicia her last name and understanding that she is the wife of the embattled state's attorney, he compliments her husband, a bit too much in the presence

of a wounded wife and her associate. He says that her husband is a righteous man who was most effective at combating and imprisoning skin heads and other perpetrators of hate crimes which, we are told, are all too frequent in the Hasidic community, which he took seriously. Hearing that Alicia's husband is in prison, Isaac pipes up that he is not surprised because a righteous man "frequently finds the world aligned against him." At that moment, we wonder whether Isaac is aware of the adultery and of the deceit in which Alicia's husband engaged on the home front alone. We do find out later that he was indeed aware of it.

### ...surprised to find her in a Hasidic community where she has clearly become a *baalat teshuvah*...

Isaac does trust Alicia and her colleague enough to tell them why he is being sued, even though he believes that one must be Jewish to understand the case. It seems that the mother of a young child slipped on the wires of the family *eruv*, an elevated string symbolizing a courtyard in which traditional Jews are permitted to carry items on the Sabbath. The *eruv* string dropped to the ground on the Sabbath, and Isaac and Anna could not fix it or call repair people until after Shabbat. They have already retained a lawyer, a cousin of Isaac's, Ryan Alpern (Chris Bowers), a more secular Jew who does see irony in the couple's being held liable "because their religion wouldn't let them act." The opposing counsel regards this behavior as "willful and wanton conduct, subject to high punitive damages."

The plaintiff claims that she had to walk to the kosher grocery store near Isaac and Anna because it had the best selection for her "daughter's special needs." But no kosher grocery store would be open in that neighborhood on the Sabbath. Did the writers mean that the woman tripped on Saturday night or Sunday over a wire that had to be neglected from Friday to Monday, due to the Sabbath and then the schedules of the repair people. Later, when Alicia and Kalinda visit a key man at the store's surveillance camera company (cameras, the writers make a point of conveying, are used out of fear of hate crimes rather than theft), the latter tells them, "It's kind of dark here at night." So was it dark (at the very end of the Sabbath), when the woman allegedly fell? But Isaac does instruct Alicia early in their discussions that the *eruv* allows for "minor work" like "carrying a baby or groceries in a community courtyard."

So do the writers believe that grocery shopping on Shabbat is not a major issue to the Hasidim? They do not seem to get their story straight. In any event, they do not let up on all the talk about hate crimes. Could they be raising the question

as to whether those ultra-Orthodox somehow provoke hatred?

While Alpern at first resents Alicia's involvement in the case, he does warm up to her rather quickly. He is a skillful lawyer, and even charms the judge by basing his case on an earlier case of this judge, who looks toward Alpern as reversing an "old regret." Yet Alpern does make advances at Alicia, including placing his hand on hers at their desk in the courtroom. This latter image contrasts with the heartfelt way that Isaac shows affection and respect for Anna by holding hands. Alpern's hand-holding is akin to groping; Isaac's is truly respectful.

Yet Anna and Isaac face a difficult marital challenge. The suing attorneys reveal that while the Hasidic couple claims their refusal not to telephone, on Shabbat, to repair the *eruv* is a First Amendment right, Anna did in fact make phone calls on at least four Friday nights to the father, Attorney Jonah Stern, with whom Isaac would have preferred that there had been no contact, let alone in violation of the Sabbath. Isaac feels betrayed and distances himself from Anna. Alicia tells him that Anna acted out of weakness and did not cheat on him as Alicia's husband had done. Isaac replies that Anna lied to him and therefore did betray him. Alicia reminds him that Anna did not act selfishly.

In the end, Isaac gains perspective from Alicia's guidance and from her ordeal. The writers do show that the situation is awkward for Alicia; they are good at that. When Anna says, "You can't just throw a marriage away, can you?" Alicia has no choice but to reply, "No." But the writers want us to speculate about what Alicia is really thinking.

After all, the writers let us know that Alicia was flattered and perhaps even tempted by Alpern's advances. Yet while their Hasidic Jews are a bit rough around the edges though likeable, their other Jews, like Alpern, are a bit rakish and outright dishonest, perhaps pathologically dishonest. In the end, Alicia must stop Alpern's brilliant cross-examination in order to save the Stern case because, we find out, Ryan Alpern never passed the bar exam and is therefore posing as a lawyer.

So much for this Jew. Also, Anna's absentee father and law firm founder, Jonah Stern, is being depicted, even before the character is introduced as a jet-setting, leisure-loving bloke who seldom makes an appearance in the office even though he is collecting such a large salary that many rank-in-file attorneys in the firm are being laid off. Should we be grateful that the Hasidic Jews are being treated sympathetically while the others are either defamed or presented as lecherous liars, albeit charming lecherous liars? Is that "balance"?

