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Study Tour in Berlin

First Row: The Hanukkah Menorah at the Brandenburg Gate. The Brandenburg Gate is the symbol of the City of Berlin. It marked the formal entrance to old Berlin. Today, of course, it is in the center of a metropolis of 3.5 million people; Berlin Victory Column; The Neues Museum has a magnificent collection of Egyptian art. It is known for the beautiful bust of Nefertiti; **Second Row:** Famous Weihnachtsmarts – the delightful Christmas markets that are found throughout the streets of Berlin. Peter Eisenmann’s acclaimed “Memorial to the Dead Jews of Europe” is located in close proximity to the Brandenburg Gate and the German government offices. It evokes the feeling of a grave yard with its stones; Germany is reconstructing the magnificent facade of the Schloss, the Imperial Palace. The reconstruction of the Schloss will cost \$400 million Euros. The Communist government of East Germany destroyed the Schloss. **Third Row:** Remnant of the Berlin Wall. The remnants of the Berlin Wall are now a favorite spot for tourists to take photos; The memorial to the Book Burning of Hitler. Notice the bookshelves under the ground are empty. *See story on page Nat 8. Photos by Annamaria Fato.*

Editorial

In our Aug. 26, 2009 issue, I wrote about a story Sylvia Boorstein had told at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis when she was the weekend scholar-in-residence in April 2003. It was about Mindfulness meditation. Boorstein is a practicing Jew and also a Buddhist.

In that issue, I published my version – how I remembered her story. Afterward, I emailed it to her and she responded that she liked my rendition. She said every detail is not exact but close enough to make the point. You can read that editorial at this address: www.jewishpostopinion.com/JPO_NAT_8-26-09.pdf.

Three years prior, in our Sept. 27, 2006 issue, I had written about another teaching she had given that same April 2003 weekend about the *mezuzah*. Before I published it, I called her to make sure that I understood clearly what she had said. At that time she was working on a new book. I mentioned how much I enjoyed her Mindfulness meditation story and I requested that if that story was not in any of her previous books, would she please consider including it in the new one. She said she might, and when I recently read her new book, *Happiness Is an Inside Job*, it was there.

The title of the book really captures its essence. It is filled with a myriad of explanations, suggestions, examples and exercises that one can do to help one maintain peace of mind or “to cultivate a noncontentious mind,” because if one is filled with animosity, one is not happy. “This is a book about restoring the mind to its natural wisdom and kindness, to its capacity for caring connection whenever confusion overwhelms it into suffering.”

I would like to share with you, my dear readers, some of the wisdom from the book, especially two of her teachings. The first is how she calms herself when faced with a difficult situation, and the second is what she tells herself to stay in a calm and caring frame of mind when annoyed by those she loves or – much more challenging – when she encounters a “difficult person.” Even though the teachings come from a Buddhist perspective, there is nothing in it that is contrary to Judaism.

When students ask her how it feels to be peaceful all the time, Boorstein is the first to admit that after her 30 years of practice, she isn’t always peaceful, but she is wiser about the decisions she makes and she is generally kinder. She also feels successful because she now trusts that when she gets into a difficult situation, she will not suffer as long as she is able to keep her heart engaged.

When her mind is confused she forgets what she has learned and tells herself “this isn’t fair” or “poor me” or “I can’t stand it if things aren’t different.” But then she will catch herself and allow herself to feel deeply that she is sad or frightened or disappointed or angry or tired and so

forth. Then her compassionate heart kicks in and takes care of her.

She tells herself, “Sweetheart, you are in pain. Relax. Take a deep breath. Let’s pay attention to what is happening. Then we’ll figure out what to do.”

The first instruction to relax helps to startle the mind and interrupt the upsetting thoughts. Paying attention to the breath accomplishes two things. When the mind is disturbed, the breath becomes shallow and the body becomes tense. Lengthening the breath calms the body and focuses the mind away from the “Woe is me” storyline of discontent. Even a quick focus on the breath begins to clear the mind of confusion and provide hope and courage.

Boorstein writes that the most important instruction is to “pay attention to the feeling of distress...Knowing the story is helpful for choosing a response, but my first response – in addition to the recognition of the pain – is to not be mad at it, or at myself for falling into it...‘Sweetheart’ reminds me that it isn’t my fault that my mind is embittered, that something has upset it, that I’m in pain.”

And now the second teaching: This one is about not holding onto bitterness, hatred, grudges, anger and such for others because those emotions leave us feeling unhappy. For those we love and agree with, she says it is not too difficult when they do something that bothers us. The instruction to “bless this person” or “think of something good” about him or her is easy. “He brings me coffee in bed,” “She is so sweet to my elderly father,” and “He is endlessly loyal to worthy causes” are three examples she gives.

Likewise for those about whom we have neutral feelings; it is not too challenging to have complimentary feelings about them when they annoy us. This is an example Boorstein gives:

“Whenever the shopkeeper in my small town who is always helpful and polite startles me by offering, unsolicited, a political opinion completely at odds with mine, I am glad, even eager to thank him for helping me shop. If I do, I can remember his kindness and not replay the story that begins ‘It’s people with views like his...’ If my mind can refrain from vilifying him – which isn’t hard to do because, after all, why upset myself? – I can continue to feel friendly. Whatever his politics, he is well mannered and I like doing business there.”

For enemies or “difficult people,” it becomes much more challenging. When Boorstein teaches this lesson, she encourages her students to begin with blessings for themselves, well-beloved friends, and familiar strangers before taking on people who evoke aversion. No one wants to “think of the good” about this kind of person. But it isn’t about making the person seem okay, it is about making your own mind okay enough to relax.

There is always more to that person’s life than what he or she did to offend you. Some

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Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

Dec. 18, 2009, Shabbat Chanukah (Genesis 41:1–44:17), 1 Tevet 5770

Tonight is the last night of Chanukah. I’ve eaten my fill of latkes and thoroughly enjoyed lighting my chanukiyah and watching the candles burn more brightly each night until their glow eventually goes out. Though most Jewish holidays have additional prayers that we say during the services, Chanukah, like most Jewish holidays, is celebrated in the home with special rituals, food, blessings, and family. I often hear from people interested in becoming part of the Jewish community or non-Jews who look at Judaism that the importance of home and family is not just a positive but something to be admired.

In celebrating Judaism at home, we work to create an atmosphere that embraces Judaism and encourages their interest and participation. At the same time we shouldn’t overlook the fact that Judaism is really a religion for adults. It is complex considering adult themes repentance, vengeance, liberation, military victory, and more. We work to make these themes accessible for our youth and children, but in the end, Judaism is for adults. Chanukah is probably the best example as kids learn about the miracle of the oil, while adults look at a battle for religious freedom and the meanings of autonomy and independence.

Regardless of the depth and meaning of the holiday or holy day, family and community stand out as key components. We are in the midst of reading the story of Joseph. During this week’s portion he finds himself looking down at 10 of his brothers who have travelled from famine-plagued Canaan to purchase food from the Egyptian storehouses.

As we all know, Joseph is in charge of this operation and anyone needing food has

to work through him. Joseph’s brothers don’t recognize him as he is dressed in his Egyptian attire and Joseph needs to figure out what he is going to do about the family that thought about killing him but sold him into slavery instead. In the end, Joseph embraces his brothers putting aside the past in favor of family. In next week’s portion, when Joseph reveals himself to his family it is an emotional exchange. Joseph then brings his family to Egypt and makes sure that they are safe, fed and secure.

Though our Jewish calendar contains any number of holidays for family gatherings and celebration, there is no question that Shabbat affords us the best opportunity to reinforce the importance of family. Whether one observes Shabbat from sundown Friday through sundown Saturday or just makes having a Shabbat dinner on Friday with blessings the key component, Shabbat is a great time to take a break from the hectic week, catch up on what is going on, maybe include a bit about the week’s Torah portion, offer God’s blessing to the children or a spouse, or put money in a tzedakah box. Shabbat is a time to reflect on family and friendships and the world around us.

For those who have a break from their regular routine at this time of year, remember to think about Shabbat. Light the Shabbat candles and think about how these candles invite us to separate the daily week from the holiness of Shabbat. Say Kiddush, and as you sip the wine, think about life. Taste some challah and give thanks for this good earth.

Tonight you light the eight lights of Chanukah. Light each candle for all those who have come before us helping to pave the path to our celebration today. In some of the dark places our people lived, these lights must have given them hope. We light the candles today and remember those who did so yesterday. When you light your Shabbat lights, light them for the beauty, sanctity and holiness of this

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Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

We just installed Internet in our house, and we have a different email address: bzcohen@orange.net.il. We have a special Internet program that blocks out non-kosher Web sites.

The main reason that we got Internet is to spread Torah in the world. For the last two years, my sister Jennie has been printing these emails as a column in the *Jewish Post & Opinion*. Now I'm going to try and get my column, and words of Torah by Rabbi Tuvia Bolton (www.ohrtmimim.org/Torah) in other newspapers and Web sites. If you have any ideas about newspapers or Web sites that may be interested, let me know. Also, I can now send out my biweekly email to a thousand people at once. So if you know anyone who might like to read it, send me their email address.

Baruch Hashem we had a beautiful Chanukah, with many miracles. Chanukah was and is a time of miracles. Here is one from this year.

I met Shmuel at our local hospital. I smiled and wished him a happy Chanukah and a speedy recovery. He smiled back and thanked me. I suggested that he put on tefillin. He politely declined, saying that he has never put on tefillin. I asked why not, and he told me his story.

He was born in Poland 79 years ago. His grandparents were very religious. He remembers his grandfather's long white beard. His parents were less religious. They sent him to a Jewish school, where he learned Torah and also secular studies. When he was 11, the Nazis murdered his parents and most of his family. He escaped to Russia and grew up there in an orphanage. In 1957 he moved to Israel.

On one hand, this is a tragic story. I can only try to imagine what he went through, and I certainly can't blame him. On the other hand, he is a special person. This is one benefit of my work in the hospital. I get to meet and know many special people. The Torah teaches us that everything that happens is for the good, even though we may not always understand. What good comes from hardships and suffering? For one thing, it often makes us into better people. Metals are refined in furnaces, and souls are refined by hardships. I feel privileged to be able to talk to survivors of the Holocaust. The ones that I have met are warm, kind and sensitive. I feel even more privileged if I succeed in helping them in any way, especially to bring them back to our Father in Heaven.

Shmuel told me that he hardly remembers his father and mother. So I tried my best to help him form a relationship with Hashem, the Father of all mankind.

I asked Shmuel why he is in the hospital. He told me about his heart trouble. That day he didn't put on tefillin, but his son did. I could see that this made him happy. Deep down all of us want to do Mitzvahs.

We met again the next day. We were happy to see each other. Again he wouldn't put on tefillin, and again his son did.

The third day he told me that tomorrow he was scheduled to have an angioplasty. Some of the arteries that supplied his heart with blood were clogged up, and they were going to try to open them up. This is serious business. For the tenth time I suggested he put on tefillin and pray, and for the tenth time he firmly and politely declined. I said to myself, "Today is Chanukah. Hashem, please make a miracle."

Shmuel pointed to another patient at the end of the room. "You see that man? He is an Arab, but he speaks Yiddish better than either of us." Shmuel called the Arab over, and we got into a lively conversation in Yiddish. Yiddish is a very special language, and all three of us were greatly enjoying the conversation. I asked the Arab to help me to convince Shmuel to put on tefillin, especially since he has never done this Mitzvah, and he is scheduled to do a serious operation. The Arab tried, and again Shmuel refused. The Arab looks at me and says, "Me redt tsu de vand" (It's like talking to the wall). We all had a good laugh.

In the next bed was another Arab. He, his wife and daughter also tried to persuade Shmuel to put on tefillin. He wasn't convinced. Finally I said to him, "Tomorrow they are going to try to open up the arteries to your heart. If they are successful, then you will thank Hashem and put on tefillin." He said, "Okay."

I met Shmuel the next day, sitting by the window in his room. He was happy. The operation had been successful, and his heart was feeling better. He put on tefillin and read the Shma prayer. It was a beautiful experience for all of us. We had a double celebration. Now he was feeling better both physically and spiritually.

A real Chanukah miracle, but with an important difference! In the original Chanukah miracles, 2,200 years ago, the nations of the world were our opponents. We had to overcome them in order to fulfill Hashem's commandments. Now many of the nations of the world, including the Arabs in today's miracle, are helping us to serve Hashem. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moshiach. The Torah promises that in the end of days, all of the nations will work together with us to serve Hashem.

It is up to each of us to help make this happen. We have to learn Torah and do Mitzvahs to bring Moshiach now!

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



ADLAND

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day. May it always bring our people together and give them peace.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ✨



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Tevet: Purification and transformation of anger

Tevet, the darkest month of the year which began at sundown Dec. 17, brings challenges that force us to tap into our inner resources and become stronger. In many places in the world, during the month of Tevet, the weather is cold, the sky is gray, and we find ourselves spending more time inside than outside in nature. These physical conditions reflect the spiritual themes of the months. This is the month not so much to go forward or start new projects but to be with oneself, to process deep feelings, purify and complete the projects at hand. I recall that my astrologer friend Nina informed me that Mercury and Mars are retrograde in Tevet, so that it seems to be in alignment with the kabbalistic forecast.

The challenge this month is to cultivate patience, and remember that nothing happens by accident and there is goodness within each challenge.

Kabbalistically, the month is devoted to the healing and transformation of anger. When it is cold outside, people get heated up inside. People become angry more easily in Tevet. You might notice that occurring with friends or even with yourself. Remind yourself that it is the month of Tevet.

The challenge this month is to cultivate patience, and remember that nothing happens by accident and there is goodness within each challenge. During this month, make a conscious effort to let go of the need to be right. Attempt to see everything and everyone in the best light. You will know how you are progressing spiritually by observing your anger level. Becoming angered easily is a sign you need to purify yourself.

We must make a decision to work on anger because being stuck in anger has so many negative consequences. It renders us victims who are powerless and unable to go forward in our lives. When we are angry we are not free. We are slaves to our emotions. We are out of control. We lose our center when we blame other people or events for our own unhappiness. That is why during this month the Torah

portions we read are all about slavery. Long before the holistic movement made the connection between the mind and the body, Kabbalah said that anger was the root cause of illness, because it actually disconnects us from God's energy and from who we really are. If we want to heal ourselves from illness, we have to heal and transform the anger we feel inside. Joy and love are such powerful healing forces in life.

