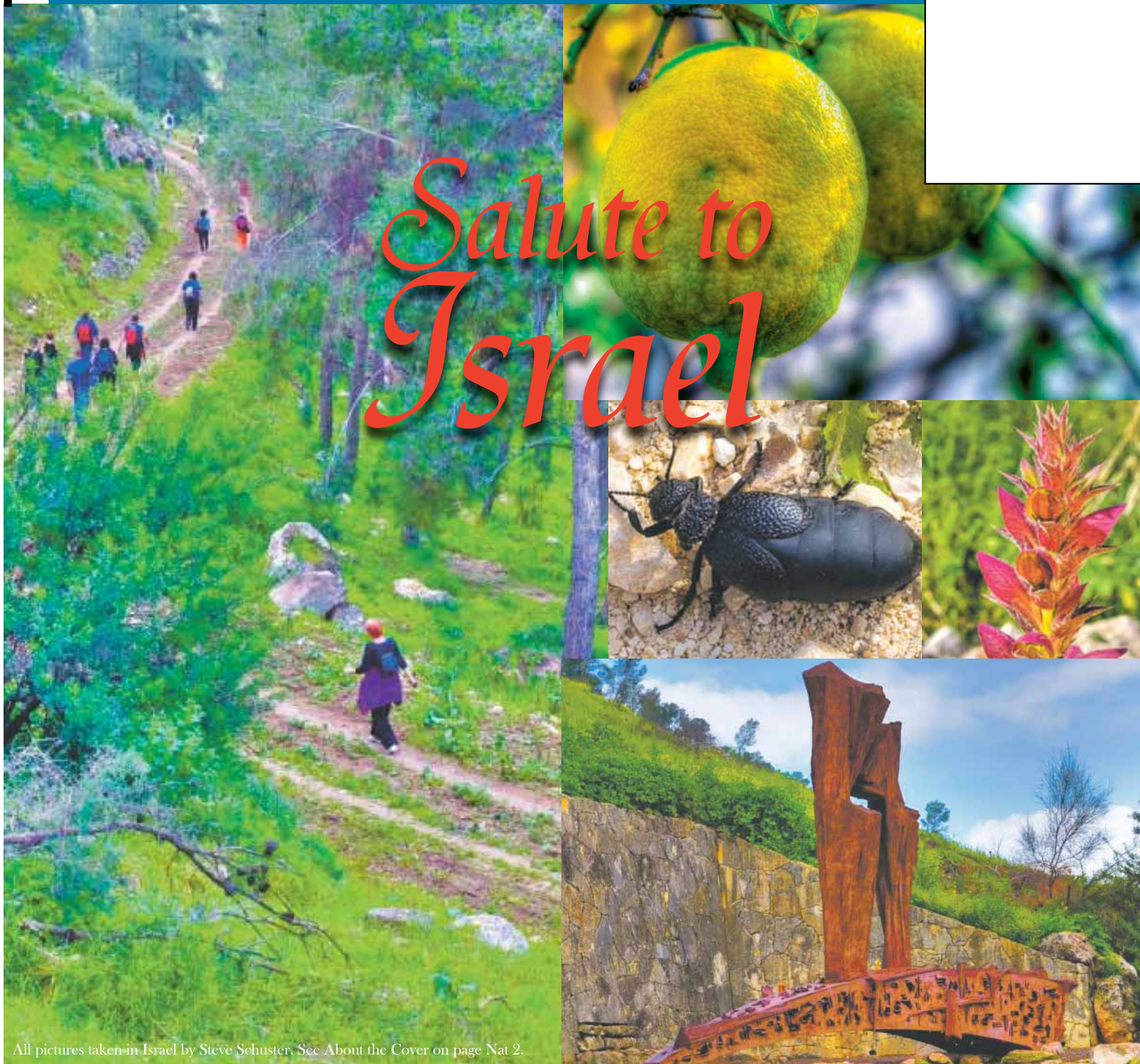


The National Jewish
Post & Opinion

Volume 76, Number 16 • May 19, 2010 • 6 Sivan 5770 Two Dollars
www.jewishpostopinion.com

*Salute to
Israel*



All pictures taken in Israel by Steve Schuster. See About the Cover on page Nat 2.

Editorial

Many thanks to all of you, dear readers who wrote, called, made donations, and emailed with suggestions for the newspaper. It was heartwarming to see how much the newspaper means to so many of you. One of the letters from Stephen Jackson, M.D., of Monte Sereno, Calif., can be read on page NAT 9.

In case anyone else would like to contact us or make a donation, we have moved. Our new address is: 1111 East 54th St., Suite 119, Indianapolis, IN 46220. We also have a place on our Web site on the Subscribe page for donations: www.jewishpostopinion.com/subscribe.html. Our telephone and fax numbers are the same, but our new email address is: jewishpostopinion@gmail.com. We welcome your comments and suggestions as well.

One of the phone calls came from a local woman who would like to help us celebrate our 80th anniversary by inviting our writers who mostly live outside of Indiana to come to Indianapolis to meet with our readers. This will take place the weekend of Aug. 13-15, 2010.

Of course anyone who is interested will be invited to come to Indianapolis to meet the writers who will be teaching or reading from their work. Once I know which writers are able to attend and as more details are finalized, I will be including them here, but for now this is a save-the-date message.

One of the suggestions from you, dear readers was to publish less frequently. At least for the summer months of June, July and August, and while we are preparing for the anniversary celebration with the writers, we will be publishing once per month instead of biweekly. In September we will most likely resume our biweekly publishing or possibly go to every three weeks instead.

The following cute letters to God written by children have been shared with many on the Internet and were sent to me by Marvin Migdol of Dallas. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I did.

Dear God:

Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't you just keep the ones you got now? ~Jane

I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that okay? ~Neil

I think the stapler is one of your greatest invention. ~Ruth M.

If you watch in Church on Sunday, I will show you my new shoes. ~Mickey D.

If we come back as something, please don't let me be Jennifer Horton because I hate her. ~Denise

I would like to live 900 years like the guy in the bible. ~Love, Chris

In bible times, did they really talk that fancy? ~Jennifer

If you give me genie lamp like Alladin, I will give you anything you want except my money and my chess set. ~Raphael

We read Thomas Edison made light. But

Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

May 14, 2010, Bamidbar
(Numbers 1:1-4:20), 1 Sivan 5770

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, gave a public talk at Conseco Fieldhouse this morning. He doesn't do these kinds of public talks very often, but he does come to central Indiana, mainly to Bloomington, where his late brother founded the Indiana Buddhist Center. This public talk was co-sponsored by the Indiana Buddhist community and the Interfaith Hunger Initiative on whose steering committee I sit as one of the co-founders.

Because hunger is one of the Dalai Lama's great concerns, especially for the hungry children of the world, the Dalai Lama supported sharing the surplus of this event between the Buddhist community and IHI. The Interfaith Hunger Initiative was awarded more than \$60,000 today from this event. One half will go the Gleaners Pantry Partner program and the other half to support the school lunch program in Eldoret in the Umoja Province of Kenya. At the cost of \$18 per child, we can offer school lunch to another 1,666 children. Though the talk was wonderful and inspirational, the outcome of so many people coming to hear the Dalai Lama is even more amazing for those of us who try to work on behalf of those unable to feed themselves and their children.

The Dalai Lama knows he is just a human being like you and I, but his experiences have brought him deeper understanding to the world. He talked about wisdom and compassion and said that these attributes come to us through our own experiences, but that religion, any religion, can help make this world a better place.

in Sunday School, they said you did it. So I bet he stole your idea. ~Sincerely, Donna

If you let the dinosaur not be extinct, we would not have a country. You did the right thing. ~Jonathan

Please send Dennis Clark to a different camp this year. ~Peter

I think about you sometimes even when I'm not praying. ~Elliott

I am American. What are you? ~Robert

Thank you for the baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy. ~Joyce

I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it. ~Nan

Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother. ~Larry

While most of these simply made me laugh, I thought the one by Elliott set a good example for us adults.

Jennie Cohen, May 19, 2010. ★

Though the Dalai Lama is a very special person to the citizens of this world, sitting right across from him, in the second row, I also felt his humility despite being surrounded by security and adoring Buddhist supporters. He loves to laugh and give a wink of the eye. When he came into the room for a group picture, he just beamed and smiled at us. We were instructed not to say anything or even reach out a hand. He looked at us and said peace in a few different languages including Arabic and Hebrew. Then he reached out his hand to people near him and faced the camera, and the official photographers took pictures.

Let me share one thing the Dalai Lama spoke about, and that is beauty. He said that there is external and internal beauty. What is most important is what is inside us and that is the inner beauty. This is nothing new. We learn as a child that you can't judge a book by its cover. All human beings have an inner beauty, but not all access it or let it guide their lives.

Often, when I am asked about the Jewish belief of the messiah, I explain this by saying that this notion of the messiah is in each of us. It doesn't rest with someone else, but is in each us. This notion of the messiah is the goodness in each person, and that if we would all just let this messiah be our strength, the world would be a healthy and peaceful place. The messiah is our inner beauty, but just leaving it there without activating it doesn't do the world any good. I believe that our inner beauty must shine in the face of all we meet. I believe that the Dalai Lama, who sat on his sofa on the stage, 20 feet from me, would agree.

When you light your Shabbat candles, light one for His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who is a light unto the nations. Light the other for the possibility each of us brings to this world to make it a better place.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ★

Chassidic Rabbi

By RABBI BENZION COHEN

In my column from Feb. 10, 2010, I wrote about doing yoga and keeping kosher. When I was 17, I practiced yoga. One aspect of yoga is to be careful not to hurt anyone or any living creature. I became a vegetarian and stopped eating meat or fish or any other living creatures. For the first time in my life I was pretty much keeping kosher, without even trying. I didn't mix milk and meat or eat any meat at all.

One of my readers asked two difficult questions:

"What happened to this mitzvah? You stopped doing it and chose to eat things that are bad for your body?"

This is a complicated issue. Indeed, in the year and a half that I practiced yoga, my life went through some great and wonderful changes. I discovered Hashem; I discovered my soul; and I began to see the beauty of the Torah way of life. I dropped out of Hebrew University and started learning in the Lubavitcher Yeshiva in Kfar Habad. A few months later, I started to eat some meat and fish, mostly on Shabbos. What changed my mind? Why did I stop being vegetarian? I had discussed the issue with my teachers and friends in the Yeshiva. They explained to me why we eat kosher meat and fish.