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. 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 this paper since 1979. ★

## Hanukkah Again

BY L. R. RARICK

The week was like an isolated lake of black and blacker night, the days becoming shorter and shorter into the shortest day. Then, at that point, the Winter Solstice.

Then the days began being a little longer each day. Day by day it was a little more light, a little longer day.

Though midwinter it was like an early spring of light, it began a promise of freshness, warmth, renewal.

The thought of progress was warm within me. The thought of more illumination, more enlightenment, shone over the future.

Too much light can overstimulate and cause exhaustion, it can burn and consume and cause sunburns and ashes. But that is not the focus of this time.

This is the time to welcome the light with the Festival of Lights, with Hanukkah, rededicating ourselves to seeing better, to better perception, with the increased opportunities.



### GOLDSTEIN

(continued from page NAT 8)

Jewish history – and, along with that knowledge, the insight to reject the warped and inaccurate caricature of the Jewish experience as little more than one calamity after another – then we could refocus our time, energy and resources on what *really* matters: developing a dynamic and robust community.

What best defines us has always been qualitative rather than quantitative. Jews have encountered a great many obstacles, and we have surmounted them, primarily, through fidelity and innovation. To take a seasonal example, Judah Maccabi and his band of brothers – a miniscule guerilla force compared to the Hellenist army – defeated their occupiers and rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem because of their imaginative, unconventional tactics, as well as their faith and fierce determination. What we celebrate at Chanukah shouldn't just be a military victory, but the triumph of Jewish will.

That is the real miracle we should reflect on at this time of year, and a central message of our history – the fact that we can evolve as a religion and a people, not in spite of our challenges, but often because of them.

Niles Elliot Goldstein is the founder and rabbi emeritus of The New Shul in Manhattan. He is the author or editor of nine books, most recently *The Challenge of the Soul: A Guide for the Spiritual Warrior* (Trumpeter). ★



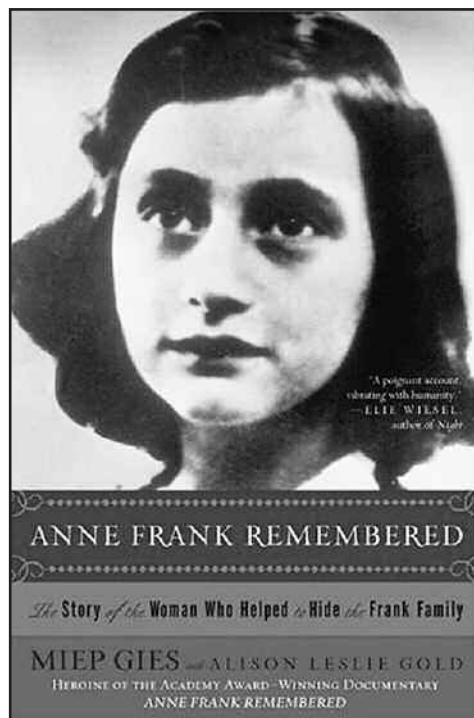
# Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

## Diary's literary and historical significance

*Anne Frank Remembered.* By Miep Gies and Alison Leslie Gold. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009. 264 Pages. \$14.

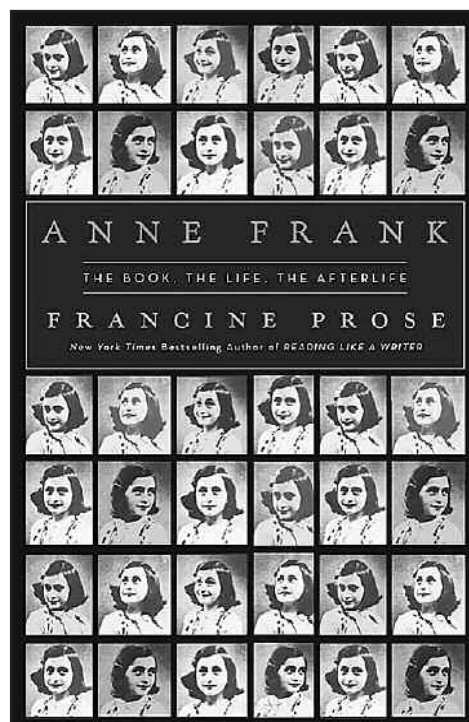
*Anne Frank.* By Francine Prose. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 336 Pages. \$24.99.