When you find yourself becoming angry, make an effort to calm yourself and not speak or act impulsively. Train yourself to take long deep breaths, visualize the release of tension through the breath. Make a habit of speaking in a soft and gentle voice so when you are angry you will not raise your voice too much. Give yourself time to look at the situation differently. Try to be detached, objective, as if it were happening to someone else. Imagine yourself on a mountain top looking down from that vantage point. Assume responsibility for your feelings, making "I" statements such as "I feel this ___ when you do ___". Do not blame the other person for your feelings. It is ultimately your choice whether to be hurt or angry. Raise your vibration by doing something nurturing or enjoyable. See the good in the other person.

When you are angry you may want to seek the support of others to ventilate your feelings or write a letter expressing those feelings freely, but do not mail it. Read it over many times as Rabbi Kalanymus Kalman Shapiro of Piaseczno recommended. Feeling our anger is different than expressing it. After speaking your anger in a safe place, consider how you might express yourself differently to the actual person who has hurt you.

Speak to God about your hurt and anger. Reb Nachman recommends that we spend an hour each day in conversation with God. Pour your heart out to God each day, even if it is just for a few minutes. Visualize yourself standing before God. You can express your feelings to God as a child would to his or her parent. Always, ask to better understand what you can learn from the challenges in your life and how to respond to them in a positive and loving way.

According to Kabbalah, this month is under the domain of Esau. When we are angry we give energy to the side of negativity. We weaken our connection to the Holy One and to all that is good. It is not that we need to become doormats or passive, but that we control our anger so we can make choices that are life affirming. This month is actually a time of great light, for the greatest light is hidden in darkness.

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



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Why?

There is a classic Yiddish folk saying that goes: "You have chosen us from among all the nations. Why, O Lord? What did you have against us?"

I think about this phrase containing both sadness and humor rolled up into one expression that has haunted the Jewish people throughout the ages. There is no doubt that we, as a people, have endured numerous efforts to eradicate all memory of us from the human psyche.

We have suffered, not only at the hands of others, but also by self-inflicting pain and anguish. The Talmud tells us that the Second Temple was destroyed because of *Seenus Hinum* – self-hatred and inner conflicts. If we study the history of the Second Temple period, we understand fully what the rabbis of the Talmud were telling us. It was a tragedy witnessing neighbor against neighbor, zealots against liberals, and apologists against nationalists. It was the ultimate destruction of a people and a tradition brought on by self-indulgence and passions that transcended reason and logic.

When the Temple walls tumbled they brought down with them the hopes and aspirations of a people who witnessed thousands of years of development and contributions that still permeate human society.

I fast forward to today, and by today I mean the 20th and 21st centuries. We were there when, after 2,000 years, a people's longing for return was realized. This was accomplished after the most unimaginable sacrifices. History is replete with stories and depictions of a dark time in humanities development. There can never be enough said or written to fully describe the anguish and torment suffered by so many and inflicted by so few.

David Ben-Gurion once wrote: "Building a State means for us a return to the soil. We found hundreds of Arab villages. We didn't take them away. We established hundreds of new Jewish villages on new soil. We didn't merely buy the land, we re-created the land. In the swamps of Hedera hundreds of Jews died of malaria, and they refused to leave that place until it was made healthy. With our toil, our sweat, and with our love and devotion, we are remaking the soil to enable us to settle there, not at the expense of anybody else."

In that short paragraph, he summed up the dreams and aspirations of a people ignored and denigrated but who gave the world the understanding of hope and survival. That short paragraph embodied the realization that centuries of humiliation and dehumanization did not alter our determination to complete the work given to us by our forefathers

and foremothers as they brought the world from darkness into light.

Theodore Herzl went even further in fewer words when he said: "If you will it, it is not a dream." The fulfillment of centuries of crying each and every year at Passover: "Next year in Jerusalem" was not only a clarion call for deliverance but a willingness to continue the task assigned to us at Sinai: The fulfillment of the human effort at completion and connection, not only to God, but to each other.

Today we are witnessing a return to the days of *Seenus Hinum*. Some call these detractors "self-hating Jews." Others have more descriptive terms. We are observing our own people demonizing a State and its people as they consider the path of survival in a hostile environment. These same people disregard the daily threat to life and limb that is reported as though it were some innocuous experience. And even when we admit that mistakes are made, it is not enough. We must die, for that is the fate of this inglorious people. Mordecai M. Kaplan said it best: "Our emancipation will not be complete until we are free of the fear of being Jews."

We are observing our own people demonizing a State and its people as they consider the path of survival in a hostile environment.

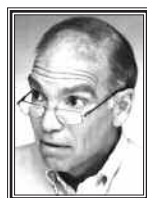
The question remains, why? Why is it necessary for us to turn the other cheek when, if we do, we will lose our face? Why is our hand extended in friendship to all who hate us only to have it ignored? Why does the world gather, on more than once occasion, to condemn this tiny land filled with so few people? Why, oh why, are there many of our own people who join in the chorus of defeatism and destruction?

There are too many "whys." There are not enough answers. It seems that the "whys" have it. It seems that the ageless question uttered by many Holocaust survivors – "At Auschwitz, where was God?" – is still echoed today. And the answer that is given: "Where was man?"

Perhaps that answer is too simple. Life is more complicated than that. Perhaps, though, that answer is sufficient for us to believe that what we must do and what must be done requires us to speak loudly when we see and hear our fellow Jews so misguided and so emancipated that they believe they are not Jews at all but rather "self-hating Jews" which, in my opinion is the same as being anti-Semitic.

The Yiddish folk saying may be more prophetic than humorous. And perhaps we should add: What do our own have against us?

Rabbi Irwin Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. Send comments to raoyitz@cox.net. ★



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

The Russians are coming – Don't bother they're here

A generation ago, the Jewish world, specifically in the U.S. was rallying to the cause of Russian Jewry. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were trapped behind the Iron Curtain, unable to live safely as Jews and unable to emigrate.

A congressman from Ohio with whom I had the pleasure of working got an amendment tacked on to a bill that made it easier for Russian Jews to emigrate. The Jackson/Vanik amendment to a U.S. foreign trade bill forced Russia to open the gates to emigration. Prior to that, there was such a heavy tax on Jews desiring to leave that heavily anti-Semitic society that it pretty well precluded any large emigration.

Times change. A generation later, thousands of Russian Jews are successfully integrated into life in the United States as well as Israel. But most of these Russians are different from other Jews who sought asylum in the U.S. or Israel. They were not raised as Jews. The Jewish religion as well as most other faiths, operated underground or not at all during the Soviet times.

Deciding to live as Jews in the U.S. or Israel, they faced a dilemma. Could they be Jews and not be religious Jews, even though it was discrimination against their religion that kept them trapped in Russia. If not a religious Jew, what were they? Well, those in the U.S. looked around and quickly found that there were plenty of American Jews who were far from any form of formal religious practice.

The question for them remained: How do I identify as a Jew if not through some form of strict adherence to Jewish law, such as keeping kosher, going to shul, observing all the holidays and fast days.

The answer of course is in our history. We were a peoplehood long before Moses came down from Sinai. When people ask me what the difference is, I use the example that I know many ex-Catholics, but I don't know any ex-Italians.

A number of these Russians have achieved considerable wealth living in a free capitalistic society. True, some gained their riches in Russia under Putin and some, yes, under murky circumstances.

Nevertheless, they are bringing an interesting view of Jewish life and identity to the world of Jewish philanthropy. The NADAV Fund, start by former Russian oil executive Leonid Nevzlin and run by his daughter, Irina, is one of the most prominent.

These Jews are not philanthropists only by donating millions of dollars to these foundations, but are actively involved both here and in Russia educating Jews,

Russian and otherwise, in the traditions, the history and the culture of Jewish life. What is unique is that the outreach program is not dedicated to religion or necessarily oriented toward Israel. It is, rather, concentrated on the Jewish peoplehood.

This "peoplehood" is a strange thing. It is what we are. It is the "Pintele Yid" in all of us. From Sudan or Siberia, from China or Chernobyl, a Jew is a Jew. We are Ultra Orthodox, Hasidim, Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist or "JewBhus." Jews all.

Dealing with this variety can really be confusing to someone who is told they are Jewish, who perhaps remember some Jewish rituals in their home going back sometimes generations, but who have had no contact or education about Jews and Judaism.

Even more confusing if someone is told, "You are a Jew." How do you deal with that, having no family or other background to hang on to? That is where NADAV and another leading organization called Genesis come in.

Stan Polovets, a Moscow-based oil executive who is president of Genesis, is quoted in the *Forward* newspaper as saying: "We felt if we focused on funding religious organizations, we would be writing off 95% of our largest population."

Now remember, he is speaking from Russia. But, how many of our disaffected youth (or adults for that matter) would understand why they are Jewish and why they feel the way they do if they were better educated in their peoplehood?

Which brings us to the justice minister of the Jewish State of Israel, Yaacov Ne'eman. Ne'eman wants Israel to "return Jewish law to its former glory." On the face of it, it sounds okay. But think a minute. Orthodoxy is Orthodoxy. And that is what Ne'eman is preaching. Women are already harassed at the Wall. Conversions are being questioned. Questioned at a time when it is the duty of this and future generations to repopulate the Jewish people after the Holocaust.

Ne'eman would have an Orthodox state in the democratic state of Israel. A pluralistic society that welcomes all our people. Our people. This peoplehood who call themselves Jews. A secular society showing all the diversity that has allowed us to survive somehow, some way, through everything.

I feel we should welcome NADAV and Genesis and all like them, and offer Mr. Ne'eman a ticket to Williamsburg, Brooklyn, where he can find the kind of insular, prejudiced life he seeks.

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. ★





Notes from the Antipodes

BY RODNEY GOULTMAN

Interfaith speaks

It wasn't going to be a political circus as occurred in Copenhagen, where cutting backroom deals on policy with regards to climate change followed a well-worn and accepted pattern. Rather, it was an interfaith gathering called the Parliament of World Religions, attended by 4,000 people from 80 countries, at which political issues were deemed to be absent. Its purpose was to find a path along which the world's faiths could comfortably face up to the many moral problems confronting the world today, be they poverty, economic development, or the great ecological crisis.

The Parliament's banner read "Making a Difference, Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth," but it would only be through their middle principle that the other two goals could be achieved. What this convocation was not supposed to be was the political plaything of any one country, however influential.

This ideal, however, was not to be attained, for Washington sent two emissaries – the State Department's Peter Kovath and White House religion expert, Mara Vanderslice – to reconnoiter in private with a select band of participants. Their purpose was to discover how American foreign policy could best curry favor with the Islamic world. Details of the participants, topics discussed, and why the organizers allowed the principle of openness to be undermined, have yet to be revealed.

What we do know is that doors were locked and guarded, and the electronic notice board normally used to advertise the subject of discussion within, was left blank. Public news of this clandestine operation was revealed only after the Parliament's conclusion. No condemnation was expressed. One person present was the Egyptian-born New York-based cleric, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, already a confidant of President Obama. Given the information blackout, one can only conjecture how the inevitable exchange over the Israeli-Palestinian impasse might have run.

Had these political apparatchniks attended the open sessions where Islam was the prime subject, they might have gleaned much of what they had heard in private. On the other hand, they might have chosen to side-step the paradox of strategic constraint exercised in these open and supposedly frank discussions, where matters likely to divide were diplomatically and deftly avoided.

A prime subtheme was the nexus between Islamic and Western values, especially as it is being played out in Europe, the United States, and of course, Australia. Compatibility was on everyone's

lips. Any problems were blamed on self-interested political fanatics. Absent was any desire to at least discuss the seriousness with which some people felt that the claims of Islam were undermining the very social values they hold dear. Indeed, according to the presenters of these sessions, Moslems had already or were in the process of integrating into their host societies, as had foreign immigrant cultures before them. There was no discussion on how to deal with those whose alienation motivated them to harm others.

A number of Moslem commentators, such as Europe's professor Tariq Ramadam, criticized the human rights record of Islamic states, and the way they treated their minorities and often, their own faith's brothers and sisters. However, talk of Iran's role in fostering terrorism or threatening to nuke Israel, the Shia-Sunni divide, and the acute persecution of Christians within the Islamic hemisphere, was absent.

...Washington sent two emissaries...to discover how American foreign policy could best curry favor with the Islamic world.

The only conflict on the books was between Israelis and Palestinians. And in this, Israel's culpability was the message of leftwing Jewish attendees from the United States such as Rabbi Dr. Michael Lerner, the editor of the magazine *Tikkun*. Matters, however, reached a point of high farce when a Shia cleric from Iran claimed not only was his country a veritable utopia for all religions, but also that the reasons for its Jewish community feeling persecuted could be sheeted home to the very existence of the state of Israel.

The blueprint for Christian-Jewish relations presented by The International Council of Christians and Jews' called "A Time for Recommitment" was well received, though the rocky nature of Jewish-Vatican affairs of late were a worry, even to Catholic speakers. Again, matters challenging Christian-Jewish relations, such as the constant hostility of the Word Council of Churches and its contributing assemblies toward Jews, Judaism, and Israel, and supersessionist thought contributing to the push to boycott the Jewish State and its people, were not canvassed.

There was naturally much room in the program of over 700 sessions for each faith and spiritual group to explain the many and varied aspects of its metaphysics. Indigenous spirituality was given a decent run, particularly that of the Australian Aboriginal, as were



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

CNN and the New York Times

Although many times I find myself in disagreement with both CNN and the *New York Times*, I depend on both of them for the news, because I believe that they deliver the most. I read them both, with an understanding of where "they come from," and it is a good habit for any reader. Neither has been consistently a friend of Israel, and neither believes that it is responsible for holding up any particular view of ethics and morality. The *New York Times* used to hold itself responsible for printing only the news "fit for print," but while that has always been a subjective call, today it is politically, religiously and morally a charged area of judgment.

female perspectives in the various faith traditions. Even paganism was slotted in.

Nonetheless, it has to be said that the proceedings of the Parliament, even with the many associated off-site activities, failed to dent the collective consciousness of Melburnians whose taxpayer dollars had heavily bankrolled it. The media coverage was also desultory. In the 24-hour news cycle that dominates the fourth estate these days, it couldn't compete with the salacious interest in the Tiger Woods story, which broke publicly while he was starring in a major golf tournament in Melbourne.