To understand this, we first need to understand what we are doing here on this world, why Hashem created us in the first place. Look around. Hashem made a world that is huge, amazingly complex and beautiful. Of all the different things that He created, only one has free choice, man. We are always standing at a crossroads. We have to choose which way we are going. Are we going to do the right thing or the wrong thing? Are we going to make the world better and help others, or are we going to just worry

The National Jewish

Post & Opinion

www.jewishpostopinion.com

Editorial and sales offices located at
1111 East 54th St., Suite 119, Indianapolis, IN 46220
office: (317) 972-7800 • fax: (317) 972-7807
jewishpostopinion@gmail.com
Address correspondence to:
1111 East 54th St., Suite 119, Indianapolis, IN 46220

The Jewish Post & Opinion
Published biweekly by
The Spokesman Co., Inc.
(USPS 275-580) (ISSN 0888-0379)
Periodicals postage paid at
Indianapolis, IN

All circulation correspondence
should be addressed to
The National Jewish Post & Opinion,
Subscription Department,
1111 East 54th St., Suite 119, Indianapolis, IN 46220.
Postmaster send address changes to:
The National Jewish Post & Opinion,
Subscription Department,
1111 East 54th St., Suite 119
Indianapolis, IN 46220

Publishers Gabriel Cohen, z"l Jennie Cohen	Advertising Director Barbara LeMaster	Accounting Vivian Chan
Advertising Sales Mary Herring	Graphic Design Charlie Bunes Crystal Kurz	Editors Jennie Cohen Grechen Throop

Subscriptions \$36.00 per year, back issues \$2.25, single copies \$2.00.

All advertisements designed and prepared by The Jewish Post & Opinion are the sole property of the newspaper and may not be reproduced without the consent of the publisher. Copyright © 2005 Spokesman Co. Inc. All rights reserved.

about ourselves, and make the world worse? Are we going to love or hate? Are we going to be nice or nasty? Every time we make the right choice, we fulfill our purpose in life to make Hashem's world better and holier by doing good, by living a life of Torah and mitzvahs.

Now we can understand why Hashem created man, in order to make His world into a good and holy place. But what is the purpose of the cows, the goats, the chickens and the fish? By themselves they can't make the world any better, but they can assist man to do the job. We can't learn Torah or do mitzvahs unless we have strength, and we won't have any strength unless we eat. It is true that eating a lot of meat isn't healthy, but a little organic meat is good, especially chicken soup, which is famous for making people feel better. And many types of kosher fish are also healthy, especially salt lox (in moderation). Fish and meat also assist us to enjoy festive meals to celebrate and observe Shabbos and holidays, bar mitzvahs and weddings. These are important mitzvahs.

But soon we will all stop eating meat and fish. In fact, we won't eat anything at all.

Every mitzvah that we do brings the world closer to perfection. We are almost there. In the past 3,800 years, we have done countless mitzvahs. Soon the world will finally be perfect.

This will happen in stages. The first stage is the coming of Moshiach and the complete and final redemption. Moshiach will bring peace to the entire world and eradicate all evil. We will all live in peace and prosperity. Nothing will disturb us from learning Torah and doing mitzvahs and coming closer and closer to Hashem. At a later stage we will reach the level when we won't need to eat anything at all. Our life and sustenance will come to us directly from Hashem.

Right now it is up to us to do these last mitzvahs. The world is almost ready. We just have to put on a few finishing touches, to bring our long-awaited redemption. Add some Torah and mitzvahs today, to bring Moshiach now!

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

About the Cover

Steve Schuster is a past-president of Temple Sinai in Worcester, Mass. He and his wife, Julie, have four children and six pets who were rescued from the streets in Israel. A writer and engineer, Steve is CEO and founder of Rainier, a leading PR agency for technology companies, including more than 20 Israeli firms. Steve travels to Israel every three months on business and is deeply committed to providing a voice in North America for Israel's innovation economy. Steve has BSEE and MBA degrees from Northeastern University and is an avid musician, hiker, photographer, gardener, and fitness enthusiast. ★

Parsha Perspective



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

Leading to God's Miracles

In *parasha* (weekly Torah reading) *Korach*, we read about Korach's insurrection against Moses and Aaron, essentially against their mission from God. Our traditional Torah commentators conclude that Korach may be fairly characterized as an aberrant leader, because he deviated from the proper and expected path of Israelite leadership.

Apart from examining Korach's individual aberrant behavior, however, it's also important to consider why so many people were susceptible to leaders who would misguide them. We suggest the most compelling explanation is that, following the incident with the spies, the people were demoralized by the prospect of never entering the land and perishing in the wilderness. Their shattered morale produced a crisis of faith, allowing self-serving leaders an opening to distort social realities convincingly – defining goodness as evil, benefactors as enemies, success as failure, and so on.

It was a moment in the early history of our people when there was a crucial need to rekindle faith in God's commissioning of Moses' leadership and his mission. The people were grumbling about leaving Egypt – after the death of Miriam, there wasn't any water to drink (Numbers 20:2-5) – so God spoke to Moses and said:

"Take the staff [which he had used to perform the miracles in Egypt] and gather the congregation together, you and Aaron your brother, and speak you to the rock before their eyes that it shall give forth its water, and you shall bring water for them out of the rock..." (Numbers 20:8).

Water from a rock?! If this isn't convincing, renewing the faith of the people, nothing will be. It's arguably conclusive proof that Moses is doing the will of God.

God tells Moses to speak to the rock, but instead he *strikes* the rock, two times – and thereby seals his fate to die in the wilderness.

Moses was given an opportunity – by declaring that water would flow from the rock – to demonstrate conclusively that he was acting as God's agent, that God had neither abandoned him nor the people.

But the possibility of water flowing from the rock didn't exist because Moses struck it or the people threatened to return to Egypt. Moses was without any extraordinary powers of his own; he could no more make water flow from a

rock than you or us. And water doesn't flow from rocks because people threaten to backslide.

God's purpose seemingly was to demonstrate that He had led them to a location where He had already created water, which was ready to burst forth at a particular moment as a perfectly naturalistic event. A miracle of supernatural proportions was not required.

Apart from the consequence Moses suffers for failing to follow what he himself regards as God's instruction, there is an important lesson here for leaders of the Jewish people. What we think of as miraculous events are often only such in respect to the time and place when they occur. For example, the separation of the Reed Sea to allow our people to escape the Egyptians is not, in itself, a miraculous event.

Consider this relatively recent description of the "opening" of the Chesapeake Bay:

"I wanted to share with you an extraordinary event I was fortunate enough to witness yesterday. On Monday night, the same storm that delivered the snow to New England made itself felt here on the eastern shore of Maryland. Throughout the night there was a strong east wind. When I awoke, the Chesapeake Bay had receded at least 30 feet, laying bare the dry land.

"The wind held back the wall of water as I watched my neighbor climb down a ladder, walk around the docks that just hours ago had hovered over the water. The dry land extended as far north and south as the eye can see, and it remained that way all day. Parts of it were so dry that the wind kicked up dust storms from what is usually thick black mud.

"The water that separates this island from the mainland a little further north was also blown back and one could truly walk across the channel to the next town. It truly was a wonder and I'm grateful to have been privileged to have this gift, especially so close to Pesach."

What made a similar event miraculous some 3,000 years ago is that our leader, Moses, led the "mixed multitude" to such a place at such a time that they were able to escape their oppressors.

What is extraordinary is that, all together, we are at the right place at the right time – by virtue of our faith.

Moses was moved by God to lead the people to the right place at the right time, where water would emerge from a rock – which in itself hardly seems extraordinary if one has done any backpacking.

It was an opportunity to witness the miraculous quality of God's "nature," to see what is always present in nature if we live according to what our tradition calls the *derekh hayashar*, the righteous path of faith that is the shortest route between any two worthwhile points in life.

Why were the consequences of striking instead of speaking to the rock so severe for Moses?

The rabbis have been discussing this question for two millennia:

He didn't follow what he himself regarded as God's instructions (Rashi);

He lost self-control, becoming angry and referring to the people as rebels, implicitly suggesting that God was angry with them, which the text gives us no reason to believe (Rambam);

Moses questioned rhetorically, "Shall we bring forth water?" (Numbers 20:10) giving the impression that he and Aaron, not God, had the power to produce water (Rabbi Chananel); and

Moses didn't perform the task in a way that the people would *see* – *internalize* the knowledge – that God would give them whatever they needed to do His will (Chiddushei HaRim).

Another reason may have been critical in that it was the underpinning of all the other possibilities: Moses may have had a loss of faith, become demoralized by the backsliding and grumbling of the people, and momentarily he may have doubted the outcome of God's mission.

It brings us to an important point for all of us as leaders – *all* of us, because at one time or another each of us is obliged to lead by contributing our unique gifts to the congregational community.

So what does it mean to say that Moses – or we – have a loss of faith, which prevents us from leading? To ask the question positively, what does it mean to act on our faith? What does it mean to take the righteous path that may lead us to the right place at the right time to find the miraculous character of God's nature?

We identify at least two kinds of faith:

One type of faith reflects a belief that God has created within us the wherewithal to believe that *God can act* in ways that are entirely outside of our reason and experience. Here "leap of faith" means *we set aside our reason and experience* to believe that *God will create* greater goodness in the world.

A second type of faith reflects a belief that, because of what God has created within us, *we can act* in ways that are entirely outside of our reason and experience. Here "leap of faith" means we allow *ourselves to create* greater goodness in the world *even though our reason and experience reject that possibility*.

Most of us experience both types of faith to a greater or lesser degree; they're not mutually exclusive.

If we *act* on our faith, ignoring our reason and experience, keeping to the *derekh hayashar* and choosing to accept God's nature fully, we will be doing everything possible to lead ourselves and others to those times and places where God's miracles are waiting for us – as the water was waiting for Moses and the people in the wilderness.

© 2010 Moshe ben Asher & Khulda bat Sarah Magidah Khulda bat Sarah and Rabbi Moshe ben Asher are the codirectors of *Gather the People*, a nonprofit organization that provides Internet-based resources for congregational community organizing and development (www.gatherthepeople.org). ★



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Sivan began May 14

Praise be to God. The month of Sivan, the month of fulfillment, the month of creativity, the month of love, arrived on Fri., May 14. The holiday of Shavuot, the holiday of commemorating the receiving of the Torah, takes place May 18–20.

Kabbalistic Forecast for the Month

"Sivan is one of the most beautiful months spiritually and physically. Just as the trees and flowers are blossoming, so are we. Sivan is a time of gaining clarity of vision, discovering one's life purpose and receiving guidance and direction on actualizing our personal life goals. A wonderful time for travel, Sivan is also a time of increased love and intimacy. This is demonstrated by the giving and accepting of the Torah that could only occur during this month. A covenant between the Jewish people and God, the Torah is an expression of love, commitment, dedication and intimacy. It is an everlasting partnership, likened to a marriage. Interestingly enough May and June that correspond to Sivan have always been a popular time for weddings.