Sixty-four years have passed since Anne Frank died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the age of 15. Her diary, the Broadway play and the Hollywood movie based on it have been read and seen by millions of people. Many of them have visited the Amsterdam building, now the Anne Frank Museum, where she and seven other Jews hid from the Nazis for 25 months before they were discovered. The only survivor was Otto Frank, Anne's father, who edited and published the diary. It has been lauded and vilified, remaining to this very day a powerful account of the Holocaust horrors.

These two books tell the story of Anne's diary as a work of literature and as an eyewitness record of the Holocaust's impact on European Jews. Miep Gies's narrative has special significance since she is the only survivor of Anne Frank's story. Truly a righteous Gentile and widely recognized with awards and medals, Miep Gies celebrated her 100th birthday in February, 2009. To mark this occasion, Simon and Schuster published a paperback edition of her memoir that appeared originally in 1987, in which she described her important participation in the saga of Anne Frank.

Miep Gies worked in Otto Frank's spice company. Her friendship with him led to her helping the Frank family hide in the



secret rooms of the company's quarters. She and her husband, Jan, who died in 1993, risked their lives each day by bringing food, news, and loving support to the eight Jews hiding from the Nazis. After they were captured in August 1944, Miep Gies found Anne's diary, saved it, and gave it to Otto Frank when he came back. Her compelling chronicle tells her life story and modestly describes her crucial role in enabling the Jews in hiding to survive until they were betrayed by an informant whose identity is still unknown.

Francine Prose, critic and author of many books, sees Anne Frank's diary as "a consciously crafted work of literature." It has "technical proficiency" that shows "observational powers," an "eye for detail" and an "ear for dialogue." Although she cites other critics who also lauded the diary, her unstinting praise calls this "one of the greatest books about the Nazi genocide."

Prose summarizes Anne Frank's life and death before devoting three insightful chapters to analyzing the book in its various editions. She then tells the convoluted story of converting the diary into a stage play, highlighting Meyer Levin's frustrated participation and his accusation that Lillian Hellman conspired "to purge the diary of everything Jewish." Levin wrote a rave review of the diary for *The New York Times* without revealing that Otto Frank had agreed to have him act as an agent for selling the book to an American publisher. He also wanted to turn the book into a play but the producer engaged by Doubleday, the diary's publisher, rejected his draft. Finally, after quarrels and threats, a husband and wife team of Hollywood screenwriters was selected to create the script. The play was well received and has since been performed many times in schools, community centers, and summer theaters. The Hollywood film also caused controversy since it emphasized universality rather than stressing the impact of the Nazis on Jews.

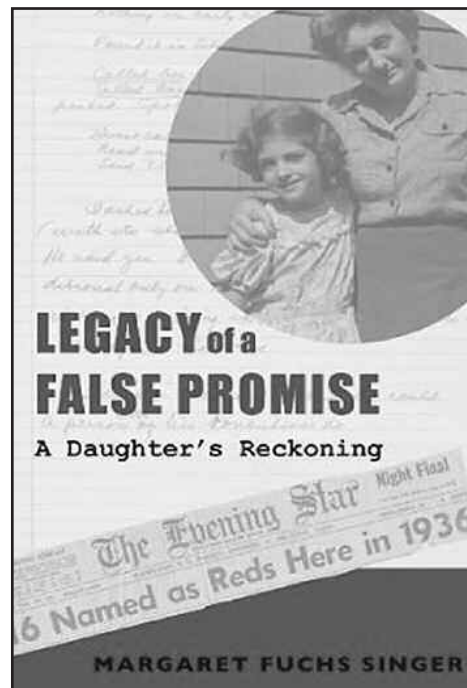
Prose exposes as neo-Nazis the Holocaust deniers who claimed that the

diary was a fraud. She writes about teaching the diary in schools and explores her own use of the diary in a class she instructs at Bard College. Her enthusiastic perspective adds considerably to our appreciation for Anne Frank's diary.

These two books are a welcome addition to the large library of books and articles devoted to Anne Frank's diary. They offer fresh insights to our appreciation of the diary's literary and historical significance.

## When civil liberties were trampled by "patriotic" zealots

*Legacy of a False Promise.* By Margaret Fuchs Singer. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009. 246 Pages. \$29.95.



The author of this memoir is a "red diaper baby." The term is used to describe the son or daughter of radical parents who were either members of the Communist party, close to it, or sympathetic to its aims. If the parents were not actually members of the Communist party, they were involved in activities that were led or supported by it.