It certainly gained scant traction within Melbourne's Jewish community, one of two major centers of Australian Jewry. The handful of local Jews who attended were already devotees of interfaith activity. Further, a number of the celebrity participants such as Rabbis Michael Melchior and David Rosen, both from Israel, and Rabbi David Saperstein described by *Newsweek Magazine* as "the quintessential religious lobbyist on Capitol Hill" had already strutted their stuff to the community in the week leading to the opening of the Parliament.

At the final plenum of the Parliament, the Dalai Lama generalized that only the inner principle of compassion could solve the moral problems facing the world. However, compassion can't replace the truth that on too many occasions, the root of some of these moral problems is a religious impediment.

Dr. Goultman 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. ★

The problem is that they print and broadcast with a sense of certainty that should make us all uncomfortable. CNN provides us with a constant assortment of experts, weighing in on areas of their interest and expertise, who most often seem to be CNN consultants. For the most part they are boring, because they are more often spokesman than analysts. And each show has its own stable of regulars.

Although Larry King's show is really just media "vaudeville," there is a pretense of getting to the bottom of whatever human garbage he is offering. Recently it was the public meltdown of Tiger Woods. What struck me most about the panel of "damage control" experts that he had assembled was their cynicism about the rest of us who were watching.

They also included the reaction of Europeans, who are always amazed at our sexual immaturity. The "Europeans" that they refer to simply believe, as do the garbage-control specialists, that we should just realize that everyone and everything is corrupt. They offered the opinion that professional golfers are unusually involved in adultery, a kind of professional hazard, given the fact that they are always traveling, and apparently can't find anything else to do with their free time.

I have never professed to understand Europeans' views of anything. I do know that they have lots of opinions, seem not to care who knows, and never seem to hold up their end of any international cause. I am especially uninterested in what the French have to say. They have repeatedly surrendered, rather than fought, and regretfully, but always, cooperated with the invaders. I am proud of the fact that the United States of America has taken the "high road," but I believe as well that the United Nations and NATO should be held responsible to live up to both the letter and spirit of their charters.

One would think that Iran is no danger to Europe, that all of those nuclear bombs in Pakistan are being watched over by fate, and that in any situation of need, like making sure that all of the abandoned nuclear materials scattered around Russia was not finding its way into the hands of terrorists, was accounted for, was really the moral responsibility of the USA.

There should be a reality check. The "experts" on Larry King's nightly show are really only expert in the area of people who feel that "freedom" means to be free from everything. Celebrities, Larry King himself, feel above conviction.

We have the power of turning them off. The larger issue, in my mind, is the idea that we are all like Tiger Woods, David Letterman, the actors, singers, politicians who become national news because they got caught. It simply is not true.

But it is okay for Tiger Woods. Gator Aid and Nike have announced that Tiger is safe. Kobe got punished by national sponsors, but Tiger is okay. Now that's material for another show.

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Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Make 2010 a year of simple pleasures

I can't remember a year of my life that I was happier bidding farewell to than 2009. Economic stresses, family health issues, and the constant barrage of global crises really wore me down. But when the ball drops on New Year's Eve, so will some of the load I was carrying this year. Call me Polly Anna, but the new year always gives me a renewed sense of optimism about the future and a feeling that if we all put our minds to it, we can set things right again.

I begin each year by asking myself what I can do to recharge my "inner" batteries and renew my sense of appreciation for life. Things I can afford, regardless of income, like enjoying a beautiful day, taking a walk with a friend or snuggling up with a good book. Simple efforts that remind me of how much I truly have, even though the world we live in has become more difficult to navigate.

It is a concept that...has taught us...we need to set aside time in order to renew and rejuvenate ourselves and in doing so, we will find delight in the world around us.

Jewish wisdom has invaluable advice when it comes to answering this question. The answer is not a "Secret" as the best-selling book by that name would suggest. It is a concept that, from the beginning of Jewish time, has taught us that as human beings, we need to set aside time in order to renew and rejuvenate ourselves and in doing so, we will find delight in the world around us.

Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath, is more than the seventh day of the week. It is a metaphor for a way of appreciating life; an invitation to let go of the things that dominate us during the week, such as work, errands, chores and shopping. By letting go of the need to accomplish and "do," we create a space in time for us to just "be" and to enjoy.

The commandment to honor the Sabbath is the fourth of the Ten Commandments and is given twice in the Torah. The first time is in Exodus, when we are told to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.

When Moses repeats the Decalogue in Deuteronomy, we are commanded to *safeguard* the Sabbath and sanctify it. It is taught that both commandments, to remember and safeguard, were uttered in the same moment by God.

In the relentless pace of contemporary life, where we barely take time to stop and smell the coffee let alone enjoy an entire day, we can learn much from the metaphor of Shabbat and these two words – to remember and safeguard. It is a challenge to be sure, to consciously stop and remember that we need to preserve the simple things in life that give us pleasure rather than to be compelled by the things that drive or obsess us, but from which we get little enjoyment.

So much has changed in the past year and much of it hasn't been for the better. But the one thing that has remained constant is that it is still up to each one of us to determine how we will live out our days. Following in the footsteps of my quasi-namesake, David Letterman, I offer *Amy Lederman's Top Ten Ideas* on how to make 2010 a year of simple pleasures:

10. Spend more time outdoors, walk when you can, and take time to notice the seasons.

9. Play more games, listen to more music and read more books than you did in 2009.

8. Surround yourself with the people you love. Take pictures of your family and friends and display them in your home and office.

7. Fix up a corner in your home where you can sit and relax, then take the time to do it!

6. Create community – join a book or hiking club, learn a hobby that you can do with others, or create a group to share Shabbat with.

5. Make soup for a sick friend or visit someone who is lonely, even if you don't have the time.

4. Set aside time to practice meditation, yoga or prayer. Find a spiritual path that provides inspiration for your life.

3. Rather than dining out, invite friends over for a potluck dinner. Besides saving money, it creates a wonderful opportunity to talk and relax.

2. Share something good that happened to you during the week and ask a friend or family member to share what was good in theirs.

1. And the Number One Idea for Enjoying Simple Pleasures in 2010: Create a Sabbath for yourself – remember to preserve and protect time each week to rest, reflect, renew and delight in the simple things that give you pleasure!

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



An Observant Eye

By RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

The sound of silence

A number of Jews, including Orthodox Jews, have been implicated in financial crimes over recent months.

Some of the scandals have proven somewhat less scandalous than when they first appeared on front pages and were seared into readers' minds. Sholom Mordechai Rubashkin, for instance, currently stands convicted of misleading a bank to secure a loan. Although that conviction, amazingly, could result in an effective life sentence, charges that Mr. Rubashkin knowingly hired illegal aliens were dropped; and more lurid accusations – that he mistreated employees, abused animals, and ran a methamphetamine factory – are no longer heard.

In some other cases, accusations have been made, but evidence has not yet been heard; and both Judaism and American law insist on a presumption of innocence.

But there have certainly been cases in the Jewish community where guilt has been well established. Bernie Madoff may never have been Jewishly observant, but the Orthodox community has certainly had its share of fraud convictions, if on smaller scales, as well.

Jewish crimes, imagined, alleged or proven, have been prominently featured in the media. But they were prominent too at Agudath Israel of America's recent 87th national convention. The opening plenary session, on Nov. 26, was dedicated to the Jewish mandate of honesty in business and personal dealings. Two of the Orthodox world's most respected rabbinic figures – Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe and Agudath Israel's rabbinic head; and Rabbi Mattisyahu Salomon, the dean of students, or Mashgiach, of the famed Lakewood Yeshiva – addressed the many hundreds who packed the large hall of the East Brunswick Hilton (with thousands more listening to a live broadcast of the proceedings or, later, on tapes and CDs). The speeches were pointed, pained and powerful, and their message came through clearly: Honesty is no less a Jewish imperative than any. In fact, in many ways it is a greater one.

There were, as it happened, two other speakers that evening, although they were not there, unfortunately, in person: Rabbi Shimon Schwab and Rabbi Avrohom Pam, may their memories be a blessing.

Video excerpts of addresses presented by those two revered figures years ago on the subject of business ethics were projected onto large screens before the crowd. As the men on the screen spoke, there was utter silence.

Rabbi Schwab, who served as the

spiritual leader of the Khal Adath Jeshurun Orthodox Jewish community in Washington Heights for nearly four decades, had addressed an Agudath Israel "Halacha Conference for Accountants" on Jan. 24, 1989. In the excerpts of that speech broadcast at the recent convention, he minced no words about the wrongness of "cutting corners" when it came to honesty in business.

"Those who resort to... dishonesty," he said, "while they may have the outward appearance of G-d-fearing Jews, deep down they are irreligious" – and he loudly emphasized the "ir" of "irreligious." G-d provides us what He knows we need, Rabbi Schwab explained. To steal is to deny that fact, and any gains thereby ill-gotten are an inheritance bequeathed by evil.

He noted, further, that the dictionary has an entry for the word "Jew" as a verb, as in "to Jew" someone (i.e., to cheat him). How terrible a desecration of G-d's name, Rabbi Schwab bemoaned, that His people are viewed as defrauders. Even if the definition carries the smell of anti-Semitism, he explained, it is a desecration of G-d's name all the same.

"I live for the day," he mused, with a pining, sad smile, "when there will be a new definition for 'to Jew': to be a stickler for honesty..."

Rabbi Pam served as the dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath (where he taught for more than 60 years) and was a member of the Council of Torah Sages. His excerpted speech was recorded on Nov. 22, 2000 and screened the next day at that year's Agudath Israel convention. He was seriously ailing and it may have been the last public address of his life. The anguish in the rabbi's face and words, though, were clearly the product not of illness but of the pain he felt at having to even address the issue.

Speaking in Yiddish, he characterized a good Jew as someone who is *ehrllich* – honest and trustworthy – "in his profession, in business, with one's workers, with one's partners..." and, like Rabbi Schwab, he stated clearly that the same honesty with which a Jew must interact with another Jew must characterize a Jew's dealings with non-Jews.

When one arrives in the next world, Rabbi Pam reminded his listeners, quoting the Talmud, "the very first question he is asked is 'Did you conduct your business in [good] faith?'"

The word used there, he noted, quite literally means "faith," because – here he echoed Rabbi Schwab – acting dishonestly in order to "supplement" our income denies G-d's ability to provide us our sustenance.

When the screens went black, before applause ensued, the silence persisted for what seemed, at least to one person in the audience, a very long time.

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The Art of Observation

By Rabbi Allen H. Podet

Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit – Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto

The term “magnificent” is thrown about much too frequently. The rector of a European college or university, in highly formal address (usually delivered in Latin), is addressed as “Magnificenz,” a title I inherited when I became the founding rector of the Abraham Geiger College at Potsdam. Valerie Jill found it useful to employ it in phrases such as, “O Magnificenz, take out the garbage!” or “Hey, Magnificenz, clean the kitty litter!”

But magnificent is the *mot juste* for the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit now at Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum. An entire wing of the famous ROM is given over to panoramas, dioramas, videos, virtual tours, explanations, and of course a selection of the scrolls themselves. The scrolls displayed are fragments, generally large enough to read with difficulty, except for the Psalms scroll, which is about 3 x 7 inches and very clear and legible. Behind every scroll is a picture of it carved into, and taking up, an entire wall.

The large, famous scrolls, of course, are in the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem, hydraulically designed to sink underground at a moment’s notice of danger, and they are, understandably, not about to be lent out for foreign exhibit. All the scrolls, everywhere, are under low, low light, constant temperature and pressure and humidity, in an anoxic atmosphere.

The presentation is eximious and thoughtful. One gets from the ROM exhibit a far more luculent understanding of the history of the scrolls and the period, of the communities that created them and the geopolitics of the era and later, than one gets from the Shrine of the Book itself. The Shrine is a protective and custodial magnificence; the ROM effort is both a palmary display and a thorough-going educational triumph.

The ROM display was clearly done by people who had in mind the reasonably educated adult visitor who is not expert in Hebrew and whose knowledge of Jewish history is about average for a literate Westerner in this century. One is reminded of the contrast between the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem.



View of cave 4, where many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Notable elements are carefully pointed out to the uninitiated. For example, one’s attention is directed to the second line of the scroll containing Psalm 121, “I will lift my eyes to the mountains, whence shall my help come? My help is from the LORD, who makes heaven and earth,” where the Hebrew word translated as LORD is really the tetragrammaton. In the scroll, the Hebrew is given in the square or Aramaic alphabet, albeit in an antiquated form thereof, except for the tetragrammaton itself, which is invariably given in the ancient Semitic or properly Phoenician alphabet. All this is pointed out in large and legible carving on the wall behind the scroll. In short, the shrine in Jerusalem is for scholars; the ROM exhibit is for ordinary well-read people.

Utterly fascinating, to me at least, is the set of virtual tours. I have never before really understood the remarkable immensity and complexity of the Second Temple complex, its grace and elegance of line as renovated and expanded under Herod the Great.

We enter a vast plaza and ascend a broad flight of stairs, leading to a marble-like corridor, which opens to the left onto another broader and longer flight of stairs. We wander through corridors, some exposed and some closed in, and mount up finally to the main plaza. We look around us and see the Western Wall, advance to the closed-in gallery, the parapets, and finally we stand before the south wall of the great cube of the Temple proper, with a perpetual column of smoke rising from behind the walls. The Western Wall looms to our left. It is a remarkable tour, extremely physical, very well thought out and executed, and it gives us a sense of actually being there. Nothing like it is available at this point in Jerusalem.

In the tour, we saw a large stone block inscribed in Greek that sat at one point of the Temple court. That actual stone from the Temple itself, about 3 feet cubed, is on display nearby, carefully clarifying that it is in Greek so as to warn gentile visitors that the area beyond this stone is closed to non-Jews. Other relics from the Temple are displayed here, but none more striking than this one.

In the presentation of some scrolls, or rather scroll fragments, we are informed that the music we hear is the traditional



Seen on the Israel Scene

By Sybil Kaplan

Chanukah week

On the first night of Chanukah, my closest friend, Marilyn, and the synagogue president, Brian, and his wife, Susan, came to share dinner with us. I had made 90 latkes, three quarts of apple sauce and 55 *onchikot* (mini doughnut holes dusted with confectioners’ sugar but with no fillings).

On the first day of Chanukah, we hosted three members of the Young Judaea year course, just arrived in Jerusalem from the Arad portion – and we ate latkes, apple sauce and more.