"It is said that when the Jews received the Torah, they were of one heart, so unified that they were likened to one being. In the Torah passage that describes Israel's encampment at the foot of Mount Sinai at the time of the new moon in Sivan, the word "encamped" is in the singular rather than the plural form. It is this unity that enabled the Israelites to receive the Torah. Sivan is a wonderful time to deepen existing relationships and open ourselves to meeting new people whom we will be able to draw closely to our heart this month. There is an openheartedness in Sivan that makes it easy to communicate and bond with many different kinds of people." (*Kabbalah Month by Month.*)

Astrological Sign: Gemini is the energy that does not want to be contained. Mercury, the ruling planet for Gemini, was the Roman messenger of the gods who flew from the heavens to Earth. Similarly, the Torah, given in this month, is the messenger between heaven and Earth. People born under this sign are thought to be mercurial, quick to move from place to place, physically and mentally. Geminis want to leave the Earth and fly to the heavens. Geminis are creative and skillful communicators. The planet of Mercury is associated with communication and intelligence." (*Kabbalah Month by Month.*)

In case some of you are wondering, "Judaism does embrace astrology, teaching that we are born under a certain constellation and with a certain

destiny. Our sages say that the length of life, number of children, and sustenance depend not on merit but on destiny. Yet it is also said that Jews are not subject to astrology. Rashi, the great Torah commentator said that prayer, charity and mitzvot can improve our mazel and this is what is meant when the Talmud says, "Jews are not subject to astrology." (*New Age Judaism*, page 101.)

Torah for the month: Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the receiving of the Torah, culminates the completion of the journey that began on Passover, the holiday commemorating the departure of the Jewish people out of Egypt. The Jewish people left Egypt, not just to leave a place of bondage, but to receive the Torah and enter into the holy land of Israel. The purpose of the Exodus was not simply to become a free people living in the Land of Israel, but to be a people who would love, know and serve God. It is not that God needed or needs our love and service, but through our love and service to God, we human beings receive the greatest good. According to our teachings, the desire of God was and is always to bestow goodness upon all of creation.

As Rabbi Moses Luzatto said in his book, *The Way of God*, "Since God desired to bestow good, a partial good would not be sufficient. God alone is the only true good, and therefore, His beneficent desire would not be satisfied unless it could bestow that very good, namely the true perfect good that exists in God's intrinsic Essence. ...Even though created beings can not emulate God's perfection in this own right, the fact that they can be attached to God allows them to partake of it. ...They can thus derive the greatest pleasure from that true good to the greatest degree possible. The purpose of all that was created was therefore to bring into existence a creature who could derive pleasure from God's own good, in a way that would be possible for it."

When God finished creating the world, the Torah tells us "God saw that it was good." After God created Adam, the Bible reveals that "God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good." The human being was different than other creatures and was capable of receiving the greatest goodness. What distinguished the human being? Rabbi Moses Luzatto, in his book, later explains that the gift of free will was what made the creation of the human being "very good." It is our free will, our ability to make choices that makes us unique among all the other creatures.

God blesses everyone and everything, but the greatest blessing is our free will. That is because God wants our heart to be an offering, not a compulsion. For this reason, God is hidden until we learn how to choose. If God was not hidden, we would have no choice but to love God, for we would be overwhelmed by God's love and goodness. With God's (see Ribner, page NAT 13)



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

Making sense of the economy

This week Goldman Sachs is taking hits for making money by "short selling" Goldman-made securities while our economy was melting down. This morning the *Wall Street Journal* reports, "Investors are profiting on the woes of cash-strapped cities and towns by buying derivatives that essentially short-sell municipal debt."

It is hard to keep up with the terms, much less the rules of how money is made in an entrepreneurial society. The very traits of greed and risk that made our country grow, are now coming back to bite us in the butt, and especially at a time when we are all hurting from lost assets, it is hard to know where to turn. Economics is not as much of a science as it is an art, and economics by committee does not sound like a very good idea.

Now that toxic assets have replaced toxic waste in our daily papers, where are we supposed to look for solace?

Well, there is always Jewish humor. Have you ever heard the stories about Max Poppel, the business legend? Some say they called him Hoppel Poppel, and that every story is absolutely true. Others, well how do you really know in a folk legend that tells the story of "Chelmer wisdom"?

Here is just one of the famous stories attributed to Mr. Poppel. Hopefully, along with a smile, it will give you some insight into fact that really nothing is new.

Mr. Poppel was a regular fixture on the Lower East Side. Visually, he looked like Stubby Kaye, the great character actor and singer in *Guys and Dolls*. He was the heavy-set actor who sang "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat."

Anyway, people on the street, stopped Max when he was walking by to hear about his latest offerings and to see if they "wanted in."

On this one occasion, someone stopped Max who was literally running by. Panting and out of breath, he agreed to tell about an amazing deal he was working on. He had come into ownership of six railway cars of sardines. These were not regular sardines, but the creme-du-creme of sardines. According to Max, they were sought after by the same people who bought the finest caviar by the ounce. Max took a prototype can from his pocket. It was packaged in foil, and had attributions from royal families.

The man asked the price. It was dear, and Max was unrelenting about selling the whole lot in one single sale. As a

HLF prisoners sent to Indiana and Illinois special prisons

BY MARVIN MIGDOL

DALLAS – Four former leaders of the Holy Land Foundation, previously found guilty for providing substantial aid for Hamas terrorists, have been sent to higher level federal prisons for security. They went from a Dallas suburb to incarceration in Indiana and Illinois.

Ghassan Elashi, Shukri Abu Baker, Mohammad El-Mezain and Mufd Abdulqader were in a low-security prison. El-Mezain and Baker are now imprisoned in Terre Haute, Ind., and Elashi and Abdulqader are in Marion, Ill. Another guilty Arab, Adulrahman Odeh, who had a lesser role in funneling millions to Hamas terrorists, is in an Adelanto, Calif. prison.

The new prisons have tighter security and closer monitoring of inmates' phone calls and mail. All prisoners speak English well and are required to communicate in English with outsiders. They had hoped to be closer to Dallas for appeals.

Abdulqader formerly worked as an engineer for the City of Dallas. A professional coworker recently told the P-O that the "charity" leader appeared to be a good worker.

Marv Migdol has interviewed numerous entertainers and other personalities for 41 years. He can be reached at fmigdol@gmail.com. ★

favor, Max agreed to give him three hours to put the money together. It only took an hour. The deal was hot.

Those six railroad cars of sardines became the talk of the Lower East Side, and groups formed on every street to get a piece of the action. It was a frantic few weeks. By the time it was over, Max had done six more different deals.

Then on a Monday morning, the story broke. After 16 deals, the owners had decided to stop selling the cars and start selling the sardines. Buyers were lined up. It was the sale of a lifetime. But when they opened the first can, they were distraught to find that the sardines were inedible. They tried other cans, other lots, but it was all the same.

And the deal began to unravel, one level to the next, and ultimately to Max, who like our contemporary bankers, like Goldman Sachs was incredulous at their dismay and outrage.

According to eye witnesses, Max, cool and confident, defended the sale by asserting that these sardines were for buying and selling, and were never intended for eating.

So, I ask you, has anything changed? Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc. His e-mail is howkar@wi.rr.com. ★



Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Is Judaism Green?

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

Read any newspaper today and you will find stories about the problems that are being created by global warming, water, air and soil pollution, destruction of ecosystems and rain forests and of course, our dependency on oil. But human abuse of our Earth is not a new issue or one that has developed solely as a result of technology. Sadly, man's instinct to destroy the natural world dates back to Biblical times.

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

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

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

In attempting to answer these questions, we need to look at the purposes for which man was created in the first place. Our first answers are found in Genesis

1:28, where we learn that man was put on the Earth to "fill it and conquer/subdue it" and in Genesis 2:15, where our divine purpose is "to work it (the Garden of Eden) and to guard it." Our marching orders seem clear, or do they?

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

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

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

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

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

The Jewish view of our environment mandates that we balance our needs against our excesses for two important reasons: First, because we are bound to



An Observant Eye

By RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

The mic is always on

The British election campaign just ended would seem an unlikely source for a Torah teaching moment, but there it was.

One of the blows the Labour Party absorbed in the days preceding the election was precipitated by Prime Minister Gordon Brown's mistaken assumption on April 28 that the microphone he was wearing during a campaign stop was turned off.

The device had just finished recording an encounter Mr. Brown had with a mildly disgruntled voter, on the issue of immigration. After the polite interaction, Mr. Brown returned to his campaign car, forgetful of the fact that the microphone was still faithfully doing its job, and groused to staff members about the "bigoted woman" with whom he had just been forced to speak.

With the speed of electromagnetic waves, of course, the comment became part of news reports worldwide.

It was only days earlier that Jews accustomed to studying a chapter of "Pirkei Avot", or the tractate "Fathers", each spring and summer Sabbath, pondered the words of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi (2:1): "An eye sees and an ear hears, and all of your actions are in the record written."

The sage (known, too, as "Rebbe") wasn't referring to the media, of course, which does in fact sometimes capture (but sometimes misses and sometimes gets wrong) at least some of what at least famous people do or say. The "eye" and "ear" in Rebbe's teaching are metaphorical, Divine ones; the record, filed in a realm far removed from the earthly. And the subjects of the surveillance and reports are each of us.

But Mr. Brown's experience was nonetheless a reminder of that deeper truth, and of the fact that it is easy to become oblivious to the fact that

all life on the planet and have an obligation to sustain it and second, because we are obligated to future generations to leave this world better than we found it. There is no better time than now to embrace that challenge.

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

everything we say and do is of concern to G-d – or, put otherwise, has meaning.

It's not that we harbor some inner atheist. It's just that there is a yawning gap between recognizing something intellectually and completely internalizing it as a compelling truth. In the prayer Aleinu, which ends every Jewish prayer service, we quote from Deuteronomy (4:39): "And you shall know today and restore to your heart that Hashem is G-d, in the heavens above and on the earth below..."

The "knowing today," commentators note, is apparently insufficient. Our belief in G-d's omnipotence and omniscience has to be "restored" to our hearts – internalized constantly – to truly affect our actions and our essences.

That was the message inherent in the strange blessing the tannaic sage Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai offered his students as he lay dying. The Talmud (Brachot 28b) recounts that he wished them that "the fear of Heaven be to you like the fear of flesh and blood."

"That's all?" they exclaimed, incredulous at their teacher's apparent confusion of priorities. The sage's response: "If only!"

"Think," he continued. "When a person commits a sin in private, he says 'May no person see me!'" And yet, of course, he is seen all the same.

It has often occurred to me that scientific and technological advances can often serve not only practical purposes but spiritual ones. They can provide us important life-messages as we need them.