Author Singer was 13 years old when she first learned that her parents were former Communists. She waited until they were both dead before she decided to look into their experience and write about it. Her fascinating narrative recreates the lives of her parents by recounting her own recollections, those of relatives and friends, as well as by searching through documents such as hearing records and FBI files. Her thorough inquiry has resulted in a riveting account that grips the readers' attention. For those who lived through the McCarthy era of the 1950s, this book will kindle unhappy memories of a time when America went astray. Younger readers will be exposed to the dilemmas and the tribulations of radicals, including many Jews.

Singer's parents were Herbert and Frances Rice Fuchs, assimilated Jews who

were "bright, idealistic intellectuals." Herbert, a lawyer, joined the Communist party in 1934 after an unhappy first marriage ended in divorce. A friend convinced him that his liberal beliefs would be best brought to fruition by becoming a member of the Communist party. Two years later, Herbert took a job in Washington, D.C., with a Senate subcommittee, subsequently known as the Wheeler Committee. In 1937, he married Frances Rice who was working for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. An economist, she joined the Communist party in 1935 or 1936. Singer could not pin down the exact date. By 1946, Frances and Herbert became disillusioned with the party and resigned.

In 1955, Herbert received a subpoena to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee. At that time, he had left government service having quit his job in the Senate to work for the National Labor Relations Board and, later, for two years for the National War Labor Board in Denver before returning to the National Labor Relations Board in Washington. By 1955, he was a part-time professor in the American University law school and also worked in a law firm. American University fired him after he testified.

The agonizing dilemma that Herbert faced in his public appearance before the House committee was whether or not to become an informer and give the names of other Communist party members. Failure to do so could result in his imprisonment for contempt. He decided to name names and his subsequent remorse "lasted until his dying days." Nevertheless, he sought help from Congressman Francis Walter, the committee chairman, in finding employment after being out of work for a year. Walter referred him to Congressman Emanuel Celler, chairman of the Judiciary Committee where Herbert worked for 20 years before retiring.

Singer's eight years of research enabled her to write a frank account of what happened to her parents as well as its impact on her and her brother. She experienced fear and fright as a red diaper daughter. Her inquiries led her to have a new appreciation for the manner in which her parents handled their ordeal. She insists that her mother was a "strong and courageous woman" and that her father "was a man of boundless integrity." Although some may question this conclusion, she has succeeded in portraying a sad time in our history when civil liberties were ruthlessly trampled by "patriotic" zealots.

## Exploring humanistic aspects of medicine

*The Jump Artist.* By Austin Ratner. New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2009. 300 Pages. \$14.95.

It is difficult to determine which is more interesting – this fine debut novel or the publishing house that released it. Let's begin with the publisher. Bellevue Literary

(see Teicher, page NAT 15)





## Kosher Kuisine

By SYBIL KAPLAN

### Hanukkah doughnuts

From Israel have come two popular foods for Hanukkah – *sufganiyot* (or jelly doughnuts) and *ponchikot* (which are ball-shaped or resemble a doughnut hole).

Gil Marks, in *The World of Jewish Desserts*, writes that doughnuts fried in oil, *ponchikot*, were adopted by Polish Jews for Hanukkah. The name is taken from the Polish word, *paczki* (pronounced poochkey), which led to the nickname, *ponchiks*, the Polish name for jelly doughnuts.

I noticed in our Overland Park, Kan., newspaper one day an ad for *paczi* (poonchkey or poochkey) and a photograph of a plate of what looked to me to be *sufganiyot*. The ad explained *poonchkey* are similar to jelly doughnuts only larger and richer tasting and are traditionally served on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent. They were made to use up shortening and eggs, which were prohibited during Lent.

*Sufganiyot* have a more interesting history. In *The Jewish Holiday Kitchen*, Joan Nathan, an acquaintance of mine from our Jerusalem days and a noted cookbook author and maven of American Jewish cooking, said she learned the origins of *sufganiyot* from Dov Noy, dean of Israel folklorists.

Noy relates a Bukharian fable, which says the first *sufganiya* was a sweet given to Adam and Eve as compensation after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. He says the word *sufganiya* comes from the Hebrew words *sof* (meaning “end”), *gan* (meaning “garden”) and *Ya* (meaning “G-d”). Thus the word means the end of G-d’s garden.

According to Noy, this fable was created at the beginning of the 20th century, since *sufganiya* is a new Hebrew word coined by pioneers.