On the third day of Chanukah, our pastor friend, Al, and his wife, Billie, and we planned a day out of Jerusalem. Suddenly Al said, “Let’s go to Modiin, home of the Maccabees.” Modiin is a big city of apartment buildings and high-rises, and that wasn’t what we wanted, but then we saw the sign “Maccabean Graves.” That was what we wanted.

Off the road we drove into a forest, and suddenly there were youth in uniforms everywhere. We parked and a guard told

chant associated with whatever is on display. In at least one case, the traditional music turns out to be 18th- and 19th-century folk tunes. Well, it can’t be heard very well anyway since it is really only background music.

From time to time, coins and artifacts of the same period of the scrolls, arguably perhaps 150 or so BCE (before the common era), are displayed invariably clearly and well protected of course but near enough to the viewer to allow for close study. They are well illuminated and accompanied by line drawings of the coins emphasizing and explaining the inscriptions and pictures. Among other artifacts, there is a small shovel made of unglazed clay, perhaps 5 inches square and with a 4-inch handle, which dates from Temple times, and is of the kind used by the priests for shoveling incense for the sacrifices.

This particular sample, we are informed, was never used for that, but was purely decorative as opposed to banalistic. The incense shovel, it seems, was a ritual symbol of the priesthood; the sort of thing one might expect to find used as a symbol on a tombstone, as the hand of blessing with divided fingers is used today.

The form of urn used for storing the scrolls is also prominently presented. As to who actually wrote the scrolls, a video presents three scholarly opinions by Israeli and American women who each explain clearly why her theory is right (and the

(see Podet, page NAT 15)

us the exact place where the graves are is not known but it was in this area. What was going on?

Maccabi Hatzair, Young Maccabees, a pioneering Zionist youth movement, was having an event. Originally founded in Germany in 1926 and subsequently expanded to other countries, this movement, along with Maccabi Youth, formed the young stratum of the World Maccabi organization (an international Jewish sports organization), but it did not confine itself to sports, engaging also in education for aliya and rural settlement in Palestine. In 1936, it held its first convention in Tel Aviv. Members of Maccabi Hatzair formed settlement groups, settled in Palestine, joined settlements and established new ones of their own.

Now 65 years old, here were 1,500 youth from all over the country, ages 10–18, listening to the mayor of Modiin and being entertained by a teenage singing group of their own.

I chanced to meet Rotem Varon, human resources manager of the adults, who told me the youth had come for a day of educational programs and soon would board 30 buses, according to their age groups, to tour the areas.

The event here in the forest ended with an Israeli Olympic player picking up a torch and carrying it across stage and out of the area as a symbolic run.

On the fourth day of Chanukah, I led a “shuk walk” of Machaneh Yehudah, the Jewish market, as part of the Chanukah week walks sponsored by the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel.

On the evening of the fifth day of Chanukah, we attended a fantastic concert at our synagogue given by Israel songster, Shuly Natan, singing the songs of Naomi Shemer. In case the names don’t register, in 1967 Naomi Shemer wrote a new song about Jerusalem for a song contest; she happened to hear a young girl soldier singing on the radio and wanted her to sing the song. As they say, the rest is history. The song was “Yerushalayim Shel Zahav, Jerusalem of Gold”; the singer was Shuly Natan. Naomi Shemer, by the way, wrote some of Israel’s most well-known songs such as “Machar,” “Od lo ahavti dai,” and “Al Kol Eleh.”

On the sixth day of Chanukah, despite the dreary afternoon, cold and dampness, I led another “shuk walk” of Machaneh Yehudah for the AACI.

In between each time we went to town, we marveled that all the lamp poles were decorated with – chanukiyot – as were buildings. Every shop, every store, even the super market, had a chanukiya to light.

And the number and variety of chanukiyot to buy was amazing.

One cannot forget that every kiosk, cafe and other food place was bursting with varieties of sufganiot, jelly doughnuts.

All of Jerusalem was filled with Israelis and some tourists celebrating the holiday. As the holiday ended, winter came in full force with enormously high winds, low temperature and rain.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ★





Rabbi's Report

BY RABBI ARNOLD L. BIENSTOCK

Berlin: City of shadow and light

I was a participant in the study tour of contemporary Germany in Berlin sponsored by the American Council on Germany from Dec. 9 through Dec. 15, 2009. (Also see photos on this issue's cover) The American Council on Germany, which is based in New York City, promotes ties of mutual understanding between Germany and the United States. The council brings groups of Americans to Berlin to understand the issues that confront Germany today. Our group, which was composed of journalists, professors, and business people, attended numerous seminars with government officials. We witnessed the vitality of German democracy after its recent elections. Germans love to argue about politics as much as Americans do – a treasured gift that we have given to them.

Initially upon my arrival in Berlin, I was upset by the grey skies of the city. I am one of those people who peer out the plane window to view the skyline of an unfamiliar place from the air. As our plane began to descend into Berlin, I looked and looked for some sign of human habitation. However, Berlin was engulfed in thick, heavy clouds until we landed at Tegel Airport.

With the exception of one day, Berlin was enshrouded in clouds throughout our visit. I thought this was a metaphor for what Berlin would be like – a city clouded by its dark and difficult past. However, I emerged from my visit realizing that although there is much that clouds Berlin's stormy history, there is much light – especially within the past 20 years. After a few days in Berlin, I felt that the light of the new Germany could pierce through the clouds that surrounded the city. Despite the winter clouds that surround Berlin, one can find the presence of light.

I was shocked to land at Berlin's small Tegel Airport. The Berlin airport could not hold a candle to our magnificent new airport in Indianapolis. Then, one of the members of our group explained the condition of the airport. It was a shadow of the past. Tegel Airport reflects the realities of the 1960s, when West Berlin was an isolated enclave surrounded by Communist East Germany. However, next year, a huge new airport will open on the eastern side of the city. The new airport will reflect the bustling, cosmopolitan metropolis that the unified Berlin has become.

As a first-time visitor to Berlin, I felt that the division between the former eastern and western sides of the city was hardly noticeable. In fact, it had to be pointed out to our group what areas used to be part of East Berlin. There is very little

left of the no man's land between the two separate cities. The Marriot Hotel, where our group stayed, is in walking distance from the little slabs that are the remnant of the Berlin Wall. Once a symbol of the oppressive Communist regime to the east, the tiny pieces of the Berlin Wall now have become a beloved tourist site for photographs.

Ironically, the Berlin Wall area is now dominated by modern shopping malls. The wall has been replaced by the mall. A huge billboard advertising for H&M loomed over the remnant of the Wall. It celebrated the triumph of capitalism over Communism. The other reminder of the old days of East Berlin is the huge Soviet embassy in the city. The building is many times larger than the American Embassy. However, now the Russians really do not need the space they once had. Memorabilia from the Soviet days is for sale at all the flea markets – you can buy all the hammer and sickle pins that you might ever want. Again, I thought, this represents the triumph of capitalism and the West. Flea markets are an absolute delight in Berlin. One can purchase anything from those kitschy Communist pins to full length fur coats. One of the delights in Berlin is the variety of hats for sale. The Berliners have the common sense to dress appropriately for the winter.

With the exception of one day, Berlin was enshrouded in clouds throughout our visit. I thought this was a metaphor for what Berlin would be like – a city clouded by its dark and difficult past.

Several of our seminars focused on the issue of global climate change in light of the Copenhagen Conference. Germany is the one of the most energy efficient countries in the West. The government is set on meeting the Copenhagen goals of 2020. Germany has created goals to fully develop alternative energy sources by 2050. Berlin has taken buildings from the 1940s and 1950s and made them energy efficient. It also has built new government buildings that take energy efficiency into consideration. Public transportation is efficient, clean, and popular. I have never been on a bus in Indianapolis in 13 years, but I rode the bus and subway in Berlin. Berliners also use the most important human energy – they walk! Basically, everyone we met was thin and trim – unlike back home in Indiana.

The pacifist tradition runs deeply in Germany as a result of the history of the

country. Germans still feel tremendous guilt and/or responsibility for both World War I and World War II and view military might as an evil. Today, Germany's armed forces are under the absolute control of the Bundesrat, the German Parliament. Germany is a reluctant participant in the Afghanistan conflict – with about 2,500 soldiers. There is significant opposition to the German presence in Afghanistan. Displays of German patriotism are rare in the country. Germans think it is very strange that we sing, *The Star Spangled Banner* before sports games and wave American flags whenever we can.

Germany, because of its past, is most committed to the success of the European Union. It is willing to work with countries that have non-functioning economies because it believes in the concept of a united Europe. Germany's economic prowess is based upon its exports – it needs to have markets for these goods, so the well-being of other economies is in the country's own interest.

Berlin was once one of the major cultural centers of Europe. It is transforming itself into a beacon of light of culture and civilization. It is a multicultural city of Asians, Turks, Eastern Europeans, Americans, and Russian Jews. There is a special oasis of culture in the city – Museum Island – with several museums. Our group toured one of the museums, the Neues Museum, with an Egyptologist. To be a tour guide in a Berlin museum, you must be knowledgeable of the subject matter in depth. Our guide actually was a doctoral candidate and translated the Egyptian hieroglyphics with ease. I asked him how many languages he knew. "Eleven," he replied. One of the most famous objects of the Neues Museum is the bust of Nefertiti, said to be the most beautiful woman of all time. The tourist gazes at Nefertiti – the wife of King Akhenaton, the creator of monotheism in Egypt – the sculpture is awe-inspiring.

Berlin is re-constructing the Schloss, the Imperial Palace of the 18th century, which was once a symbol of the city. It was destroyed by the Communist government of East Germany. The Schloss, an incredible financial undertaking, will be recreated as a museum of world culture and understanding.



Shalechet, the Hebrew word for "fall," conveys the destruction of life in the Holocaust. The artist has created 10,000 faces that flow in a river of humanity. All photos taken by Bienstock's friend on the trip, Annamaria Fato of Pittsburgh, Pa.

As a rabbi, I was interested in Germany's relationship with Israel and its Jewish population. Germany regards itself as the best friend of Israel in Europe. Several of the government speakers noted the special relationship between the two countries. Germany is Israel's largest trading partner in Europe. Israeli tourists visit Berlin regularly. When I was walking one day in the tourist area by the hotel, I heard a family speaking Hebrew. They were lost – on of all streets – Ben Gurion Street in downtown Berlin. I spoke to them in Hebrew, but I couldn't give them good directions.



The Jewish Museum of Berlin was built by noted architect Daniel Libeskind. The walls and floors of the Holocaust section (above) are formed at strange angles to convey the feeling of disorientation.

Yes, the shadows of the Holocaust are present throughout Berlin – as they should be, forever. In the heart of the city is the magnificent art sculpture by Peter Eisenmann – the Memorial to the Dead Jews of Europe. It looks like a cemetery in the heart of the major street of Berlin – with obelisks of various sizes that evoke grave stones. The memorial is a somber, dark gray. Thousands of individuals wander through the labyrinth of the stones each and every day. When we drove by the Memorial to the Jews of Europe, someone in our group remarked that ironically Hitler's bunker was located right near the site. The cab driver stated it decisively. He remarked, "That is where Hitler went to Hell."

One of our side trips in Berlin was to a distant suburb of the city. The American Academy, which sponsors American scholars in Germany, is located there. I was shocked when I read the name of the area – Wansee – the infamous place where Hitler and his advisors decided to destroy the entire Jewish community of Europe. It sent shivers down my spine – a frightening shadow of the past. However, now Wansee is known for its Americans who gather to discuss issues of American and German concern.

The magnificent Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue, with its elaborate Byzantine architecture, is now a Jewish cultural

center. There is a kosher food store and kosher restaurant nearby. Two groups of institutions have security in Berlin – government buildings and Jewish communal institutions. Each night, a huge menorah was lit at the Brandenburg Gate, which is the symbol of the city of Berlin. There were advertisements for Hanukkah on bus shelters throughout the city. I was moved when one of the government officials wished me a “Happy Hanukkah.”

The Jewish Museum of Berlin is one of the beloved museums of the city. It is the equivalent of our Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. Ninety-eight percent of its visitors are not Jewish. It was packed with people when we visited it on Sunday. As we entered, we were given clever admission tickets with either a fish or a pig on them to highlight a special exhibit. I got the pig (*Verboten* – the German equivalent of *traife*). A friend in my group quickly exchanged my ticket for the fish. The rabbi should be *kosher*.

The Jewish Museum of Berlin was designed by the architectural genius, Daniel Liebskind, who was born in Lodz, Poland. One part of the museum is a Holocaust Memorial. Our guide was obtaining his doctoral degree in Jewish studies. The walls and floors of the museum are at bizarre angles – one feels off balance as he or she walks through them. There is a huge black tunnel in the museum. Visitors enter it to feel the darkness of the Holocaust. A labyrinth of stone obelisks conveys the feeling of imbalance and awkwardness. Throughout the museum are hollowed out spaces – Daniel Liebskind calls them voids – to express the nightmare of the Holocaust. Many Holocaust survivors have come to the museum and felt that its architecture has caught their horror.

The museum shares the entire history of Jews in Germany in a meticulous, exacting and clever fashion. There are interactive games throughout the museum. The museum documents the stories of famous German Jews of the 19th and 20th centuries. I read with fascination about the incredible contributions of German Jews to the arts and sciences. Ironically, while I was reading about the interaction between Jews and Germany before the Holocaust, I thought that German Jewry was very similar to American Jewry. Perhaps no other Jewish community immersed itself into its country of residence more than German Jews. Only American Jews identify with the United States in a similar fashion.

In honor of Hanukkah, there was a Hanukkah Market with items for sale. The museum was imitating the famous Weihnachtsmarts – the delightful Christmas markets that are found throughout the streets of Berlin. The Hanukkah Market was filled with gifts to buy and food to eat.

I began to speak with one of the salespeople in the Hanukkah market. I asked her if she was Jewish. She said she had an interesting story if I wanted to listen. I said I did. She told me that her husband

(see Bienstock, page NAT 15)

Mountain of Peace, Missoula 2009

BY MATTHEW J. SILVER

Some brotherhood meetings start with a prayer, talk of what happened at their last meeting maybe, who is ushering when, who didn’t when he was supposed to, discussion of the children sponsored at JCC day camp, how much Irving paid for an *aliyah*, how much Irving should have paid. Then they start talking about someone’s brother-in-law’s money, two *meshpucah* get mad and everybody goes home. In Missoula, Montana, the men of Congregation Har Shalom gather in the middle of the Clark Fork River that roars through downtown to fly fish. That’s their venue. Some call it the Tallis, Tefillin and Tackle Club.