When a basic understanding of our solar system lulled humanity into feeling it had mentally mastered the sky, powerful telescopes were invented that revealed new and mysterious realms of an incomprehensibly large and expanding universe, and that keep us aware of how little of what's out there we really understand. When the basic structure of the atom was fathomed, particle detectors came along and uncovered a bizarre zoo of inanimate beasts that make a mockery of our commonsense notions. So quasars and quarks keep us humble before the grandeur of Creation.

And then there are other, more mundane but increasingly utilized technologies, like the ubiquitous cameras on city streets or peering at us from our computer monitors, our GPSs, our E-Z Passes or our cell phones, that render us visible and audible where once we may have felt entirely alone. For all their downsides, they, too, are a healthy reminder.

They remind us, as did Rebbe, that even outside the turmoil of a national election, even when we're not on the street or in a car or sitting at a computer, even if we're not famous or of interest to mortal authorities, we are heard and we are seen, and our every action is duly recorded.

© 2010 AM ECHAD RESOURCES

Rabbi Shafran is director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America. ★



Moreinu & Maggid

BY REUVEN GOLDFARB

Anywhere but here and now!

"We cannot cleanse the word 'God,' and we cannot make it whole; but, defiled and mutilated as it is, we can raise it from the ground and set it over an hour of great care." ~Martin Buber, "Prelude: Report of Two Talks," in *Eclipse of God*

"The God you don't believe in I don't believe in either." ~Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, in a conversation with Chogyam Trungpa, 1975

One of the treats of summer vacation – the time of our annual trip to the states from our home in Israel – is the chance to visit with our four children and seven grandchildren. This visit also entails exposure to contemporary Anglo-American culture, especially movies. During our most recent trip, my wife and I observed how on long car rides our grandchildren pass the time by watching videos. On a trip to the Sierra Storytelling Festival, for example, our granddaughter Eliana, then 4 2/3, watched on her own device and borrowed my earphones to avoid distracting the other passengers – her Dad, Yeshayah; her uncle, Elishama, who drove; her *Savta*, my wife Yehudit; and me, her *Zeide*.

However, when we traveled to Vermont with our son Sandro and his four children – Gregorian, 13; Boudicca, 10; Aubrey, 7; and Cassia, 5 – we were all involved in the media experience. Sandro set up his laptop in the space between the two front seats, where he and Gregorian sat, with the screen facing backward toward the five of us in the middle and back rows, plugged the external speaker jack into the van's stereo system, and fired up episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Harry Potter* movies.

Doctor Who is a time-travel adventure series produced by the BBC, starring Daniel Tennant as the peripatetic Doctor Who, who, with his companion or companions of the moment, fires up *his* device, apparently without knowing where it's headed, and spirals through time, landing, with its nondescript public phone exterior disguise, in some other era. The first episode we watched, called "The Shakespeare Code," took the doctor, with the convenient sobriquet of Smith, and his companion, Martha Jones, to London in 1599, where they see the end of a performance of *Love's Labour's Lost*, meet Shakespeare, encounter a trio of witches who are intent on world domination, and, with Shakespeare as their ally, do battle with them to prevent their nefarious schemes from succeeding.

This episode was rather entertaining and clever. The next such episode was much less pleasant. On the way back from visiting Marty and Karen, Yehudit's brother and sister-in-law, we watched "School Reunion," in which Doctor Who and his three companions battle shrieking alien bats who have infiltrated a middle school as their first step in – you guessed it – taking over the world. These sinister aliens, disguised as a school principal and his faculty, attempt to brainwash the young students through some kind of computer program, when they're not kidnapping and eating them. Doctor Who, employed there as a physics teacher, and an undercover investigator, Sarah Jane Smith, a former traveling companion of his who pretends to be a *Times of London* reporter assigned to interview the principal, combine forces with Doctor Who's current partners, Rose Tyler and Mickey Smith, along with K-9, an antiquated in style yet still futuristic "tin dog" (the interactive computer Sarah Jane has preserved – is this getting complicated?), and one student misfit to rout the invaders, in sequences reminiscent of "the dinosaurs in the kitchen" scene from *Jurassic Park*.

But that was not all. During the break between videos, we listened to a couple of chapters from *The Subtle Knife*, the middle volume of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, a vastly better written and more engaging fantasy adventure series (to my mind) than either of the others. Then it was back to the screen, the elaborate special effects, and the heavy mood music. It was *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, with more magical derring-do, life-threatening challenges from the Dark Lord, Voldemort (he-who-must-not-be-named, the former Hogwarts student Tom Riddle), who wants to, yes, take over the world! And, as in the other stories sketchily alluded to thus far, he can only be defeated by a small team of dedicated and often misunderstood allies, key members of which are children, commonly on the verge of – or barely into – adolescence.

On the next weekday, Yehudit and I took Boudicca and Aubrey to see *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, a movie replete with further episodes in the unending struggle of good versus evil. And everywhere I looked, I saw more examples of that summer's thematic trend, such as a poster for *The Time-Traveler's Wife*, a movie for adults, which has apparently garnered some quite favorable reviews. And once I found the first volume in Phillip Pullman's trilogy, *The Golden Compass*, aka *Northern Lights*, I was able to complete my reading of the series, since I started with volumes two and three, *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*. For those not yet initiated into this further example of English fantasy writing, it features travel between multiple worlds, an evil clerical apparatus, exotic creatures

both malign and benign, sinister forces out to strip the life and soul from innocent creatures, human and otherwise, who can only be stopped by...well, you know who – the usual allies – witches, shamans, and children.

Readers of *Lord of the Rings* will recognize the pattern. Even the term used by Tolkien as the epitome of evil, "The Dark Lord," is replicated by J. K. Rowling in her immensely popular series, followed by its equally popular series of movies. All of which leads me to wonder why vast audiences would rather be anywhere but here and now.

In the spiritual arc of my generation, the term "Here and Now," as in Ram Dass's brilliant and influential book, *Be Here Now*, has characterized the search for wisdom. If one could only stay centered and focused in the moment, goes the teaching, one could learn everything one needed to grow spiritually and to cope with the vicissitudes of life. The core of meditation, many teachers say, is to ground oneself in the body, in the space one occupies, with one's breath, and allow thoughts that arise to stream through one's consciousness and out again, neither to grasp nor to resist them. This is a spiritual practice that has enhanced many lives, perhaps proven difficult for nearly everyone who has tried it, but has in many cases become a central pillar in the spiritual life of untold numbers.

And yet, the boredom of this moment and this moment only, what Chogyam Trungpa calls "rage spread thin," the restlessness, and the continual mental recycling of personal obsessions, is intolerable for many, even most, of us. We need, we desire, we crave adventure and meaning, an escape from our stolid and prescribed routines. While many find meaning in working for good causes, raising funds, giving hands-on assistance, and engaging in countless other altruistic activities, everyone wants to be inspired and entertained. The chosen entertainment can be stimulating but not inspiring, in other words, not be the slightest bit edifying. It can simply consist of constant reinforcement of the dreariest clichés – and too often does. One might use that distinction as a benchmark of its worth.

I am convinced that the power of art – of a great poem, story, novel, play, or movie – to uplift and transform the individual who participates in its enchantment, who suspends disbelief and enters its imaginary world – is a critical and defining aspect of human existence, and one essential to our survival, since "without vision, the people perish." Yet one must scrutinize the offerings that appear in the contemporary marketplace to ascertain which are truly beneficial to the consciousness of those viewers or readers who invest their time and money in absorbing them. I will suggest that despite the apparently escapist nature of the entertainments presently drawing attention from a vast public, there are vital reasons for their popular appeal and even some

benefit to be derived from them, could they be closely analyzed and applied.

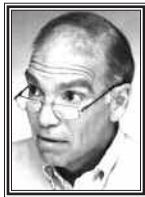
One common thread in these dramas is the threat to the world from demonic forces. What these forces have in common is their sheer selfishness and indifference to suffering. Indeed, they often seem to enjoy the suffering they inflict. These portrayals tap into deep wells of fear. There have always been times when human actors have made self-aggrandizement their primary goal and inflicted death, destruction, and incalculable kinds and degrees of suffering on vulnerable humans and other life forms. Such individuals and organized forces exist today and continue to pose a threat to us. Even Mother Nature can pack a wallop. Her immense power to destroy is seldom far from our awareness. Yet human creatures, employing their intelligence and creativity, can form alliances that allay the severity of Nature's power and mitigate the selfishness of those whose desire for dominance and control drives them to expropriate more than they need, to everyone else's detriment.

The antidote to our justified apprehension is implicit in the role taken by the unlikely and often ill-prepared heroes of the tales dramatized today by the novelist and the screenwriter. Cooperation among natural allies can effectively counter the selfish designs of those who have lost their humanity, who have, in other words, ceased to be compassionate, ceased to empathize with their neighbors. This well of compassion is the segula, or remedy, that can be drawn upon to change the world for the better. Then these journeys to places and times far from the here and now can provide a life-restoring elixir to a world badly in need of it.

I haven't mentioned this so far, but the omission of any reference to G*d in these books and movies is a striking feature. Don't you agree? It's as if the reference has become too embarrassing, too retro, and too irrelevant, not only to the lives of the characters but, more especially, to the lives, values, and belief systems of the readers and viewers for whom the authors and auteurs have fashioned their work. Putting such an arcane, complex, and loaded concept as "G*d" at the center of any adventure story that is designed for today's diverse audience is simply seen as too potentially divisive and commercially risky.

It remains the province of more parochial and sectarian communities who hold by religious certainties but do not necessarily seek to impose their doctrines on society in general. However, if they do, it makes the idea of an omnipotent, omniscient Deity even more suspect. The absence of meaningful G*d references also suggests that the characters in these adventures, who are frequently in life-threatening situations, rely not on G*d but upon their skills, aptitudes, and personal character (bravery, nerve, will power),

(see Goldfarb, page NAT 13)



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

For a bright guy, an abysmal lack of understanding

The Middle East has never been an easy place to figure out. I mean, you have all these clans and sects and intrigue and mistrust and oil. And then there are the Jews. They sit in their ancient homeland, on less than two percent of the land mass of the area. Why all the fuss?

All the fuss is because just as in medieval times in Europe, as long as you can blame the Jews for the problem, people seem to be satisfied and not look at the real causes. So, you can't blame the Arabs that much, they are only taking clues from the Christians over the past five hundred years. But we can fault a seemingly sensible, well-educated law professor who spent a great deal of time on the streets of Chicago for just not getting it.

Barak Obama came into office with preset group of ideas and policies, as do most presidents. You would think that in the past year, despite all the other things he has had to distract him, he would have at least seen the truth in the so-called Israel/Palestine Problem.

While he has chosen the tough route on domestic policy: charging ahead on health care, bank regulation, immigration, and trying to get America back to work; he has fumbled the ball completely when it comes to the Middle East.