Some say *sufganiyot*, which means sponge-like, are reminiscent of the sweet, spongy cookie popular along the Mediterranean since the time of the Maccabees. Hebrew dictionaries say the word actually comes from the Greek word, *sufgan*, meaning puffed and fried.

John Cooper, author of *Eat and Be Satisfied – A Social History of Jewish Food*, has another theory. He says Christians in Europe ate deep-fried pastries on New Year’s Eve, and Christians in Berlin ate jelly doughnuts. From them, German Jews started eating apricot-filled doughnuts. When they immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s, they encouraged the population to eat the jelly doughnuts for Hanukkah.

One of my favorite pieces of research describes the characteristics the *sufganiyot* are said to have: (1) they are round like the wheel of fortune; (2) they have to be looked at for what is inside not for their external qualities; and (3) they cannot be enjoyed the same way twice.

#### Parve, Low-sugar Ponchikot (about 30)

3/8 cup sugar  
3/8 cup sugar substitute  
2 eggs  
1/4 cup nondairy whipping cream  
1 1/2 tsp. grated lemon peel  
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract  
2 1/4 cups flour  
1 Tbsp. baking powder  
2 Tbsp. pareve unsalted margarine oil  
confectioners’ sugar

Combine sugar, sugar substitute, eggs, nondairy whipping cream, lemon peel and vanilla in a bowl and blend well. In a mixer or food processor, combine flour, baking powder and margarine. Add to creamed mixture and form soft dough. Heat oil in a pot. Drop dough by table-spoon into oil. Cook for 3 minutes or until brown then turn to brown other side. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle confectioners’ sugar on top before serving.

Sephardic Jews descended from the Jews of Spain make *bimuelos*, also called *burmelos* or *bimvelos*, a yeast fried fritter or puff pancake often served with a citrus-scented sugar syrup.

#### Birmuelos (2 dozen)

3/4 cup honey  
2 Tbsp water  
2 tsp. dry yeast  
2 Tbsp. water  
1 egg  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 1/2 tsp. oil  
1 1/2 cups flour  
1/2 cup water  
oil

Combine honey and 2 Tbsp. water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, set aside. Dissolve yeast in 2 Tbsp. water in a bowl. Add egg, salt and oil. Add flour and stir. Add 1/2 cup water and make into a dough. Allow to rise for 1 hour. Heat oil in a pot. Drop dough by tablespoon into oil. Birmuelos puff up and turn over by themselves. Cook until brown. Drain on paper towels. Dip in warm syrup and serve immediately. If making ahead, do not dip in syrup until ready to serve.

Greek Jews make *loukomades*, a deep fried puff made with yeast with a honey topping and dusted with cinnamon. I received this recipe during a Greek food festival at the Jerusalem Hilton hotel 32 years ago.

#### Loukomades

5 cups water  
8 cups flour  
3 oz. yeast  
1/5 cup sugar  
2 tsp. salt  
1 egg  
oil  
honey

Place water, flour, and yeast in a mixer. Add sugar, salt and egg and mix 20 minutes. Let stand one hour in a warm place. Heat oil in a pot. Using a melon



## Celebrating Hanukkah

By DEBBIE STEIMAN-CAMERON

### My favorite latke recipe

Many years ago, when my husband, Tom, and I lived in Southern California, we were invited to some cousins of my dad’s for Hanukkah. It was a potluck and I volunteered my husband to make latkes, though I’m not sure at that point he had ever made them before. Being the easy-going person that he is, he agreed and immediately launched into his endeavor.

After researching the topic for a couple of days, he discovered the secret to crisp, flavorful latkes: soaking the potatoes in water and frying them in peanut oil. (Just be sure no one consuming them has peanut allergies.) Much to my delight, they were the best I’d ever had. He now makes large batches of them this time of year. We take them to the kid’s schools and eat them during the eight days of the holiday. I always assist; I help with tasting and eating.

Sour cream and applesauce make lovely accompaniments to the latkes. When I was a kid, my mom cooked many things from scratch. In the fall, it was homemade applesauce. We’d go to the Lilly Orchard store, ripe with fresh smells of apples and bees buzzing around and select our fruit. Tom’s latkes motivated me to reproduce the flavor of my mom’s applesauce. It is easy and delicious. Happy Hanukkah!