“Our gatherings are in the river in wading boots, instead of in some committee room at the shul,” said congregation president Bert Chessin. “These brotherhood ties are to fishing lines,” he laughed. Born and raised here, he recently returned. His favorite bar mitzvah gift was a fly rod.

The Garden City straddles the Lewis & Clark Trail, the home of nearly 60,000 people plus some 12,000 students at the University of Montana. Originally founded as a logging area and trading post to service Indians, ranchers, miners and farmers, scenically it is absolutely stunning. This town is nestled in a valley surrounded by the jumbo Bitterroot Mountain Range, grassy and treed peaks, still home to many bear, deer, and elk. The taller rugged peaks maintain ice caps, even in summer.

In the Rattlesnake Canyon neighborhood, you notice nearly as many deer as you do squirrels on north side of Indianapolis. In the fall, brown bears may be found in a tree, three houses down, foraging for hibernating food. The flavor of the town, the mix of the new blood young and the lifestyle of the rural old, is reminiscent of Bloomington, Ind. – except here, hippies and hunters get along fine.

In 1954 several university professors gathered to provide Jewish community education for their children, first meeting in each others’ homes, and later in libraries, churches, and rented space. One of them was Meyer [Mike] Chessin, originally from New York, who holds a plant physiology doctorate from Berkeley and is now a retired, distinguished professor of botany from the U of M. Spry and still active at 88, he became known as “Lefty Mike” for his political views. He and his wife, Flo, in Missoula since 1949,



The sanctuary at Congregation Har Shalom. Photos by Bert Chessin, president of the congregation.



borrowed a Torah from the Helena congregation for son Bert’s bar mitzvah; after that congregation became inactive, the Torah lived in the Chessin’s home for 10 years until the mid 1970s.

In *Missoula Valley History* (1991), a compilation of old photos of people, parades, community groups, festivities, and notable biographies, beginning with Native Americans and all written by locals, Meyer wrote about the Jewish community. He said the first recorded Jew living there was Jacob Leiser, “who emigrated from Germany to the East Coast, sailed around the horn to California, then walked from there to Missoula” in 1870, which by then was already an established trading post.

The university did attract some Jews, including a number of distinguished professors, including the controversial author, critic, and intellectual wild-man, Leslie Fiedler, who lived there 20 years until the 1960s. According to Har Shalom’s brochure, he led community Passover services, and his wife, Margaret, nurtured the Sunday School. Until the 1950s there was no more than a handful each of Jewish architects, doctors and lawyers in town.

Members of the community led services as needed, but “until the early 1980s,” wrote Chessin, “the existence of an organized community was very transitory.” However, he goes on, “one cementing influence was the phenomenon of the schnorrer....it is part of Jewish tradition to honor [their] requests, but their frequency had become so burdensome that ad hoc meetings were called to deal equitably with them.”

Though two Jews from years ago are buried in a local cemetery, it is far from urban areas. The closest city with more than 2,000 Jews is Spokane, Wash., a four hour drive.

But now the congregation has its own building for the first time. “Two years ago our offer was accepted by the building’s owners, and with loans from two temple members, the owner, and the bank, we have a mortgage from the bank and loans in place,” said Toba Winston, who was president at the time of the acquisition, and helped secure the original loans and obtain initial guarantors. “But they are interest-only loans, and we are working to raise money to reduce the loans to an affordable monthly amount.”

She also shepherded through the affiliation with the URJ, and the subsequent hiring of a student rabbi from URJ-LA. “We are continuing to have success on

many fronts. The Sunday school has improved from meeting once a month to twice a month, and we just had a very successful yard sale. So in addition to raising money, we are building a closer, caring community,” she added. Winston, who moved to Missoula from Baltimore in 1999, credits Rabbi David Fine of Seattle with being extremely helpful in making the transition.

A funeral home previously occupied the building, so the chapel is now the sanctuary, and other rooms were readily converted into offices and classrooms. “During the week we rent the classrooms to a Montessori School, and the three-car garage is leased to a local casino, so we show some income,” said Winston.

On my first visit in 2003, I interviewed Susan Hay Cramer, Dr. Scott Green, and Jim Gray. Susan Hay Cramer is the former executive director of Mazon (The Jewish Response to Hunger) and now the CEO of United Way of Missoula. Dentist Dr. Scott Green, who moved from New York over 25 years ago to take advantage of the ski slopes, started a building fund in the 1980s that grew slowly but steadily, and he served many years as president of the congregation. Jim Gray (who wrote for the *Jewish Post & Opinion* in the 1970s) is a specialty chef, experienced in all the denominations, and serves as the cantor at Har Shalom. Gray and Cramer have lived there less than 10 years.

At the time, services were held in the public library and in homes, and contract Rabbi Gershon Winkler, ordained Orthodox, practiced a different kind of theology to praise the Almighty, combining other spiritualities with Judaism, a path that did not appeal to everyone, but most apt to draw younger adherents.

Not one to mince words, Gray said he had driven the 200 miles to Butte – not an easy drive – for High Holiday services the previous year because he could not tolerate Rabbi Winkler’s service. Green’s two sons were both b’nai mitzvah under Rabbi Winkler, so he was okay with him. Cramer refused to attend services under Winkler, but has celebrated Friday evening Shabbat dinner in her home for years. People scramble to get on her Passover Seder guest list.

“Scott pretty much held the congregation together in the 1970s and 1980s. He and Gray are now both active supporters,” said Cramer, now herself a board member.

(see Silver, page NAT 15)



Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Fun at work

“Funsmith,” writes Chaim Macher, “why aren’t my people having more fun at their jobs already? They’re getting paid. They get benefits. They have plants, even. They walk around with sour pusses that make even me not want to do business with them. What’s the matter with them nowadays anymore?”

So I write back to Mr. Macher, praising him, not only for having the vast intelligence to write me, but also because he actually seems to think it’s important that “his people” should also be having fun, even though they are at work, even though “they have plants.”

I believe in fun. I’ve spent most of my life following that belief. I think of it as my “playful path.”

The experience of Deep Fun, as the story of Joe so clearly illustrates, can be found in work as readily as it can be found in play.

Some kinds of fun are maybe not so enlightening or trustworthy. But there is at least one kind, which I call Deep Fun, which seems to be pretty much what my life is for. And what my work is all about.

The first person I found who more or less shared my understanding of Deep Fun was a fellow named Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. In his book, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, he describes one person in particular who was very much on the Playful Path.

“Years ago my students and I studied a factory where railroad cars were assembled. The main workplace was a huge, dirty hangar where one could hardly hear a word because of the constant noise. Most of the welders who worked there hated their jobs, and were constantly watching the clock in anticipation of quitting time. As soon as they were out of the factory, they hurried to the neighborhood saloons, or took a drive across the state line for more lively action.

“Except for one of them. The exception was Joe, a barely literate man in his early 60s, who had trained himself to understand and to fix every piece of equipment in the factory, from cranes to computer monitors. He loved to take on machinery that didn’t work, figure out what was

wrong with it, and set it right again. At home, he and his wife built a large rock garden on two empty lots next to their house, and in it he built misty fountains that made rainbows – even at night. The 100 or so welders who worked at the same plant respected Joe, even though they couldn’t quite make him out. They asked his help whenever there was any problem. Many claimed that without Joe the factory might as well close.

“Throughout the years I have met many CEOs of major companies, powerful politicians, and several dozen Nobel Prize winners – eminent people who in many ways led excellent lives, but none that was better than Joe’s.”

The experience of Deep Fun, as the story of Joe so clearly illustrates, can be found in work as readily as it can be found in play. My particular focus on games and toys and the stuff of play has occupied so much of my life mainly because it is easier for people to access Deep Fun in play than it is at work. Especially at the work place.

Joe was exceptional. On the other hand, so are we. So, Mr. Macher, what I want to tell you is this: When work is good, it is fun. When work is right, it is fun. When your people are given the opportunity to work the way they work best, what they will also be having is fun.

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>. ☆

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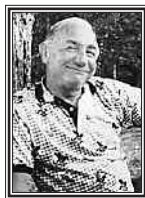
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Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

Memoirs of Hebrew school

Naturally, there was no Hebrew Day School in my youth. No sooner had you finished your compulsory public school (an unjust law, said my advanced libertarian friends) when you jumped into the streetcar and clickety-clacked to Hebrew school. Full of peril, like our older brothers being airlifted from the Battle of the Bulge to the invasion of Iwo Jima. My analogy is an accurate one. Hebrew school was a great impediment to our athletic ability.

No napping, a brief recess, and by the time it was over, darkness had shrouded the synagogue and it was impossible to play football in the pitch black playground. Home we went (streetcar and car pool) to painfully linger on the joys of our Christian friends who had been on the playground since 3:15. (And by the way, that explains why we win all those Nobel prizes but only have a handful of Jews decorating the professional athletic halls of fame.)

[Bathsheva] was not bathing, just catching a few rays. And David – well, he was taking a census of Jerusalem roof tops.

The classes were small, which meant that our teacher – who could spot an aleph instead of a beth at a hundred yards – never lost visual control over passed notes, whispers, or rude gestures. As I’ve told you in other Hebrew School vignettes, he was armed with a ruler – and it wasn’t for measuring.

And as this wasn’t bad enough, there was always a girl or two in class. Great, you’d think. Even we 12-year-olds knew that they possessed biologic and cultural differences that would brighten our social lives in a year or two. Besides, they were good to sit next to because it cut down on the teacher’s back swing with his cutlass of a ruler. Didn’t want to clip a feminine ear.

But those girls, they set a high bar for the lesson. Naturally, they weren’t absorbed by football, baseball, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, track, or anything that demanded the freedom of the great outdoors as we were locked in our penal cells. I mean it. Betty Ann Green got 10 out of 10 of her vocabulary assignment (including *hatzylim* = eggplant; the most impractical word in the entire Hebrew

vocabulary). Most of us little boys hated eggplant anyhow. We playground athletes were lucky to get, say 4. The girls won all the medals.

And the girls, understanding the value of rarity and blessed with a more mature view of the social world, delighted in excelling.

There was another advantage (besides civilizing us pagans). Since the synagogue or temple couldn’t afford one class for each age group, we were frequently mixed up with older kids who knew the ways of the world beyond *hatzylim*. Much more biological knowledge was disseminated around the classroom than eggplant propagation. After all, a few of the seniors wanted to sit next to the girls. Silly, I thought.

Our teachers avoided this topic. I’ll never forget the day *moreh* (teacher) told the blandest version ever told of David and Bathsheva. She was not bathing, just catching a few rays. And David – well, he was taking a census of Jerusalem roof tops. No physical relation was implied, but then he couldn’t deny that the Lord punished his census taking by taking the child. Probably adopted, said our teacher. (Our teacher, a master of evasion, had a similar problem with Joseph and Potiphar’s wife. She was tired and wanted to nap and she hated to nap alone.)

But now, benefited by hindsight, I understand his challenges – and his spiritual mission. I disrecall his name, but no matter – G-d knows.

To make matters worse, my permanent seat (eight chairs removed from Marianne Greenberg, naturally) was next to a window overlooking the playground – ah, the skills and muscles that I was under-exercising due to that two hours of frozen concentration, except when I ducked and wiggled away from that ruler. Oh well, there are skills other than athletic and of far more value in my adult life. And Marianne Greenberg ain’t what she used to be.

Ted Roberts, a Rockower Award winner, is a syndicated Jewish columnist who looks at Jewish life with rare wit and insight. When he’s not writing, Ted worships at Etz Chayim Synagogue in Huntsville, Ala., where for 25 years he has served as bar mitzvah teacher. His inspiration is his patient wife, Shirley. Shirley, both wife and muse, and three hawk-eyed children review every word he writes – especially his stories of family life, one of his frequent themes. His collected works The Scribbler on The Roof can be bought at Amazon.com or lulu.com/content/127641. Check out his Web site: www.wonderwordworks.com. ☆

On this date in Jewish history

On December 30, 1935

Sandy Koufax, baseball player, was born.

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

Kaufman's Conclusions

BY ARI J. KAUFMAN

Astronaut David Wolf lands at the JCC

Tuesday night, Dec. 15 was yet another production of the popular, Emmy-award winning *Mickey's Corner* at the Arthur M. Glick Jewish Community Center of Indianapolis, Ind. This time, Mickey Maurer's unique guest was astronaut David Wolf.

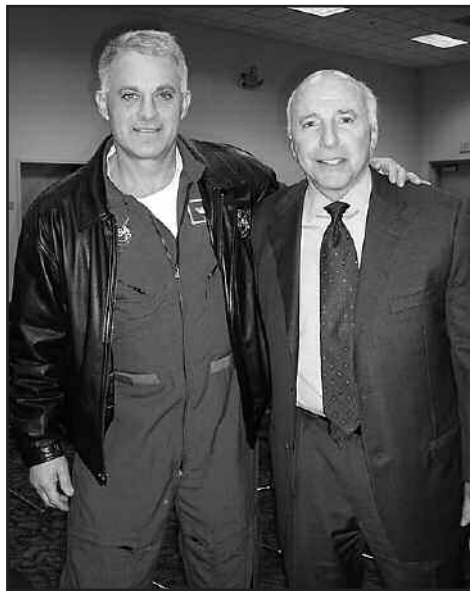
Michael (Mickey) S. Maurer is a successful attorney, entrepreneur, civic leader and philanthropist from Indianapolis. He has been involved in the industries of film production, radio broadcasting, cable television throughout Indiana and Michigan, newspaper publishing, and banking.

Dr. Wolf, a Hoosier, is a graduate of this JCC's Early Childhood Education program, North Central High School, Purdue University's school of electrical engineering and Indiana University's medical school. The 53-year-old has ventured into space on three separate missions, the first being 12 years ago. He's amassed seven spacewalks, including a 128-day extended stay on the Russian spacecraft Mir – for a total of 158 days in space. He subsequently trained as a flight surgeon with the United States Air Force, then joined the staff of Johnson Space Center in 1983, where he was tasked with investigating the physiological effects of microgravity, among much else.

[Wolf] implored youngsters to focus on "what they'll become first...no one does it (becomes an astronaut) right out of college."

Local affiliate FoxTV 59's Bob Donaldson introduced David Wolf as a "hometown hero," then Mickey Maurer followed, introducing this guest as someone who is "the embodiment of our childhood dreams." And indeed, among the 200 or so folks who came out on a chilly fifth night of Hanukkah, many of them were in fact children.