He has taken Arabs at their word, not seeming to know that words are tools and weapons in that society. So, his overtures to Damascus have resulted in the building of a nuclear plant in Syria, taken care of by Israel (thank you very much), and the equipping of Hezbollah with scud missiles courtesy of Assad.

He or his advisors have chosen the route of telling Israel to make more and more concessions while leaving Palestinian terror alone. To which, the Arabs rejoice. They have no desire for peace with Israel. None.

Now this administration has gone so far as to complain that Elie Weisel, a *worthy* Nobel Lauriat should not run an ad in the *N.Y. Times*, simply stating a truth: Jerusalem is the Capitol City of the State of Israel. Of all administrations to complain about freedom of speech!

The rhetoric of the president and his secretary of state helps the domestic agenda in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and others to have the American president bash Israel... See, they say, it is the Jews who prevent peace and prosperity, not your own leaders. The new American president says so.

He has even gone so far as to misquote his Middle Eastern commander, General Patraeus by saying that Israel is endangering the lives of American troops. What a load of horse hockey! The Jihadists are attacking Americans for being there. They could care less about some apartments being built in a Jewish neighborhood, whether it is in Jerusalem or Brooklyn.

As one who campaigned for him and hoped he was not too late to undue the damage to basic American values done by the Bush Cheney years, I am shocked and disappointed. Not that he should challenge Netanyahu, not that he try to reach out to the Muslim world, but that he should so ignore history and take this line. To please whom? Toward what end?

Every time the Israelis and Palestinians have sat down together, Israel has come away with less of itself. It gives and gives and the Palestinians give nothing. And come back to the table where the last agreement ended with all the Israeli concessions in hand. Only what Israel has given up. And they start from there.

All this American president has to do is read history. Not even ancient history. Look what Clinton did. Israel gave up a huge chunk of itself, including the historic city of Hebron, burial place of our Sages. From the other side? Nothing. Arafat, that terrorist and thief walked away from the table.

Israel left Gaza, voluntarily. No sit-down negotiations, just left. And what did they get in return? The destruction of an industry in greenhouse agriculture that could have been a kick start to the Gaza economy and rockets raining down on Southern Israel.

Doesn't this new American President read newspapers? Doesn't he have good intelligence from the area? I used to say, well, what you see is only theater, the real stuff is going on behind the scenes. I have come to believe there is no "behind the scenes."

Does Israel really want a successful Palestinian State? Take a look at the so-called West Bank. Israel is working with the business people there, and the economy is booming. Investment and building are going apace. While Abbas is far from a friend of the Jewish People, he is prospering by leaving things alone and letting the business folks do commerce.

Obama's background is one of having the two sides of an argument sit down at a table, negotiate the problems, come up with a solution and then sing Kumbaya. That will not work with Arabs. Again, look at history, just of the past 20 years.

I believe he can do great things for this nation. I believe that he has a vision. So, it is even more difficult for me to understand how he so misreads the situation with Israel.

Somehow, somewhere, he has to understand. Maybe Rahm Emanuel should bring his Dad to the White House to shake some sense into the guy.

Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommu-



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

The wrong Jeremiah is heard

Introduction

I begin by stating that I was born an American. In fact my birthday is Dec. 7, a major date in the history of our nation as described by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his famous "A date that will go down in infamy" sentence in a speech to the Congress of the United States as it declared war on Japan in response to the vicious attack on Hawaii.

I served my country during, what is referred to as, the Korean War era, and was honorably discharged, and even served more years in the reserves. I never saw combat but was stationed overseas as part of my tour of active duty.

I mention all this because I believe that my patriotism and devotion to the United States of America gives me the right to disagree with its policies, not only because of my contributions but also because of my inherent right as outlined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

All this is to help make clear that, sometimes, even religious fervor has a rightful place in the discourse relating to political conclusions and dictates as they affect human dignity and human allegiance. This country was founded on the principle that free men, and women, have the obligation to speak truth even when it is contrary to most opinions. So spoke the Biblical Prophets in helping the people determine their moral requirements.

I speak as a simple human being, dedicated to the betterment of the human spirit in achieving fulfillment and salvation through faith. I am not so arrogant to believe that my voice is the only one that makes sense or deserves to be heard. It is a voice, among many, that seeks justice, not only for my people, but for all peoples. This is *my* calling.

The wrong message

During the presidential campaign, we were told by candidate Barack Obama that even though he was a member and frequent attendee of Pastor Jeremiah Wright's Church in Chicago, he never really heard what he said or accepted what he espoused. What was that? Hate!

His (Jeremiah Wright) sermons



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. ★

demonized the Jewish people and condemned the United States of America using descriptions that are too sick to print let alone speak. His words were not meant to encourage but rather discourage his own people who needed and deserved to be treated with respect. By exhorting these diatribes he, in fact, belittled his flock and showed great disdain for their intelligence.

This Jeremiah stood before his congregation and did not teach about God and love and forgiveness, which are the duty and responsibility of clergy from all beliefs and persuasions, but rather he taught disloyalty and disaffection. The New Testament expounds on the theory that you cannot claim to love God whom you have never seen and hate your fellow-man whom you are in contact with daily. The rest can be found in the dictum: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Somewhere this concept was lost as is his soul.

Sitting in the pews week after week, month after month, year after year, was a member of that congregation, the congregation with the wrong Jeremiah, named Barack Obama. Can anyone, for one instant, believe that we are capable of sitting through these venomous outpourings and not be affected?

Jeremiah, the true Prophet of God, the defender of his faith, the real Jeremiah, preached: "Do not listen what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. 23). When people, claiming to be Godly, speak of alienation, they lead you in paths not directed by God. Such is the man who is called Jeremiah Wright. The wrong Jeremiah is being heard, and for sure the wrong message is being sounded.

We are now witnessing the results of those years of misleading his people. No longer a candidate, no longer saying what people wanted to hear; now President Barack Obama is putting into action the words that have echoed in his mind for these many years. The United States of America is witnessing, first hand, the divisiveness being spewed to a public that has yet to understand, what the true nature of the man, the man who claimed to be devoted to bringing us together, is really all about. And if we disagree we are labeled "racist." The question is really: Who is the racist?

How can we be expected to come together as one people when our leader demonstrates, time and again, the lack of commitment to this concept? You cannot achieve success on the backs of those you condemn. Denigrating one does not give sanctity to another.

The blessing and the curse

To dispel all issues about dual-loyalties, let me here and now state unequivocally that I am committed to the security of our country, to the principles in which it was founded and the concept of pluralism (see Weiner, page NAT 15)



Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Nachas and mechaiyeh

Dear Mr. Funsmith.

You write a lot about games. But you call yourself a funsmith. I was wondering if you could write a little more about fun – especially about the kind of fun that doesn't necessarily involve games.

Yours awfully, Shep

Dear Mr. Shep,

In my attempts to understand fun, and especially to convey that understanding, I find myself very often using two Yiddish words: *nachas* and *mechaiyeh*.

The word "mechaiyeh" describes the experience of soaking in a hot bath. Not too hot, of course. But perfectly hot. Quietly soaking. Not scrubbing. Not even necessarily soaping. Effortlessly afloat in the embrace of penetrating warmth. Finding yourself, from time to time, saying, to no one in particular, except maybe the entire universe: "Ahhh, such a mechaiyeh!"

Of course you can have mechaiyeh-like experiences almost anywhere. A shower, maybe. Even, you should forgive the reference, on the toilet. Of course, you don't need water to experience a mechaiyeh. You can be lying in the sun, on the beach, on your porch. You can be having a massage. You can be sitting still on a hot day in a cool breeze. And then there's that first sip of tea or soup, especially in cold weather or in the morning. And then, in the evening, the simple acts of opening your belt, taking off your shoes and socks, putting on a bathrobe or a soft sweater.

Mechaiyeh comes from the Hebrew word "chai," which means life. To experience a mechaiyeh is to experience yourself becoming more alive, your being being enlivened. Listening to music. Dancing. Holding hands with your spouse, your friend, your children or grands. Ah, such mechaiyehs!

So, if you understand the meaning of mechaiyeh, you understand something else about fun.

Then there's *nachas*. Nachas is fun of a very different kind. It's the kind of fun you have when you're watching your kids at a school play. A funny kind of fun, because you can have it even when you're not doing anything. Fun of the nachas variety is most often attributed to the fun you get from your kids and grandkids, and sometimes even your spouse and parents and friends. You can be playing a game with your kids, and get beaten, both fairly and squarely, and also totally and entirely, and feel good about it. Because it gives you such nachas.



Jews by Choice

BY MARY HOFMANN

Camp: Not just for the summer!

I can't speak for Jewish camps in general, as my experiences have only involved Camp Swig, the URJ camp my kids attended in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and Camp Newman, located in the wine country above Calistoga, Calif. Much as we all loved Swig, it had to be retired a few years ago due to irreconcilable earthquake standards, and its most beloved landmarks were somehow relocated to the newer, more modern, and safer environs of Camp Newman.

How important is camp to kids? As you can imagine (or maybe not), a Merced childhood in a congregation that wavers between 25 and 30 families,



Nachas is the kind of fun where you find yourself actually feeling happy for someone else. Because of someone else.

There are many kinds of nachas. You can get a sense of nachas from walking into your kitchen and just noticing how everything is put away so nicely, everything clean, orderly. You can get nachas just from appreciating things – yourself, your spouse, your kids, your car, even.

Nachas comes from the Hebrew word "noach," which means "rest" or "peaceful" or "comfort." "Accomplished" maybe. It's a kind of fun that feels good, like a mechaiyeh. But it's not the body that gets the good feeling. It's more like nachas is a mechiayah for the soul.

So here we have two kinds of fun, both penetrating very deep into the core of being: the fun of great physical comfort, and the fun of great spiritual comfort. They are the kinds of fun that enrich our lives, whether we are young or old, healthy or not so much. They are gifts, and the more we receive them into our lives, the more fun our lives become.

DeKoven of Indianapolis calls himself a "funsmith" because it's the easiest way he can define the last 40-plus years of his career. He offers humorous and engaging presentations, workshops and classes – all about fun. He coaches people to help make their lives more fun: work, school, games (of course), marriage, parenthood, exercise, healing, toys, recovery, and retirement, for starters. 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. Read more about him on <http://deepfun.com/about.html> or email him at funsmith@deepfun.com. ★

cannot in itself create the total Jewish environment we may want for our kids. But even a small injection of camp seems to have a powerful effect. Case in point:

When my daughter Cathy (who only went to camp a couple of times as a child) was first engaged, the place of her wedding dreams turned out to be the chapel at Camp Swig. Since it was in process of closing when she married in 2003, they had to make do with a chuppah in Merced. However, when Camp Newman decided to resurrect Swig's old Family Camp Weekend last year, Cathy was eager to take her kids.