#### Latkes

4 large russet potatoes  
1 large onion  
4 eggs  
1/2 cup flour  
1 1/2 tsp. salt  
peanut oil for pan frying

Coarsely grate the potatoes. Cover with water for a couple of minutes. Drain and repeat for a second soaking. This step produces crisp latkes. It also removes the discoloration arising from oxidation of the

scoop, take a scoop of dough, drop into hot oil and fry until brown. Drain on paper towels. Serve on a plate with honey drizzled on top.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, food columnist and feature writer who moved from Overland Park, Kan., to Jerusalem in Septmeber 2008. She has just completed compiling her ninth kosher cookbook, this one for her synagogue, We’re Cooking at Kehilat Moreshet Avraham. Copies are available at KMA, P.O. Box 2072, Jerusalem 91290. Each cookbook is an \$18 donation plus \$4 for postage and handling. ★

potato starch. Grate the onion. Mix the grated onions, eggs, flour and salt with the well-drained potatoes.

Use enough peanut oil to cover the bottom of the skillet with 1/4 inch of oil. Heat on medium high heat. When oil is hot, use about 1/4 cup of potato mixture for each pancake. Turn when nicely browned around the edges.

Place finished pancake on a paper towel to drain off extra oil. Serve hot and crispy. Applesauce is a wonderful complement to this recipe. You can buy applesauce or try making your own (recipe follows). It is quite easy.

#### Applesauce

4 apples (preferably Macintosh)  
1 1/4 cup water  
2/3 cup sugar  
1 tsp. cinnamon

Peel and seed apples. Coarsely chop apples and place in a saucepan with the remaining ingredients. (I usually taste the apple before cooking, if it is tart add a little more sugar.) Bring to a boil and turn down heat to low. Let simmer until very tender and the water is mostly evaporated. The apple will break up, looking like chunky applesauce. Refrigerate when cool.

Debbie Steiman-Cameron has an MFA in creative writing. She is a teacher and writer who loves to cook and create recipes. Debbie can be reached at [debbiewriter@gmail.com](mailto:debbiewriter@gmail.com). ★

### MEDAD

(continued from page NAT 16)

photographer and sound man, finally arrived.

I try to listen very carefully to the questions and have no problems asking for better wording. I try to give extremely clear and explicit answers. The trick is to never be ambiguous nor sarcastic. Plain, straight talking is best. Otherwise, your words may come back to haunt you. I’m never PC (politically correct), just plain honest. If you want an official line, don’t come to me. I write my own script and don’t take orders. I represent myself, my view of things, not always very conventional or even polite. “Out of the box” is my comfort zone.

Well, so far I haven’t seen any sign of that interview. If you have, please let me know.

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



**COVER***(continued from page NAT 2)*

garnered wide recognition from collectors, museums, and other institutions. His large-scale works with saturated colors have been acquired by museums and hospitals.

In 2001, he received the prestigious Creative Renewal Fellowship, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., and awarded by the Arts Council of Indianapolis. He used the funds to travel to China and Nepal, where he spent two and a half months writing, drawing, painting, and photographing. From November 2003 through January 2004, the Swope Museum of Art in Terre Haute featured an exhibit of his work, a mid-career retrospective.

In 2008 he was awarded American Artist Abroad by the United States government. He acted as an artist ambassador to the nation of Thailand. In 2009 he has received a second Creative Renewal Fellowship, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., and awarded by the Arts Council of Indianapolis.

*The Domont Studio Gallery is located at 545 S. East St. in Indianapolis, but you can check out his work on his Web site: [www.domontgallery.com](http://www.domontgallery.com) or email him: [john@domontgallery.com](mailto:john@domontgallery.com). ★*

**KAPLAN/ISRAEL***(continued from page NAT 7)*

and individuals or families to make Standing Together campaigns part of their itineraries.

We were told we were participating in the “ice cream program.” David also initiated a campaign to send a Rosh Hashanah card to *chayalim* (soldiers).

“This is a project; we’re not a business,” says David. “This is one to one with a *chayal*. They’re putting their lives on the line every day and we have an obligation to say thank you.”

By 3:15 p.m. the yeshiva boys are loaded on their bus and we are back in the van heading back to Jerusalem, feeling some of the high David feels.

To make a donation, to donate for the donut fund or to become involved with Standing Together, contact [david@together.org](mailto:david@together.org).

*Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, food columnist and feature writer who moved from Overland Park, Kan., to Jerusalem in September 2008. ★*

**GOUTTMAN***(continued from page NAT 8)*

festival of Purim, rather than furthering the cause of peace in the conflicted Middle East.

*Dr. Gouttman is a former senior academic at the University of South Australia, current senior political analyst with the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission (Australia’s ADL), and associate of the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. He can be reached at [rmgout@melbpc.org.au](mailto:rmgout@melbpc.org.au). ★*

**ROBERTS***(continued from page NAT 9)*

vibrant, high-spirited kids. Many with gray-blue eyes and wavy, light brown hair.