Wolf, who admitted his first time in a space shuttle was scary, and that these journeys are actually scarier each time, told the crowd he actually finds "it's often scarier to watch." During the interview, Wolf often acted as a teacher, explaining a shuttle goes from zero to 18,000 miles per hour (five miles per second, that is) in roughly nine minutes. Astronaut Wolf likes to kid



Astronaut David Wolf (L) with Michael Maurer. Photo credit: Jennie Cohen.

he "lives on the edge safely" and that, in terms of safety, you "want to get the job done without becoming famous" referring to any accidents or near mishaps in space.

Much discussion was scientific and education oriented. For instance, Wolf talked about the "recovery" of an astronaut after time in space, explaining how one "readapts to the gravity" of earth in terms of weight, how one moves, stands, and even drives a vehicle. It can take a month or even a year to recover after extended time in space, losing bone minerals, muscle mass and weight.

One audience question naturally had to do with how a person becomes an astronaut. Interestingly, Wolf explained it's mostly about luck and being fortunate. Many who are plucked by NASA to enter space were engineers or in the medical field, as both those professions lend themselves well to the experiments (foundations of the GPS, cancer research, tissue regeneration) that go on once in space.

He therefore implored youngsters to focus on "what they'll become first...no one does it (becomes an astronaut) right out of college." Wolf said growing up he admired Neil Armstrong, who in addition to being the first person to set foot on the moon, was also a Purdue graduate and Korean War veteran.

Right now, all five crews for the next 18 months of missions have been chosen and are preparing already. No further missions are scheduled beyond those.

"You never know if you'll be tapped for another mission," Wolf, who has mostly spent time in space with Russians and astronauts from the 16 other nations that constructed international space station, explained. "It's been an amazing era," he reminisced. "It's also had a dark side," referring to the 1986 Challenger and 2003 Columbia disasters.

Wolf does expect further exploration to visit Mars and to contact other life forms, though perhaps neither of those in our lifetimes. "It costs \$5 billion each time we go up – but we spend more on pizza each year!" he factually noted to audience laughter.



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Pet peeves II

I may as well confess it. My readers, if any, have long suspected it anyway. I am an anachronism. As a people, in this country at any rate, we are always of the cutting edge. If it is new, it must be better, and we want to have it. Speaking for myself, I am not so sure. One of my children gave me an iPod for my last birthday. I graciously accepted it. It was a lovely gesture and, as I later learned, an expensive one at that.

The only problem I have with it is that I couldn't figure out what I was going to do with it. I do not "download" tunes, especially the ones that are popular with disc jockeys. For what purpose? I do not want or need to listen to music while I walk. If I am in my car, there is the FM radio or if on a longer commute, there are CDs I can play. I may yet figure out some need that it may fill.

I recently complimented a cantor (in print) for wearing "traditional" cantorial regalia on his CD cover. Why? For the simple reason that in this age of informality, few if any cantors wear those ecclesiastical hats or even robes, that's why. My thinking is that they should, and that goes for the rabbi as well. I feel uncomfortable with clergy wanting to be addressed by their first names. I believe that a physician ought to wear a white lab coat and a dress shirt and tie. I also believe that it is deplorable that many teachers, especially male teachers wear jeans and sport or polo shirts to school. They appear as disheveled as their students. In really good private schools, the kids wear uniforms, as they should.

The things I miss that used to be the norm during most of the previous century in this country are the structured

late Friday evening services. In my first position as an organist in a Conservative congregation (you heard right), the officers wore tuxedos when they were on the pulpit. These days, most rabbis prefer to host a pot-luck supper, sing a few ditties (with sacred texts) and then adjourn to the chapel or sanctuary where more ditties will be sung. There are few if any choirs, mixed or otherwise, and no organ either. The cantor, who now has little or anything to sing of a formal (i.e., music that is composed or improvised), will often accompany him/herself on a guitar. While this development is a change, I am not of the opinion that it is progress.

The prevailing thought is that the more homey, familiar, informal the services are, particularly with regard to the music, the more likely that folks will return the following week. I don't think so. Why should they? They can hear Springsteen, the Rolling Stones, and more on a CD and the kids can listen to Brittany et al on an iPod. They surely are not Hassids; most can barely read Hebrew, why then should they listen to Hassidic-like tunes in the temple, or rock, country or other kinds of musical stuff with Hebrew words in temple services?

A friend of mine related that during his student days he visited a Catholic church as a courtesy to his roommate. He had to pay to gain admittance. When he remarked that he didn't have to pay to get into a temple service, he was told that in the cathedral, they put on a better show! (Well, at least they used to!) Who wants to listen to lay folk talk, talk, and talk some more, at least initially about the weekly torah portion? Obviously, while many do, I am not one of them.

Music on the other hand is a process that occurs in time. My reaction after listening to the first movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (which took 17 plus minutes to perform) was (like life?) that it was over much too soon. I would observe that experiencing music and religion simultaneously tend to make one both hungry and thirsty!

Listening to people talk excessively tends to make me sleepy. I can pay attention to a speaker for 10 or perhaps 15 minutes. After that there is no guarantee. Listening to music is something different for me. With the exception perhaps of Bruckner's music, length is generally not a problem. On the other hand, if a speaker (unlike a composer) can't say what he's got to say in 10 minutes, another hour will not help. (Please see the Gettysburg address.)

On the TV show *Sixty Minutes*, most segments take 10 to 15 minutes. On the other hand Andy Rooney makes his point in less than the average time of the three minutes allotted to him. You don't suppose that his colleagues think of him as an anachronism too? The opinions here expressed are, alas, my own.

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



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

The Family Guy "Special"

When *Family Guy* was first broadcast in 1999, *Washington Post* TV critic Tom Shales described it as "utterly excremental." He warned that it would lower standards of entertainment and that such an effect is not conducive to genuine, reflective, wholesome humor.

He was right. The baseness of this production was revealed, clearly and unabashedly, when the two leads behind the cartoons, Seth MacFarlane and Alex Borstein, stepped out on the stage to perform their song and dance and take on vaudeville. A Fox TV special, *Family Guy Presents Seth and Alex's Almost Live Comedy Show*, followed the Family Guy episode about the Holocaust survivor grandmother (reviewed in this column on Oct. 21). The opening sketch, the tone-setting gag, the draw-in bit, referred relentlessly to the Holocaust. And it was a new low, perhaps the all-time low, in "humor" on "Jewish" subjects. I must confess that I was not prepared for it.

What hypocrisy are Borstein and MacFarlane satirizing, unless they really believe that Jews who say that they mourn the Holocaust are actually glad that there is less "competition" in Jewish humor.

After a vulgar vignette from the cartoon folk, series creator MacFarlane, who does several of the voices on the series, declared his intention to "inject heart" after the off-color "self-pleasuring humor" of the opening vignette. So he began to croon the song "Edelweiss," from *The Sound of Music*. Suddenly, Ms. Borstein, the voice of Mrs. Family Guy, interrupted in the name of "my being Jewish," complaining that "the Austrian people were not very kind to my people during World War II." The "sketch" played the Holocaust against back stage power plays, for Alex continues: "and we said we were not going to do this." She adds, "Everybody talks about how the Jews never fight back. Well...I'm fighting back tonight." Here is wholesale mockery of an

important premise in the Jewish communal consciousness and in Holocaust education – namely, that people must speak out about evil even when they might be mocked or repressed, lest evil triumph.

MacFarlane replies, "This is not the place to bring out your Hebrew baggage." Is this intended as mockery of those who accuse Jews of having "baggage" when it comes to the Holocaust, or is it a cue for Alex to bring up her own personal "baggage." She retorts, "My mother and grandmother barely escaped the Nazis during World War II." Is it better not to mention the word "Holocaust," lest one be accused of mocking it, and to attribute Nazi hatred of the Jews to "the war"? And are we to assume that Alex must learn to move on from "the war"?

MacFarlane's response is truly obscene: "If none of that had ever happened, how many female Jewish comedians would you be competing with in Hollywood? Right now, it's just you and Sarah Silverman." Borstein's response is even more obscene: She sheepishly joins in singing "Edelweiss" with MacFarlane!

Is this humor? Genuine humor relates certain truths about human foibles and offers perspective and insight. It satirizes base instincts and behavior in order to prod more noble behavior. It exposes hypocrisies.

The MacFarlane-Borstein sketch actually mocked the higher instincts and equated them with baser instincts. After all, in *The Sound of Music*, the "Edelweiss" lyrics are sung by a family who have resisted Nazi evil and weep for a country that has debased itself. Borstein's sketch persona comes across as petty for declaring all Austrians bad, and the over-all effect of this "humor" is to put her "bigotry" on the same level as, say, the bigotry that led to the Holocaust. In mocking the "speak out against evil" mandate, this sketch feeds on the moral laziness or outright bigotry that leads to a tired-of-hearing-about-Holocaust-baggage mentality.

What hypocrisy are Borstein and MacFarlane satirizing, unless they really believe that Jews who say that they mourn the Holocaust are actually glad that there is less "competition" in Jewish humor. The persona that Borstein assumes in this sketch literally croons such good riddance. The musical bit ends on the note that more dead Jews mean greater opportunity for more living Jews.

The MacFarlane-Borstein "special" puts *Family Guy's* "Jewish-themed" episodes into context, suggesting that the vulgar "humor" may actually cushion a core of barbarity that is truly "excremental."

Stiller and Meara on Mercy

Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara appeared on the new NBC nurses drama, *Mercy*, as an elderly couple, Joe and Estelle Thalberg. Though the years have been kind to them, the woman portrayed by Meara suffers a stroke after a hip replacement, much to the worry of her adoring husband. They hope, in a day's time, to celebrate their 65th wedding

anniversary together in joy and in reasonable health. They find it amusing – or, rather, writers Gretchen J. Berg and Aaron Harberts find it amusing and maybe even cute for them – to keep talking about sex and referring to a "threesome."

There are Yiddish words bandied about here, including a ribald word for fornication which is gleefully intoned. Yet the husband is not without some piety or at least generosity of spirit. Walking into the hospital chapel hoping, maybe even praying, for his wife's speedy recovery, he sees a nurse worried about her policeman boyfriend and offers her something to eat, "a nosh." He does have the courtesy to ask, "Would He mind?" Whether or not that is appropriate for the chapel is left to the viewer, who does get the impression that "noshing" is a Jewish way of praying and that Yiddish has expressive, raunchy words, too.

In the current cultural climate, ribaldry is regarded as refinement. Recently, the *Forward* has boasted about books and conferences reviving "smutty" Yiddish language virtually unknown in Jewish society because of the "old-guard haute Yiddish group." While this might play well now, how will it look ten years from now in reruns? And if it looks good, or even better, then, where will society have been?

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



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

The meaning of Zion

Historically, a place is named for a feature or event associated with it and rarely for euphony. A cow-crossing at a river is called "the ox-ford," and a town arising there "the town at the ox-ford" or "the ox-ford town" or "the Ox Ford." As the town grows more important, its name supplants its own original meaning: "the Ox Ford" becomes "Oxford," pronounced "oxfud," and the cow crossing is forgotten. So too with "Zion."

Zion first appears in II Samuel 5:7-9, where we read "David captured the citadel of Zion," moved into it, and renamed it the City of David. Its ruins lie halfway up the southern spine of the Temple Mount. Later, Solomon built the Temple and "assembled the elders of Israel ... unto ... Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion" (I Kings, 8:1). Thus, at that time, Zion denoted the city below the Temple, not the Temple or the hill.

But what was the original meaning of Zion? Its underlying Semitic root is *tsadi-yod-nun*, which in Hebrew means "to stand out." And Jerusalem does stand out for Jews. In Arabic, the root means "enclose with walls," is consistent with the layout of a citadel.

In New Babylonian, *tsiyÇnu* means "incense." Interestingly, *tsiyÇnu* exactly matches the Hebrew *Ṭsiyon*, since Babylonian "Ç" always corresponds to Hebrew "o." In Old Babylonian *siyÇnu*, with a simple "s," means a "temple." Though *siyÇnu* and *tsiyÇnu* evoke the Temple and its incense, the name Zion predates the Temple.

But other evidence confirms the linkage between Zion and incense: In Hebrew, the Temple Mount is called *Har ha-Moriah*. Hebrew *mor* and Babylonian *murru* denote the fragrant resin, known as myrrh, produced by the *commiphora gileadensis* tree. Myrrh is the key ingredient of incense. Native to the hills of Gilead which lie across the Jordan River, myrrh trees also grew in parts of Judea. The name *Moriah* can be understood to mean "incense place." Thus, "Zion" and "Moriah," which evoke the earliest days of our people, carry echoes of an era even more ancient time, when the hill on which the Citadel of Zion stood was covered with myrrh trees.

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

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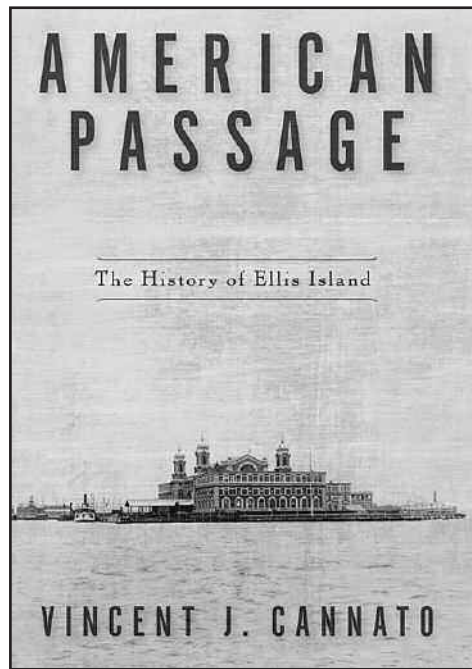
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Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Story of Ellis Island

American Passage. By Vincent J. Cannato. New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 487 Pages. \$27.99.



In 1881, pogroms in Russia led to the departure of many Jews. From then until the beginning of World War I in 1914, a total of two million Jews arrived in the United States, mostly through Ellis Island. The history of that famous port of entry is carefully and thoroughly recounted in this book.

The initial immigration station, beginning in 1855, was Castle Garden, a former concert hall at the foot of Manhattan. The battle for and against immigration was fiercely joined at Castle Garden and persisted for many years long after Castle Garden was closed in 1890, having received eight million immigrants during its 35 years of service.