It was one of the happiest weekends of our lives, even with (maybe especially with) the torrential rains that enabled her 5 and 4 year olds to slosh around with umbrellas to their hearts' content. Families from all over California gathered to share Shabbat dinner and nearly 48 hours of (mostly moist) Jewish experiences together.

So this year we took the men – my John and her Ben and the weather was spectacular. We sang, we danced, we prayed, we ate, we hiked, we did crafts, we climbed, and we ate some more. Our Lyra turned five the April weekend of the camping experience, and the chef baked the most enormous birthday cake I've ever seen, which easily fed the 100 or more people in attendance, who all sang Happy Birthday to her.

Other highlights of the weekend? Aside from the birthday extravaganza...

Discovering the game of ga-ga. Do you know ga-ga? If not, visit a camp or JCC near you and check out the ga-ga pit. I'm told it originated at Camp Swig and has spread like wildfire around the Jewish camping world and is making inroads in Israel.

Meeting the baby pygmy goats in the kibbutz area of the camp.

Our homemade etched hamsas and knotted friendship bracelets.

The songs we plan to incorporate into our own services.

Our guilty pleasure at watching our beloved 6 year old, Aidan (who we had just warned, over and over and over) continue to tempt fate and fall in a mud puddle.

The widower and his three-year-old girl there for their second year without Mom, who were enveloped by every other family there. And the single woman with her adopted daughter who saw a metaphor for their lives in the moment when various folks joined her under her family tallit for a blessing, thus creating an unexpected extended family.

The closing circle. In fact, the closing circle every night which I hope to introduce to our congregation in which we sway, arms about each other, singing the Hashkiveinu.

I have no idea whether or not Family Camp is a common program at the various Jewish camps around the country, but I hope it is. What a bonding experience it is for the families, and what an extraordinary introduction it is for kids when they get to know a place



Second-hand blogs

BY ED WEILAND

Those steps from boy to man

I remember the joy I felt the day I went from "Bar-Mitzvah Boy" to certified young Jewish man. On the morn that I was reborn, father gave me my first shave to make my face free of fuzz. That's all there was to verify I'd passed, at last, into the age of puberty to become the exulted pre-adult role that God had chosen just for me.

A mark of my premasculinity (1935) was the blue serge wool suit my mother bought for me – the best that money could buy. It included a vest, a pair of knicker-style pants to augment the man's long pants, the symbol of my maturity. And a brand new tie.

Fastening the knot in my first tie was an almost catastrophe. It came out wrong every time. My mother and my brother, Hy, tried to tie the tie around my neck but could not. He made it too tight. I started to choke.

"You're making me a nervous wreck," my mom gasped, scared to death. "What if he chokes while reading the Torah?" Mom said, "See, you should listen to me. A Jewish mother's always right. We might as well wait until Pa gets home. He'll do it right."

"In the event he might start to choke he should hide a bottle of wine in his pocket and take a sip. That'll clear his throat," said my father when he got home.

"You make a joke," mom said. "If it happens I might drop dead."

My brother, Hy, laughed and so did mom. "My son can't be a *shicker* on his bar-mitzvah day," mom said.

(see Weiland, page NAT 19)



surrounded by the loving embrace of their parents, grandparents, and the other families there.

I went to an "away camp" once when I was a little girl, and it was a mixed experience, to say the least. The only real positive was that I went with a friend who had been there before. Except for her, I was homesick and miserable and felt like I was on the moon for a long, long week.

The kids who attended Newman's Family Camp weekend, on the other hand, especially those who start young and go annually, will feel like they're going home again when they're old enough to attend on their own.

If camps in your area don't already provide this option, suggest it! It will be a blessing for everyone involved.

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

Letters to the Editor

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

Suggestions for the newspaper

Dear Editor:

I have been a faithful reader of the JPO for decades (cannot recall my first subscription date). I love it and look forward to reading it.

I also am the editor of a scientific journal, the *California Society of Anesthesiologists' Bulletin*, a 96-page quarterly. It used to be monthly, then bimonthly, and now quarterly. The costs have risen, especially mailing, and environmental consciousness has been used as an excuse to eliminate the printed version. However, I have been resisting, although we do now have an electronic version as well.

I soon am sending out a survey to the 3,700 members to determine the future of the printed version. I still believe that a material printed version is valued by many members. It is more transportable, although now many cell phones also carry electronic communications. Obviously, many of the younger amongst us prefer electronic. I believe that they don't read much more than the first paragraphs, if that, and don't digest the material in its fullest fashion (they skim at best except for a few members). I sympathize with your readership demographics (older, not as computer literate, poor eyesight, unable to sit in front of a screen for long periods of time).

So, any suggestions? Well, you might just become a monthly and perhaps increase the size of the issue by a modest amount, if that is possible with your publishing. You could offer an electronic version if that does not become a major expense. And, perhaps be more selective in the articles/authors you publish. I love the book reviews, Neusner, Gold, and Shipley, and Hofmann when she writes.

More of national and international news would be interesting to me, as that has seemed to wane, but then again you need someone to cull the information from sources. I like the front cover art work, but the color may be too expensive? And, what about having some advertising? You might hire someone to secure advertisements and give them a percentage of the "take" as their "salary" (that is what we do with our Silicon Valley Jewish Community News (San Jose)).

You may have to increase the subscription rate a bit as well. Other than that, I would keep a stiff upper lip and keep on carrying on, as best as you can, what your beloved father began and did so well for so many decades.

I am planning to send in a small contribution.

Stephen Jackson, M.D., Monte Sereno, Calif.

A jewel in Jerusalem

Dear Editor:

Ten years ago, in September 2000, a unique program was created at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies in south Jerusalem.

The Pardes Educators Program, which combines advanced studies in Jewish texts with teacher training and offers students free tuition and a generous living stipend during their two-years of study, prepares graduates to become Judaic Studies teachers in North American Jewish day schools.

The program was specifically developed to address a growing demand for knowledgeable and passionate day school teachers to strengthen and enhance the full spectrum of Jewish life in North America. The goal was not just to train more teachers for Jewish day schools but to raise the level of teaching toward a deeper and more intense knowledge of the classical Jewish texts, a passion for Jewish *peoplehood* and Jewish life, and openness to all Jews.

Since its inception, 100 Jewish studies teachers have successfully graduated from the program (in addition to the over 4,000 alumni of other Pardes programs) and the majority have assumed teaching positions in the breadth of Jewish day schools, from denominational to community day schools, across Canada and the United States. Pardes has achieved its objective to produce creative teachers who engage young students through a combination of warmth, intellectual growth, critical analysis and spiritual challenge. In fact, the Pardes Educators are thriving professionally and many have been swiftly promoted to heads of Jewish studies departments and even heads of school.

The Pardes Educators Program was developed with and is funded by a grant from The AVI CHAI Foundation and although similar programs have since been started at other institutions, the Pardes program remains unique in that it includes a masters degree in Jewish education through Hebrew College in Boston, Hebrew language studies, pedagogy training, student teaching and individual mentoring, as well as assistance in job placement.

As novice teachers in the field, graduates of the program also benefit from an Alumni Support Project, separately funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, which offers counseling, mentoring and networking with staff and fellow alumni, as well as ongoing opportunities for professional development and further text study.

Outstanding Jewish Educators are critical for the future of the Jewish people. Pardes enables these passionate soon-to-be teachers to transform Jewish education – one classroom at a time.

Those interested in seeking more information about the program that begins in the fall of 2010 can contact Gail Kirschner at gail@pardes.org.il.

Sherwin Pomerantz, a 26-year resident of Jerusalem in private business, is a member

of the Board of Directors of the Pardes Institute and co-chairs its Development Committee.

One siddur for all Jewish tragedies

Dear Editor:

The RAV, Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik stated that Yom Hashoah should be observed on Tisha B'Av and not on a separate day. It is already becoming confusing. Some people have services on the exact Hebrew date of Yom Hashoah, 27th of Nissan, some the next day, and others several days later. There is no continuity. Now a new date of commemoration has arisen, the liberation of Auschwitz, Jan. 27.

My prediction is that years from now the Holocaust will become a small part of history just like the inquisition, programs, and expulsions.

A Holocaust Siddur will enable Jews in the future to use a text while praying, which will offer *kinot* (elegies), poems, recollections, historical data and commentary by the great rabbis and Holocaust historians. I believe that the Holocaust will eventually become a non-Jewish issue. My fear is that it will not be a discussion involving six million Jews, but rather 50 million human beings. In the future the only day that will be observed with certainty, will be Tisha B'Av.

We should have one siddur that incorporates the various tragedies the Jewish people have suffered through history.

Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth-El in Edison, N.J.

Columnist Miriam Zimmerman responds to Rabbi Rosenberg

Dear Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Rosenberg:

Your letter to the editor raised two issues in me that I would like to elucidate in this space to confirm why I think HaShoah deserves its own special holiday. You cited the Rav, Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z"l, on why Holocaust remembrance should be confined to Tisha B'Av. From the Orthodox Union and Yeshiva University websites, I realize I am way out of my league in pitting my opinions against such an eminent Talmudic scholar and intellectual giant as the Rav. Readers, for a concise and interesting bio of the Rav, go to www.yu.edu/riets/index.aspx?id=23720.

I would like to point out that the Rav passed away in 1993. He could not have foreseen the advances in technology and the impact of the Internet on education and research. I see from your website, Dr. Rosenberg, that you have degrees in communication and education (in which fields I, too, hold graduate degrees).

You are well aware that historically, the invention of new communication technologies has resulted in a democratization and accessibility of knowledge. When the written word replaced oral testimony, eye witness accounts could be preserved. When paper replaced stone, information became much more portable and accessible. Movable type enabled information to be disseminated to the masses. The educated

elite, clergy and nobles, lost their monopoly on information with a concomitant loss of power.

The rise of electronic communication further democratized knowledge. Any man or woman with a camera phone can become a photo-journalist and post images with commentary instantaneously accessible worldwide. Professional journalists no longer write the "first draft of history," rather, everyman and everywoman have the means to compete.

We are seeing cataclysmic changes in the media as a result: The rise of blogs, the invitation to interact with professionals on topical issues online, the increasing prominence of surveys and polls. Whether we like it or not, more and more, the average person's input matters.

Electronic communication technologies make it possible to give voice to all and achieve consensus based on the widest possible array of input data. The election of President Barack Obama, I believe, exemplifies this process; truly he is a "grass roots president," a subject for another column.

In the future, the Halachic process need no longer be controlled by the elite. Already, observant Jewish women have the means to have male study partners without violating modesty laws. They can conduct research, write responsa, and argue with the best without having to appear face to face.