On this second night of Hanukkah, it was more apparent than ever to the old lady that daughters dream and fathers scheme. Next Hanukkah she’d tell them how Adam Grossman had softly tiptoed into her heart.

*Ted Roberts, a Rockower Award winner living in Huntsville, Ala., is a syndicated Jewish columnist who looks at Jewish life with rare wit and insight. His product is short fiction, commentary, and a series of wedding and bar mitzvah guides that explain the tradition behind our ceremonies. His themes explore Judaism from apple strudel to Zipporah. Check out his Web site: [www.wonderwordworks.com](http://www.wonderwordworks.com). His collected works can be bought at Amazon: The Scribbler on The Roof. ★*

**PARSHA PERSPECTIVE***(continued from page NAT 10)*

What confirmation do we have of Joseph’s character?

- He recognizes that sexual relations with Potiphar’s wife would be a sin against her, her husband, and God: It could destroy their marriage, family, and personal well-being. And it would undermine one small piece of the social fabric that sustains a world of justice and kindness in the image of God.

- He fails to let his father know he is alive and viceroy of Egypt, undoubtedly causing deep pain to himself, to avoid the inevitable shattering of his family that would have resulted had his brothers’ evil deed been revealed to their father (S.R. Hirsch on Genesis 42:9).

- He acts to prevent speculative buying of food during the famine, selling only retail to each family, not profiting personally or allowing anyone else to do so on the backs of the people (Genesis 41:56–57).

- And in the final analysis, his father, Jacob, appoints him to be head of the family after he dies (Genesis 48:22).

All this comes to teach us that our leadership-recruiting poster has to have a new picture. It has to convey a vision of the congregation as an instrument of Divine Providence, uplifting and fulfilling the lives of the people. It has to be a picture that holds out the opportunity to contribute inspired and inspiring leadership *l’shem shamayim*, for the sake of heaven rather than personal aggrandizement. And it has to be a picture that invites as potential leaders those who know or are coming to know and practice the wisdom tradition of our people.

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*Rabbi Moshe ben Asher and his wife Magidah Khulda bat Sarah are the co-directors of Gather the People ([www.gatherthepeople.org](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)), which provides online resources for congregational community development and organizing. ★*

**BACKALENICK***(continued from page NAT 11)*

caught in the crossfire of wars, the lack of enlightenment and justice, has prevailed in all times and places – and continues to prevail. One can only hope that in mankind’s future a different story will evolve.

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

**TEICHER***(continued from page NAT 13)*

## THE JUMP ARTIST

Austin Ratner



BELLEVUE LITERARY PRESS  
NEW YORK

Press is just four years old, having been established by the New York University School of Medicine to issue books that bring together medicine, science, and humanism, bridging the gap between the arts and the sciences. The first volumes to bear its imprint appeared in 2007.

The mission of Bellevue Literary Press is to explore human experience in the practice of medicine through literature so that medical care will be more humane. Jerome Lowenstein, the publisher, has been professor of medicine at NYU’s School of Medicine since 1977. He has been a physician for more than 40 years with a special interest in the humanistic aspects of medicine as is reflected in the goal of the Bellevue Literary Press. While it is housed in 273-year-old Bellevue Hospital, one of NYU’s teaching hospitals, it is a separate, nonprofit organization, receiving no financial support from NYU. It survives on revenue from the sale of its books and from vigorous fund-raising efforts.

Among Bellevue Press’s early books is *The Jump Artist* by Austin Ratner, a

physician and author of short fiction that has appeared in a number of literary magazines. This is his first book and its title refers to Philippe Halsman, a Latvian Jew who became a famous photographer known for his pictures of celebrities jumping in the air. Ratner has studied Halsman’s life and fictionalized some aspects of it to produce this excellent novel.

The story opens in the fall of 1928 when 22-year-old Philippe Halsman is hiking in the Austrian Alps with his father. In an accident; the father falls and dies. Philippe is falsely charged with killing his father and is imprisoned. With the aid of anti-Semitic “witnesses,” a hostile court finds him guilty despite the strenuous and persuasive efforts of his defense lawyer. Before he is sent off to serve his sentence, a physician examines him and says that Philippe has tuberculosis. The doctor tells him, “Prison is bad for your health. Try to get out soon.”