In 1892, the new immigration station on Ellis Island opened for its first newcomers. The heated debate between immigration restrictionists and immigration defenders continued. The Supreme Court greatly influenced the argument by holding that Congress and the executive branch had complete authority over immigration, giving courts little say over who could or could not enter the country, thus elevating the importance of the authorities at Ellis Island.

The first immigration commissioner at Ellis Island was Colonel John Weber, who had fought in the Civil War and later became a congressman. The secretary of treasury, who had jurisdiction over immigration, asked Weber to investigate immigration and he traveled to Europe, coming back with a sympathetic report on the plight of Russian Jews, joining those who favored immigration and opposing those hostile to immigration. Some insisted that the newcomers would become productive citizens while others claimed that they were Europe's refuse who would

only become cheap labor. The Boston Brahmins were against immigration and one of them organized the Immigration Restriction League which had many prominent members including Harvard's president, A. Lawrence Lowell, who later advocated a quota system to limit the number of Jewish students. The League urged that Ellis Island officials administer a literacy test to those seeking admission to the United States.

Immigration commissioners and their deputies were appointed as a consequence of political patronage. Their disputes with each other over immigration policies spilled over into their relationships with Treasury Department administrators. How to handle the immigrants at Ellis Island became a bone of contention with accusations of dictatorial behavior and sexual misconduct. Questions about who decided who was admitted became a source of scandal as complaints mounted about the mistreatment of immigrants. As president, Theodore Roosevelt became involved in immigration policy, shifting his view to a pro-immigrant position. The "melting pot" versus "cultural pluralism" argument became part of the discussion.

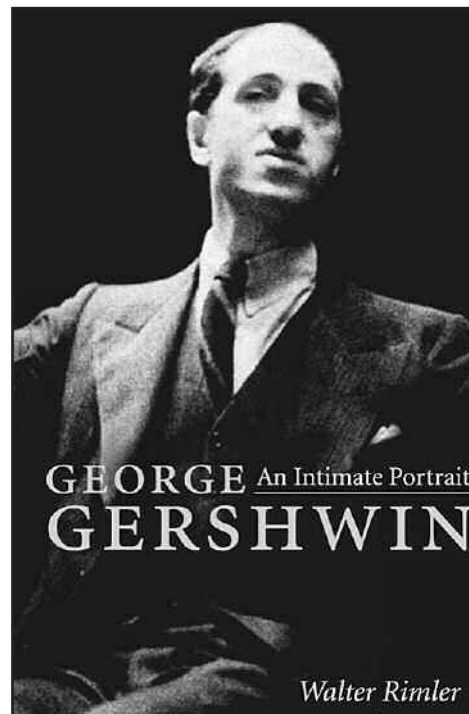
Immigration quotas in the early 1920s severely curtailed immigration, reducing the need for Ellis Island until it became a place for detaining aliens during the Cold War. At that time, references were made to Ellis Island as a "concentration camp." Finally, in 1954, to solve the public relations problem, Ellis Island was closed, having seen 12 million people in its halls during its 72-year life span. It could contribute nothing to contemporary immigration issues with new entry gates at the Mexican border and the John F. Kennedy airport. Today, Ellis Island is a museum, commemorating its significant contribution to our nation.

Author Cannato is a history professor in Boston who wrote a previous book about John Lindsay as mayor of New York. Although the minute details he presents here are sometimes superfluous, by and large, he has done an excellent job in presenting the Ellis Island story.

Biography contains unused source material

George Gershwin. By Walter Rimler. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009. 240 Pages. 33 Photographs. \$29.95.

During his short life from September 1898 to July 1937, George Gershwin composed enough popular and classical music to warrant being called one of America's greatest musicians. Adding to the number of existing biographies, Walter Rimler, author of two previous books on music as well as articles and short stories, justifies another account of Gershwin's life by his having discovered previously unused source material. Weaving together these new letters and interview records with his diligent research, Rimler has produced a lively narrative that captures Gershwin's musical



triumphs and failures as well as the tragedy and the achievements of his brief life.

Born to Russian Jewish immigrants, Gershwin was the second of four children. Raised on the Lower East Side, Gershwin became enamored with music at the age of ten when he heard a fellow-student play Dvorak's *Humoresque*. He began to use the family piano, originally bought for his older brother, Ira. Despite their limited means, his parents recognized that George had talent and arranged for him to get music lessons. By the age of 15, he dropped out of school to work in the music business and six years later, he wrote *Swanee* which earned him thousands of dollars. In 1924, after composing for several Broadway shows, Gershwin wrote and was the pianist for the original presentation of *Rhapsody in Blue* which brought him considerable fame. Wealthy and successful, he bought a five-story town house near Riverside Drive and moved his parents and siblings into it.

Living the happy life of a celebrity, Gershwin met James and Katherine Warburg in 1925 and soon began an affair with Katherine that lasted on and off for the rest of his life. James (Jimmy) was a member of the well-known Jewish banking family and Katherine (Kay), who was not Jewish, was a composer who came from a musical family. The couple had been married for seven years and had three daughters but followed the ethos of the Roaring Twenties with limited marital restraints.

Gershwin, similarly not bound by his affair with Kay, had numerous romances none of which led to marriage. Although he was not observant, practically all of Gershwin's friends were Jewish, making Kay an outsider. Even after she divorced Jimmy Warburg, Gershwin and she did not marry. They separated in 1936 when George moved to Hollywood to write songs for the movies with his brother, Ira. There, Gershwin complained about fatigue and headaches that were initially misdiagnosed as emotional in origin until it was recognized that he had a brain tumor.

An effort to get Dr. Walter E. Dandy of Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, America's best neurosurgeon at the time, failed but it didn't matter because the tumor proved inoperable and Gershwin died on July 11, 1937.

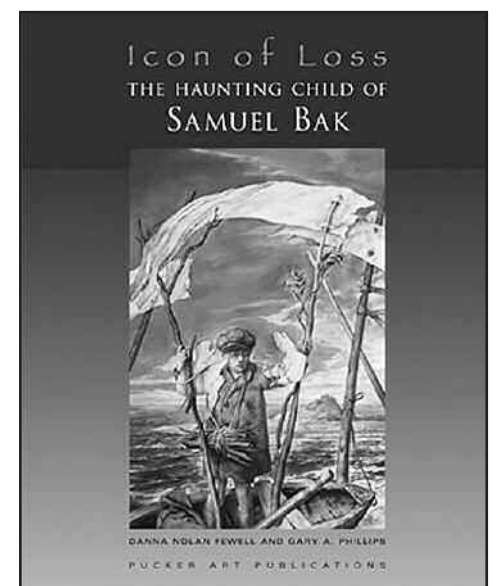
Interestingly, about a year later, author Thomas Wolfe was taken from Seattle, where he had become ill, to Baltimore for Dr. Dandy to operate. Although this time, Dr. Dandy did perform the surgery, it was too late and Wolfe died on September 15, 1938 just before reaching his 38th birthday about the same age as Gershwin.

In addition to his many show and movie tunes as well as his concert music, Gershwin is known for the folk opera, *Porgy and Bess*, considered by many to be his greatest contribution to American music. Rimler tells the story of its composition at great length. He also mentions the failed efforts to write a Yiddish operetta and an opera based on *The Dybbuk*, S. Ansky's supernatural story. Rimler explores Gershwin's troubled relationships with his family, especially his mother and Ira's wife, his sister-in-law.

This energetically written book adds to our knowledge of a superb composer who, unfortunately, died too early.

Art of Samuel Bak

Icon of Loss: The Haunting Child of Samuel Bak. By Danna Nolan Fewell and Gary A. Phillips. Boston: Pucker Art Publications. Distributed by Syracuse University Press. 100 pages. \$50. Color Illustrations.



One of the most noteworthy pictures to emerge from the Holocaust was taken in April-May 1943. It depicts a terrifying scene in which a group of Jews – mostly women and children – having been forced out of their hiding places, await their deportation to a death camp. They stand in the street with their hands up as Nazi soldiers, with guns, carry out the operation. Slightly apart from the group, a young boy in an overcoat, wearing short pants and knee socks, stands in partial isolation with his hands in the air. The expression on his face shows his anxiety (see Teicher, page NAT 15)



Kosher Kuisine

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Dips or Spreads for New Year's Eve

When the girls were small, our home became the place for friends to gather on New Year's Eve. Most of the time it was dips or spreads and pita chips or crackers around 9 p.m., a nice light supper around 10:30, watch New Year's Eve in New York on TV at 11 our time, and dessert and champagne just after midnight. If you like that pattern, you are welcome to use it and here are some new dips and spreads to start off your evening.

Deviled Egg Spread (10 servings)

I just got this from the Food and Wine website by Katie Lee, and thought it was a great idea to copy with several modifications!

- 12 hard boiled eggs
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp. Dijonaise
- paprika

Cover eggs with water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cool 25 minutes. Drain and cool under cold water. Shell eggs and halve. Coarsely chop half egg whites. Place in a bowl. Place remaining white and yolks in food processor with mayonnaise and Dijonaise and process a few seconds. Add to chopped egg whites. Place in serving bowl and sprinkle with paprika. Serve with pita chips, crackers or toasted bread points.

Shmil's Pumpkin Appetizer (6-8 servings)

Shmil is the owner and chef of our neighborhood restaurant, housed in a building that once belonged to the train yards and can be seen from the balcony. This was recently created by him and re-created by me.

- 2 cups fresh peeled, raw pumpkin
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. tahini
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 crushed garlic clove
- 1/8 tsp. lemon peel

Preheat oven to 325°F. Place pumpkin in a pan with olive oil. Bake in oven until soft. Peel pumpkin and mash in a bowl. Add tahini, lemon juice, garlic and lemon peel.

Tuna Fish Balls (12-16 balls)

One of the contributors to my cookbook for our synagogue gave me this recipe and we love it. She got it from a friend in England who made it during World War II.

(see Kaplan/Recipe, page NAT 15)

Jews in Sports

Pigskin Yes – Pork No Olshansky is the Cowboys' Sampson

By MARVIN MIGDOL

Special to the Jewish Post & Opinion

DALLAS – As the Dallas Cowboys went into their Dec. 6 game against the New York Giants, Igor Olshansky remains one reason why the team sits atop the NFL's East Division and destined for the playoffs. Olshansky made 23 tackles in the first 11 games. He is a defensive end player especially awesome against the run and was recently lauded in the *Dallas Morning News* sports section.

His Jewish pride includes having twin Jewish Stars of David tattooed across his shoulders. Be careful if someone utters an anti-Semitic slur. They would have a 6'6", 315-pound Sampson to contend with. And don't call it a pig-skin – he doesn't eat pork.

Olshansky was born in the Ukraine in 1982. He's the first Soviet-born player in the NFL. At San Francisco's Chabad-run Hebrew Academy, he met the then 9-year-old girl he was to marry one day, and they now have three boys. "It is important for me to lead a Jewish life and build a Jewish home," he said.

His first sport was basketball. His coach told him, "Look, Igor, when you get to the baseline, drive for the basket. It'll be like Moses parting the Red Sea – the water will open up and there won't be a soul in the way." He was a leading football defensive force for the University of Oregon Ducks.

In the 2004 try-outs for the draft, he amazingly bench-pressed 227 pounds 41 times and then 43 times on a second try. He has run the 40-yard dash in 4.9 seconds.

Getting married in a traditional Jewish ceremony in 2005, imagine his friends struggling to lift Olshansky overhead in a chair to meet Liya, his similarly raised wife!

Did you know that Marv Migdol is a speech writer as well as a PR and marketing consultant? ★

First Israeli to play in NBA game

By ARI J. KAUFMAN

In June 2009, with the 23rd selection in the NBA draft, the Sacramento Kings made Omri Casspi the first Israeli to be selected in the first round of the draft. (He isn't the first player an NBA club has drafted from Israel; Doron Sheffer, who attended college at Connecticut, was picked in the second round of the 1996 draft. He elected to play professionally in Israel). Upon his debut with the Kings in November 2009, Casspi became the first Israeli to actually play in an NBA

game. The 21-year-old, who actually toyed with the idea of entering the NBA draft in 2008, is among basketball's youngest players.

Casspi was born just south of Tel Aviv in the city of Holon, and grew up in Yavne, part of Israel's Center District. He dabbled briefly in tennis and soccer, but the man who now stands 6 foot 9, focused on basketball by age eight. His mother, Eilana, played on the Israel national team, and therefore spurred his interest. Casspi's pro career actually began in 2005 at the age 17, when he signed with Maccabi Tel Aviv. In February 2009, just a few months before he came to America, Casspi finished fourth place in voting for the "Europe Young Men's Player of the Year Award" for the 2008-2009 season.

Asked weeks after drafting Omri Casspi what he saw in the Israeli that made him a first-round draft pick, Kings' general manager Geoff Petrie, said, "We thought that he was the best player available for the needs we had to fill. We have seen him play now for a couple of years...We saw him at the European championships, and the workouts he did here in Sacramento. He is still young and has a lot of room for growth. When he was available for the 23rd pick, we were really happy."

Casspi himself was really happy as well. "When Sacramento called out my name, it was the best moment of my life," he told the *Canadian Jewish Tribune* in November. "A historic day for me and Israel all wrapped in one."

Omri, who was in Israel during the draft having also just completed his required service in the Israeli army, immediately signed a three-year contract.

A *USA Today* article this summer reported that Americans are apparently trying to make Casspi comfortable. Though Sacramento has a small Jewish community, its members have been a big help. When Casspi arrived in early August long before the season began, the Jewish community welcomed him with open arms, advising him on where to live, helping him rent a house, and providing guided tours of California's capital city.

"They called me, and they took me out to see the city and they arranged a house for me to rent," Casspi told the nation's largest newspaper. "When we got to Sacramento, we didn't know anything; but thanks to people in the Jewish community, everything is good now. We have been treated very well by them and all Kings fans."

He'll live in Sacramento with his older brother, Eitan (25), also a former hoopster that played on Israeli club teams and who now runs the Web site Casspi18.com.

"It has always been Omri's dream to be in the NBA, so in a way we are both living that dream right now," Eitan said. He's come along to help Omri on this American odyssey to make the transition run smoother, sharing a car with him, taking control of his brother's off-court responsibilities.



Omri Casspi scores on a dunk during a game against the Portland Trail Blazers. Photo from his Web site: Casspi18.com.

"I go back home, my brother is there and we can speak in our own language. I can talk about my ups and downs and he listens," Omri said in December. "He supports me in everything I do."