Instead of one man having so much influence over the practice of 20th-century Judaism as the admirers of the Rav proclaim, in the 21st century, many people can, and, I predict, will influence change. Access to knowledge will empower everyman and everywoman. Dr. Rosenberg, you cited only one source, the Rav, to back up your opinion. The rabbis of the 21st century will have to contend not only with the "experts" but also with the wisdom as expressed by the masses.

Someone like me could set up a blog for Yom HaShoah with the purpose of investigating why the Holocaust should have its own dedicated holiday. Anyone could post, chats could ensue, consensus could be achieved. Of course, if I chose to do that, I would use all possible means of persuasion to make the case for Yom HaShoah. Citing one expert will no longer be persuasive.

Another concern is your observation that "the Holocaust will eventually become a non-Jewish issue. My fear is that it will not be a discussion involving six million Jews, but rather 50 million human beings." Solution: Let the International Day of Commemorating the Holocaust on Jan. 27 be for the 50 to 55 million lost during World War II, including the six million.

But Yom HaShoah would be dedicated for Holocaust victims – the Jews. The six million would not have to compete with the other tragedies from Jewish history on Tisha B'Av. Just as we mourn the loss of our parents not only on the anniversary of their deaths but also at four other proscribed times of the year, we can mourn Holocaust victims more than

(see Letters, page NAT 19)



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Yom Yerushalayim

"Ten measures of beauty were bestowed upon the world; nine were taken by Jerusalem and one by the rest of the world." This is read in Tractate Kiddushim 49:2 of the Babylonian Talmud.

May 11-12 was the 28th of Iyar, *Yom Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem Day, the newest holiday on the Jewish calendar, established in 1998 by the government.

From the time King David made Jerusalem his capital, it has remained the eternal capital whether it was conquered by Christians or Muslims or others.

With the War of Independence in 1948, Jerusalem was divided and the eastern section was occupied by Jordan and ruled from its capital, Amman.

On Mon., June 5, 1967, Israel's neighbors challenged her borders. Syria fired at the north and in the air; Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran in the south and sent 100,000 troops into Sinai. Jordan opened fire on Jerusalem.

On June 7, the third day of the Six-Day War, the Israel Defense Forces broke through Jerusalem's dividing wall, fighting against the Jordanian army, which had occupied, desecrated, destroyed and devastated Jerusalem's Old City for 19 years. The Israel Defense Forces liberated and reclaimed the Old City for the Jewish people and made United Jerusalem the nation's capital.

Jerusalem – the holy city

Fact – Jerusalem has always been described and revered in Jewish law. Jews pray facing east to Jerusalem. At the Passover seder, we say, "Next year in Jerusalem."

Fact – For 3,000 years, Jerusalem has been at the heart of the Jewish people. The city has only been divided twice in history – once in the period of the



All three photos by Barry A. Kaplan.

Maccabees, 22 centuries ago; and from 1948 to 1967 when Jordan occupied its eastern part. The only time it was a capital was under Jewish rule.

Fact – The holiest place in Jerusalem for Jews is the Western Wall, the remains of the wall built around the Second Temple and the Temple mount above.

Fact – There is no mention of Jerusalem in the Koran because there is no historical evidence to suggest Mohammed ever visited Jerusalem. Mecca and Medina are Muslim holy sites not Jerusalem.

Fact – It was Arafat's uncle, grand mufti of Jerusalem, in the 1920s and 1930s who concluded for the first time that Mohammed ascended into heaven from the site known as the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. It was he, in the last century, who started the myth that there was a Muslim connection to the city.

Fact – On March 22, 1990 the U.S. Senate unanimously adopted a resolution declaring that "Jerusalem is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel" and "must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected."

On April 30, the House adopted a resolution declaring Jerusalem to be the undivided capital of Israel in language identical to that passed by the Senate.

Fact – In 1995, the United States Congress overwhelmingly passed a law requiring the U.S. government to

move its Embassy to Jerusalem. Presidents, however, may invoke their authority to waive the law based on the "national security" interests of the United States, and this is why the move has not taken place.

In a piece called "A Letter to the World from Jerusalem," the writer says:

There was a Jerusalem before there a New York. When Berlin, Moscow, London and Paris were forest and swamp, there was a thriving Jewish community here. Three times a day, we petition the Almighty: "Gather us from the four corners of the world, bring us upright to our land; return in mercy to Jerusalem, Thy city and dwell in it as Thou promised."

For the first time since the year 70, there is now complete religious freedom for all in Jerusalem. For the first time since the Romans put the torch to the Temple, everyone has equal rights.

Let me add, in conclusion, Jerusalem has been a remarkable city for 5,000 years. What other city can say it has been fought over by Babylonians, Macedonians, Seleucids, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamelukes, Turks, British and Jordanians! All have left their impressions upon the city.

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither! May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not count Jerusalem the greatest of my joys."

Tributes to three Jerusalem friends

Jerusalem Day is this week, but I am saddened by the loss of three Jerusalem friends who will not be recognized and who will not receive any special commendations. There is an old saying that bad things happen in threes, especially events of bad luck like deaths coming in groups of three. Now I believe it.

Just last month, I received a text message and a phone call from the son and daughter of an old friend of more than 30 years telling me their dad had just died.

Mel Millman came to Israel from Brooklyn in the late 1960s I believe. I met him and his Israeli wife, Chanita, about 30 years ago, and they were part of a once-a-month soup evening we created. He was a high school biology teacher and a poet. I kept contact with them and when we decided to come here to live, they were wonderful answering questions, sending us their budget and being helpful.

To me, Mel was a strong, outspoken, dynamic man, very beholden to his wife, Chanita, a strong, outspoken Israeli. When we returned, we noticed Mel seemed slower and thinner. It wasn't until last year that his wife told us he had Parkinson's. I had already told him he needed to write his autobiography and I'd help with the editing.

We all felt so excited that Chanita, whose hearing loss was severe, had undergone a special implant in one ear, and her hearing had not only been restored, but she and I could talk on the telephone after all these years!

One day I learned from Chanita he had fallen, hit his head and had surgery. After a month in Hadassah hospital he was sent to another recuperative facility but from her descriptions, it sounded as if he were in some kind of comatose state.

The shock of hearing he had died was painful to me. Within a short time of his death, his second grandson was born. I am so sorry he did not write his autobiography; I think there was a lot to Mel that we didn't know and that would have been nice to know. His son said they hope to collect his poems and publish them for friends.



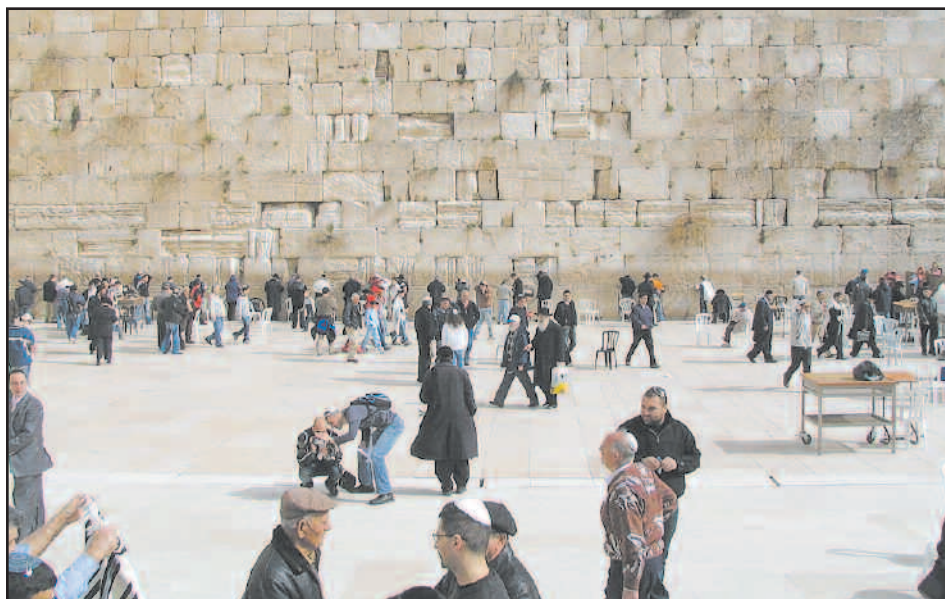
Not too many weeks passed when the daughter of my friend, Pat Limor, called to say her mom had just died. She and I had spoken just a few days before and she seemed to be winning her battle with cancer. She had spent several months in a hospital last year, and now was home with a caregiver; she was driving and trying to recuperate and still deal with the loss of her husband, Moshe, the year before.

Thirty years ago, Pat and Moshe were neighbors, but she had worked at the *Jerusalem Post* as well. Theirs had been a real romance. She had come to Israel as a youngster from England, met handsome Israeli Moshe and they married. Moshe was very articulate and intelligent and worked with the Ministry of Education.

Then Pat and I kept contact while I was gone, and she worked at the Bible Lands Museum gift shop. On my first trip back, she was my driver and guide, part of the time, enjoying the reliving of what I had done in the years before, as I was writing my autobiography of my 10 years in Israel in the 1970s. When we returned to live, we learned Moshe had Parkinson's and had slowed down. Mentally, he was as sharp as ever.

After he died, we spoke often, but she couldn't bring herself to come and visit. She spoke of her son in England and his two children as well as his daughters by his former marriage; her son and his family and daughter and her family in the Tel Aviv area. She was very devoted to the family. I miss her British accent and her insights.

Now yesterday, the husband of a friend going back to when I lived in New York in the 1960s, called to say she had died. Dr. Ruth Frankel Kolani. Yad Vashem has an album of her childhood memories, "No Child's Play." She and her parents fled Germany and Austria, (see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 19)





Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

Sondheim himself on Broadway and Folksbiene turns 95

The estimable Stephen Sondheim, as it happens, is a very private man, and scanning his biography, one comes to understand why. He was born in New York of Jewish parents who were divorced when Sondheim was a child. His mother, anything but loving (from his own accounts), tended to foist him upon neighbors. Fortunately, when mother and child moved to Pennsylvania, those neighbors happened to be the noted Broadway lyricist Oscar Hammerstein and his wife. The pair became Sondheim's surrogate parents – and thus shaped his future life and career.

Though Sondheim may be an elusive figure his career certainly is not. He is known and praised throughout the world for having shaken and reconstructed the Broadway musical – bringing a dark and contemporary meaning and a new style of music to the time-honored genre.

But now, at last, Sondheim is revealed in the new Broadway show *Sondheim on Sondheim* – a show that has been conceived and is directed by James Lapine. Sondheim chats with the audience throughout the evening, leaning back at his desk, discussing his work, friends, life, mentors. All on video, as it happens, but with a close-up camera.