Philippe’s 20-year-old sister mounts a strenuous effort to secure her brother’s release. She writes many letters and recruits a number of dignitaries such as Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland, and Thomas Mann to intercede on Philippe’s behalf. Her strenuous exertions are reminiscent of what happened when Alfred Dreyfus was set free. Finally, a sympathetic Austrian chancellor who held office for a short time pardons Philippe in his last official act. After a few months of recuperation, Philippe settles in Paris where he studies engineering. However, his true love is photography and he soon turns to this as a full-time activity, specializing in taking pictures of “beautiful women.”

In 1933, after Hitler came to power, Philippe photographs Andre Gide and has an interesting discussion with him. Philippe goes on taking pictures of women as the threat of German aggression continues to mount. One of the women is Yvonne with whom he falls in love and asks her father for permission to marry her. After they are wed and have a baby, it becomes clear that France is about to be taken over by Germany. Yvonne, the baby, Philippe’s mother, and her sister manage to get to America and he follows them, assisted by a visa obtained with the influence of Albert Einstein. The book closes as Philippe establishes a successful career as a photographer in the United States, escaping the anti-Semitism that took over most of Europe. Ratner succeeds in describing the history of this era as seen through the Philippe’s experiences. His exploration of Philippe’s emotions is a sensitive achievement.

This psychologically perceptive novel is a fine expression of what Bellevue Literary Press is trying to achieve. Readers will want to seek out other books put out by this unusual publishing house while they eagerly await Ratner’s next book.

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





## Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

### Shopping in Jerusalem, something for every taste



I always get a kick out of the store window reflections, even when there's nothing I would buy. I've never liked snoods. I think of them as colored undershirts with spikes.



This is my kind of food, though I'm not quite sure what they are. Hint! Does anybody know?



I ought to stay away from all this delicious food. For this, I'd go off my diet for a bit. But if I had to choose between the baklava and Haagen Dazs Mint Chip or 5 Mint....I'll take the ice cream!



#### The latest in home renovations

Do you see that shiny, new railing? It was installed just before I brought my father to live with us.

When we built the house 25 years ago, the few steps leading to our front door didn't seem like too many. But in recent years I've had to help neighbors walk up and down them and I'd get nervous about those who insisted that they could make it fine on their own. Inside our house there aren't any stairs, making it very comfortable and safe for the elderly and for crawling babies.



We're not the only people in Shiloh to have added a banister so people can have something to hold onto. Ours isn't very fancy, but it's strong and matches the ones the same workman put up on the main path from the road to the synagogue. My

neighbor's father ordered them when he moved here.

Our Shiloh neighborhood is now 28 years old. The first "temporary," prefabricated structures arrived August 1981. We moved into "ours" that Sept. 1. We now have children older than we were then, and now we have to take into consideration the needs of the much more elderly. Synagogue renovations are accessible by wheelchair as well as by baby carriages.

*Baruch Hashem*, thank G-d, we're a community for all ages.



#### Turning wintery

Nothing's more beautiful than the wintery sky here in Shiloh. The summer sky is boring, all blue, but as winter approaches, the humidity and clouds make it a visual wonderland. May G-d bless us with plentiful rain.

#### Another milestone in my saga, taking care of my elderly father

So far, *bli eyin haraa* (don't tempt the evil eye) my father can do a lot for himself. One thing he can't do is to change the battery of his hearing aid. That's because his eyesight isn't all that great nowadays, so he can't see it.

Last week, at my daughter's instructions, we went to "HaOzen," a hearing aid place. I bit the bullet and told the young guy that I'm taking care of my father, and as he can see my father wears hearing aids, and I haven't a clue how to deal with them. So, I got a lesson, how to clean and how to change batteries and know when that's necessary. I bought the necessary supplies, brought them home and...I waited until a bolt from the blue would tell me when to use my new skills. Yesterday it hit!

"It's very strange. These hearing aids don't seem to be working."

"Hmmm... maybe it's time for me to change the batteries." I "tested" them and they were dead. So I got the equipment, and easier than I had ever guessed, changed the batteries, and my father was able to hear better. All the challenges should be this easy.

#### Straight talk, plain talk, whatever it's called, I don't beat around the bush

The other day, my husband handed me the phone. It was Ben Hubbard of the Associated Press. He wanted to come to Shiloh for an interview on a day when my husband wouldn't be home, so I was asked to cover.

No big deal. In the 28 years plus since we moved to Shiloh, I've had more famous journalists and dignitaries over. My father would get a kick out of reading about me in *The New York Times*. Now, he's part of the show. We sat on a bench in the park across the street. I gave him a sandwich to eat, since we were missing lunch when the crew, Hubbard plus

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