Omri also expects to see friendly faces in different American cities. When he travels to areas with large Jewish populations, he hopes plenty of fans will be waving Israeli flags.

In his first game on Oct. 28, 2009, Casspi was an immediate success, scoring 15 points in only 19 minutes, making 7 of 9 shots. Afterward, he told the Jerusalem Post, "I'm not concerned with peripheral issues. I'm very focused, working very hard, keeping my feet very much on the ground. I know what I need to do, I know how I need to work. I'm always preparing for the next game. Life in the NBA is very fast and we still have 81 games to play."

Asked later by an interviewer from Army Radio whether the grandeur of the occasion had dawned upon him during the game, Casspi admitted that the significance of his achievement had occurred to him:

"When I was in the dressing room, I sat and thought about where I had started...I saw in my mind everything that I had gone through...and I said to myself: 'Wow, I'm sitting right now in the dressing room of an NBA team; around me are NBA players of the highest caliber in the world; I'm going to compete for the first time in an NBA game, which will be on the highest level I've ever played; and I'm making history for our country, being the first Israeli player.'"

As of Dec 27, 2009, Casspi is averaging an impressive 12 points and four rebounds per game in just 25 minutes of action. He scored over 20 points in three December games.

Kaufman is a military historian with the Indiana War Memorials Commission in Indianapolis. ★

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EDITORIAL*(continued from page NAT 2)*

examples she gives: “He raised two sons alone,” “She would have been a wonderful singer had her family been able to afford training for her,” “This political leader whose policies I dislike probably believes he is right, just as I believe I am.” These people are human beings with at least one thing we all have in common: We are all doing the best we can.

Wishing people well, means that Boorstein is no longer afraid of them. She has stopped holding them at emotional arm’s length. This relieves her of the sense of needing to be on the defensive and that makes her feel better. She says this exercise does not make her suddenly start liking this person, but it makes her realize that forgiveness and goodwill are her most reliable refuge.

One important point she makes in the book is that these exercises are an ongoing process that one has to continue working on throughout his or her life, but one will notice progress along the way. The best part of this book is not included here because of space limitations. It is filled with wonderful stories that help explain the lessons. What a great way to learn complex teachings!

Jennie Cohen 12-30-09. ★

PODET*(continued from page NAT 7)*

others are wrong). Such a presentation could have been confusing to novices, but it has been done in a manner that makes clear the points of disagreement and, in my opinion, leaves the general impression that the authors were probably the Essene sect described by Flavius Josephus. This is in any case the prevailing opinion of the scholarly community.

One finishes the exhibit, of course, in the gift shop, as museums always plan to have one end such a tour either in the gift shop or the restaurant. But one searches the shop in vain for a CD of the exhibit, or a copy of the virtual tours of the Temple or of Jerusalem. That is because this exhibit came to Toronto directly from Israel and will be returned directly to Israel from Toronto. Amazingly enough considering the planning and work that has gone into it, this is not going to be a travelling exhibit but a one-time-only presentation.

One must hope that the controversial Israel Antiquities Authority, which authorized the loan of materials and which helped plan the exhibit, will appreciate how popular and influential this exhibit already has been and how many people have lined up to see it. One hopes they will reconsider their decision and turn this into a travelling exhibit, along the lines of the travelling King Tut exhibit, for the great museums of America and the West.

The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit is at the ROM through early January 2010.

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com. ★

BIENSTOCK*(continued from page NAT 9)*

was born in Germany but always felt there was something different about his identity. It was only recently that his father revealed to him that he, the father, was born as a German Jew. The son decided to convert to Judaism as a middle-aged man. His wife, the saleswoman, decided to convert as well. They were recently remarried in a Jewish wedding ceremony. Her husband read the *haftorah* last Shabbat in synagogue.

We left Berlin on a dark, cloudy day in the midst of a snowstorm that paralyzed traffic. Today, contemporary Berlin can worry about traffic snarls instead of the evil of Nazism and Communism. Twenty-first century Berlin is a symbol of triumph over the horrors of the 20th century – the genocide of the Jews of Europe and the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union. I often gazed upon the Hanukkah menorah, which stood by the Brandenburg Gate, the symbol of the city. It was next to a Christmas tree, on a plaza by the American Embassy. Berliners are eternally grateful to the United States for their role in creating a democratic Germany. In fact, some 250,000 Germans showed up to hear Barack Obama speak. The Reichstag, once associated with the diabolical plans of Hitler, now has a shimmering new dome on it. Checkpoint Charlie, once the symbol of a divided city, is now a quaint tourist spot. Today, the Berliner may be a Vietnamese man from Hanoi, a Romanian student from Bucharest, or a Russian Jew from Moscow. The ethnic and cultural diversity of today’s Berlin laughs at Hitler’s vision of “a master race”.

Yes, there are many shadows in Berlin from the past, just as they are many clouds in the Berlin winter. However, there is much light. I hope that the light I witnessed in Berlin will shine upon this city and grant it a future of peace and understanding.

Rabbi Bienstock serves Congregation Shaarey Tefilla in Carmel, Ind., a suburb of Indianapolis. ★

SILVER*(continued from page NAT 9)*

“The building is definitely a turning point for this congregation, and it has helped establish our presence as a viable member of the faith community.

But fund raising is a struggle, the economy is difficult, and we’re a small congregation. At the same time, you can’t help but feel pride every time you see the lit sign on the front of the building, even though most of the people who see it are not Jewish,” she added, smiling.

When Cramer speaks to her Rotary Club, she always injects a bit of Jewish wisdom: “I feel a responsibility to my faith to lead a moral life, especially since I am in the public eye, without being preachy or judgmental. But the Jewish community has to ask itself, ‘How important is my

Judaism?’ I hear so many people say that it’s important to them to have a congregation, but they don’t support it,” she said. They are at a critical juncture: A part-time secretary currently networks the congregants, and there are programs through the week, including Sunday School. But, she adds, “a full time rabbi would contribute to long-term sustainability.”

Cramer was married Oct. 18. She was given in marriage by Green, and Gray performed the ceremony – colorful characters, they are, as the Jews of the Mountain of Peace grow into a new challenge. (www.har-shalom.org)

Matthew Silver is a freelance writer, researcher, and musician living in Indianapolis, Ind. ★

TEICHER*(continued from page NAT 13)*

and fear. No one knows for sure whether or not he was among the one and a half-million Jewish children massacred in the Holocaust especially since, in 1982, there was a claim that he had survived and was living in New Jersey. Regardless of whether this assertion is true or false, the picture has become an emblem of the Holocaust.

Artist Samuel Bak, himself a child survivor of the Holocaust, decided to paint images of the Warsaw boy in different settings and different forms to commemorate his image in “impossible memorials.” Bak was born in Poland in 1933 so that he could be the same age as the boy in the photograph and in his paintings. After surviving both Soviet and Nazi occupation, Bak wound up in a displaced persons camp in Germany and then studied painting in Munich. In 1948, Bak emigrated to Israel where he became a student at Jerusalem’s Bezalel Art School. After serving in the Israeli army for three years, Bak moved to Paris for further study. He then spent more than 30 years living in Europe, Israel, and New York until 1993 when he settled in Weston, Mass. where he now lives.

Although Bak began painting the Warsaw boy in the mid-1990s, most of the images presented in this book were completed in 2006–2008. Reproduced in glowing color, the pictures show the boy in many symbolic representations: leading a procession; coming through architectural ruins; at a Masada-like fortress; as a conscripted laborer; like Isaac about to be sacrificed; escaping in a hot-air balloon; under severed or rootless trees; and holding up the broken tablets from Mount Sinai. Bak makes full use of his stellar creative abilities to capture fully the horror of the Holocaust through his imaginative depictions of the Warsaw boy.

The explanatory text that accompanies the vividly colored illustrations was written by two Bible scholars, Danna Nolan Fewell of Drew University in New Jersey and Gary A. Phillips of Wabash College in Indiana. Each has published a

number of books on the Bible and they collaborated in 2008 to produce *Representing the Irreparable: The Shoah, the Bible, and the Art of Samuel Bak*.

While their comments on the pictures are helpful, they often appear a few pages before or after the actual illustrations so that readers have to scurry back and forth to match the commentary with the pictures. As the entire book is less than a hundred pages long, it could readily have been extended by a few pages in order to match the text with the pictures.

The book includes an interview with Samuel Bak that appeared in a 2004 book by Richard Raskin, titled *A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study on the Life of a Photo*. Also included are a brief list of important dates in Bak’s life, a tabulation of selected exhibitions, a record of the public collections in which Bak’s work appears, and a short bibliography.

The authors have rendered a useful service in presenting these pictures which build on a well-known photograph to elaborate imaginatively on the fearfulness of the Holocaust.

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

KAPLAN/RECIPE*(continued from page NAT 14)*

11 oz. can tuna
2 beaten eggs
2 small grated onions
salt and pepper to taste
6–8 Tbsp. matzah meal
oil

In a bowl, combine drained tuna, eggs, onion, salt and pepper. Add matzah meal to bind and add more if needed. Form into small, bite-size balls. Heat oil in a pot. Deep fry balls. Serve warm or cold.

Vegetarian Chopped Liver*A classic that we never tire of!*

1–2 tsp. margarine
1 medium chopped onion
1 tsp. chicken soup powder
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts
1 large can peas
3 hard boiled eggs

Heat margarine in a frying pan. Sauté onion with chicken soup powder until soft. Place onion and margarine in a food processor. Add walnuts, peas and hard boiled eggs. Process until just blended. Spoon into serving bowl.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, food columnist and feature writer who moved from Overland Park, Kan., to Jerusalem in September 2008. She has just completed compiling her ninth kosher cookbook 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. ★



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

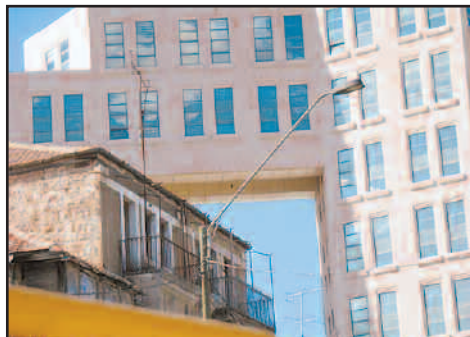
Jerusalem – never dull

Jerusalem has always been a city more enjoyable for pedestrians than drivers, but recently, even those of us who take pride in walking it find ourselves stymied by unexpected walls and barriers. Olmert's light-rail is a bit heavy on the feet.



Some of the architecture is rather surprising, and sometimes incongruous, compared to its neighbors. At least this Jaffa Street building isn't in a windy location.

At first I didn't follow what was happening here, as I crossed from Binyanei Ha'uma to the Central Bus



Station. Then I listened. The man was an archaeologist digging for "buried treasure." He was explaining to the interested passersby about what had been discovered.



As the saying goes: Only in Jerusalem!

First Israeli haircut

More from the saga of my father's new life in Israel, after making aliyah at 89.

My father has been in Israel about two months already. Originally I figured that my mother would be here by now, but she feels she must be in New York to sell the house. In the meantime, we keep my father busy here in Shiloh, occasionally visiting my married daughter in Ofra and her family, my father's great-grandchildren. This week was only his second trip to Jerusalem. Even by car it's a big trip for him, so we prefer local entertainment. Yes, he's very pleased with his haircut.



Are there really 613 seeds in a pomegranate?

The basis of Jewish Life is *Taryag Mitzvot*, the 613 Mitzvot, G-d given commandments. There's a tradition

that each pomegranate fruit contains 613 seeds. No, I've never bothered counting them, though others claim that fame. But one thing I did notice: Humongous pomegranates, like those sold at the very end of the season, have a large proportion of inedible white. Take a look at the fruit I photographed just below.



Now, look at this fruit, photographed in the same size bowl. It's a smaller fruit, but it has a larger proportion of seeds, and the seeds are what we eat and get juice from.



This makes it pretty obvious to me that there may be the same number of seeds in each pomegranate fruit, 613.



Reversal, going back, the essence

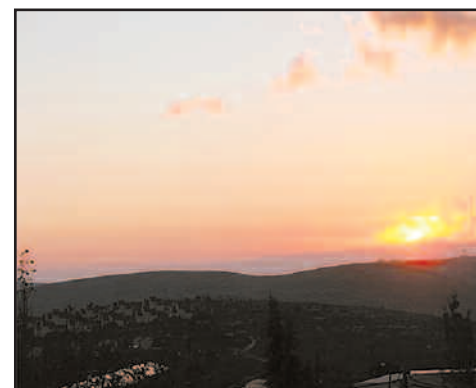
More in the saga of taking care of my very elderly father. My father has surprised us on Shabbat by joining in the Friday night singing of "Shalom Aleichem." Actually, he also surprised himself: "I must have known this when I was a kid," he said.

He didn't grow up in a very religious home from what I understand. They were strongly Jewish, but not religiously observant. Here in Shiloh, in my religious home, he's being exposed to a life style, which isn't all that familiar. But for the man who was proud and happy to be called "The Jew" on the enormous United States Navy ships during World War II – the only Jew who admitted being of that very minority religion – he's amazingly comfortable here. His essence is Jewish, no doubt.

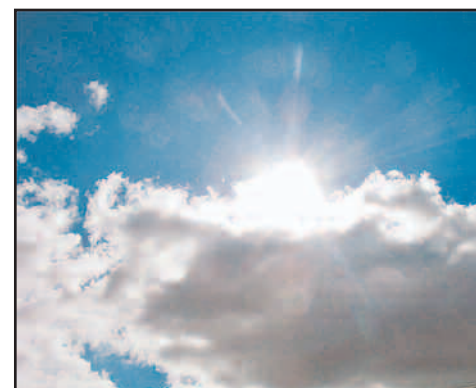
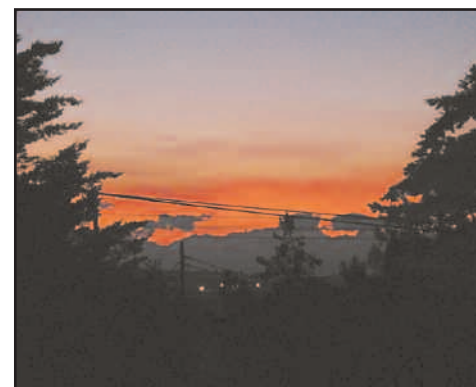


Picture the sky

For sure the sky over Shiloh is the most gorgeous in the world, especially during the winter.



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. ★



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