At the same time, Sondheim music and lyrics unroll on stage, interpreted by eight gifted singers, topped by the remarkable Barbara Cook. Each cast member has his moment in the sun – performing in duets, trios, solos, or in company.

Disappointment lies, not in the work of these professionals, but in the choice of songs. For the most part, these are lesser-known Sondheim tunes. Many of them never made it into the musicals or



L to R: Barbara Cook and Vanessa Williams in *Rondabout Theatre Company's Sondheim on Sondheim*. Photo credit: Richard Termine.



L to R: Euan Morton Leslie Kritzer, Erin Mackey, and Matthew Scott perform in front of an image of Stephen Sondheim in *Rondabout Theatre Company's Sondheim on Sondheim*. Photo credit: Joan Marcus.

were dropped – and for good reason. No doubt, Lapine and company made these choices, trying to stay away from clichés. But better-known pieces are missed. Yet, *Sondheim on Sondheim* redeems itself musically when Barbara Cook, close to the show's end, offers "Send in the Clowns."

The great joy of this show is the seamless way in which video and stage moments are welded together in beautifully imaginative staging. It is a series of "oohs" and "ahs" as the video piece puts on its own memorable performance, a performance that constantly reinvents itself. Credit goes to designer Peter Flaherty for his wit, skill, and aesthetic sense. Beowulf Boritt's elegant set design and Ken Billington's lighting meet these same high standards.

As one considers musical revues in general, they tend to be tedious, with performers standing about. Not so with *Sondheim on Sondheim*, with its fluid moves from stage to screen. In all, one comes away from *Sondheim on Sondheim*, not with memories of the songs, but with a sense of what heights theater/video design can reach.

And, fortunately, a more intimate acquaintance with Stephen Sondheim himself. At last, the Great Man is revealed.

The Folksbiene gives itself a birthday party

The Folksbiene Theatre (officially The National Yiddish Theatre – Folksbiene) has just celebrated its 95th birthday. It was the annual gala/fund-raiser/awards night, titled "From the Golden Land to the Promised Land," for the venerable New York-based company. (Folksbiene, as it happens, is the oldest continuing theater in America, and the oldest continuing Yiddish theater worldwide.)

Venue for this annual event was not the company's new commodious downtown home at the Baruch Center

for Performing Arts but even larger quarters – uptown at Lincoln Center's lush new Rose Hall (in the Time-Warner building). This was, most certainly, a prestigious mainstream setting.

Festivities opened on a high note, as Frank London's Klezmer Brass band marched down the aisle, horns blaring, and audience joining in exuberant applause. From the first moments, the audience and the show connected. One big *mishpocheh*!

And indeed the Folksbiene people had trotted out the big guns – in its presenters, its winners, and its entertainers. Noted figures in the entertainment world from Israel and this country were on hand, both in person and in spirit – offering endearing tales, songs and skits – and paying tribute to Yiddish theater.

Co-hosts of the evening were two theater personalities who have made

their mark in mainstream, as well as Yiddish, theater – Fyvush Finkel and Eleanor Reissa. Miss Reissa, who was artistic director of the Folksbiene through five crucial years, is an award-winning director, playwright, actor, choreographer, singer. Mr. Finkel, though best known in recent years for his long-running role in the television series, *Picket Fences*, has had a distinguished acting career in stage, screen, and television – and has also had his share of awards.



Israeli cultural icon Chava Alberstein performs at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Photo credit: Michael Priest Photography.

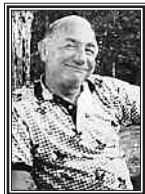
Highlight of the gala was the Israeli folksinger Chava Alberstein. Though she sings in five languages, she focused for this occasion on Yiddish songs, which proved to be totally enthralling. A cultural icon in her own land, Miss Alberstein easily reached across the footlights to capture her American audience.

Also from Israel were the appealing entertainers of Yiddishpiel – The Yiddish Theater of Israel, and, from Montreal, of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theater.

(see Backalenick, page NAT 19)



L to R: Bryna Wasserman, the director of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre in Montreal is joined by Folksbiene's artistic director Zalmen Mlotek, and Yiddishpiel of Tel Aviv's artistic director Shmuel Atzmon backstage at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Photo credit: Michael Priest Photography.



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

Fathers, you're never too old to inspire

I used to be a father. I still am, and now I'm a grandfather, too. But it's a load I can handle because the job description is just about identical. It calls for inspiration – of young minds and young hearts; especially grandkids who are remote and therefore consider themselves safe from my constant inspirational messages.

Yes, despite TV and video games and Blackberries and cell phones and an environment humming with electronic messages – we Jews honor and cherish words printed upon paper. We still are the People of the Book. Give us a pencil and a piece of paper, and we'll find something to say.

So, I write a lot of letters to my grandkids. For only 44 cents (it goes up every year – no competition will do that every time) you're allowed a large number of words written on paper. And a wise grandfather, besides council, advice, and family gossip, can include a candy bar, a stick of gum, a newspaper clipping, or a baseball card to lure the young mind into the civilized joy of correspondence. What teacher ever taught successfully without incentives? It's a trick I learned years ago from the Crackerjack people. They marketed candy with cheap, fragile toys. I market family pride.

History hints that Socrates – you've heard of the Socratic School – kept a big jar of black olives beside his desk to reward precocious students and I do the same with my letters.

I use wiles of all kinds to encourage my younger kin to rip open their envelopes with frantic enthusiasm. "Wonder what he sent this time? Maybe if I write back today, he'll send me another Hershey bar."

Yes, Hershey bars are great. Nice and flat – but they have their disadvantages in July unless you live in Nome and your granddaughter hangs out with her kids in Anchorage. Kids love letters with or without sweet bonuses. They love their name in big, bold letters on the envelope. They love the ritual of sorting through the mail and throwing the discards on the floor before finding THEIR letter.

And like I say, I rarely write without including something that is either amusing, edible, or ethically fortifying. My favorites are clippings from my local newspaper (human interest stories, we used to call them). So educational! Encourages kids to read and observe the world outside of home and school. And if you pick your stories with care, you can

package amusement and even morality in your envelopes. For example, I just mailed off to eight grandkids a story of a 65-year-old lady who wrote a confession to her high school principal; she cheated in a high school writing course 47 years ago! My small audience loved it and marveled at her delayed but full confession.

They were full of questions: "Did she have to take the class over? Did she get a punishment? Did they send her a new report card? I assured them she was not punished and maybe – because of her honesty – they renamed the auditorium in her honor.

But my kids usually award the family Pulitzer Prize to the vignettes I call "Pet Saves Family": The collie who pulled Jamie out of the river. The cocker spaniel who barked and alerted the family to their smoldering home. And of course the whole category of dog-finds-missing-child story. We humans, even after we've lost the glow of childhood, still have a soft spot for animal rescue stories. It goes back in history to the gabbling geese who saved Rome. A story probably told in a grandfather's letter of 300 BC.

We don't always need burning homes and swollen rivers. Kids of the right age (say over 3 and under 10) love any animal story. Naturally. They love animals. There's a kinship there of smallness, innocence, helplessness that we just don't understand. Just this month I mailed out a tearjerker that couldn't fail to warm the juvenile heart. A two-column report of a three-legged dog – yes, a handicapped mutt who had lost a race with a truck and forfeited one of his four limbs – found a lost child. The sheriff and an army of searchers failed, noted the article, but the dog, only 75% effective, found the missing child.

The returns from my young readers have been overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this theme. More! they cry. They want more. But that's not so easy. I'm at the mercy of the newspaper industry, which is attracted to war, corruption, crime, and disease rather than the uplifting genre of "Pet Finds Child."

Besides the inspirational value, there's a selfish payoff to my letter-writing campaigns: I like the return mail. And maybe decades from now when I'm old and my pen trembles on the paper; and my poor old grinders are loose and wobbly, my mail will be full of attentive notes sweetened with easy to chew Hershey Bars. Bread on the waters, you know.

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



The Art of Observation

BY RABBI ALLEN H. PODET

Dreams to make life livable

Recently we saw a new production of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, an old classic staged by the "Uncommoners" Company of SUNY's Jamestown Community College. It was a fine production, splendidly cast, sensitively done, and the picture it gives of hardscrabble life in 1937 in a northern California agricultural valley is a moving one.

Granted, it is Steinbeck, not Shakespeare. The characters are flat, they do not change much either to grow or to deteriorate. The outcome is predestined and predictable from the beginning. It concludes with too many loose ends, even for a two-act play. But it is an important slice of literary Americana.

It is the story of Lennie, a mentally deficient, good-hearted, giggling gentle giant, and his buddy, George, who has for some reason undertaken to take care of him. The two agricultural drifters have a dream that they will someday have a small farm of their own, a plan they share with an elderly, crippled farm worker. The title is from the Robert Burns quote, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley." The plan will never happen, not for these three.

The production does what it is, at best, supposed to do, which is that it makes one think. It is meant to be a disturbing play, partly because of the grim and depressing picture it paints of 1937 agricultural life in America for the poor, but partly because it makes us think of plans and hopes, our own and those of others, that never really had a chance of fulfillment.

Lennie and George live in a fantasy world of hopeless unreality because that is the only way, says Steinbeck, that they can live. The reality is that life was over for them when they were born.

I found the play deeply troubling. It called to mind with grim persistence a scene, an unremarkable incident that happened during one of the years we were living in London. We were in the West End, and had stopped at a barber's near our home to get a haircut, or as they are required to put it in the West End, a hair styling, which differs from a haircut in price and in the elevated nose of the stylists.

The gentleman who operated on me was a man of dreams. Noting that I was an American, he told me that he knew a good deal about life in America, and he planned to emigrate there. A barber in Manhattan, he said, makes four times

what he is paid in London. Often as much as six times.

He reads, presumably in *Friseur's Quarterly* or the like, that most hairdressers in Manhattan own, or partly own, their own shops. He has seen pictures. America is the land of rags to riches, not like old England, where the class system guarantees that one will die in the same miserable niche in which he was born. Any number of workers like him have made it, he reads, and so can he. He is young, or at least early middle aged. He has a plan, and he can hardly wait to put it into action.

Who asked me for my opinion? Why did I feel it necessary to respond to this pleasant farrago?

I was young and stupid, or perhaps younger and stupider. I lived in a world of truth and realism, and somehow the unreality of what I was hearing called for a rejoinder. I pointed out the prices that this theoretical well-paid barber will pay for food, lodging, clothing, a little simple entertainment. If he settles in Manhattan, he will be one of so-and-so-many thousand barbers competing for customers, and outside of Manhattan he will discover that in most cities – he had spoken of Los Angeles – public transport such as he took for granted here was so bad as to be virtually non-existent, so that a car, itself an enormous and endless expense, was not as here a luxury but a necessity.

I continued in this vein, the expert from America, shedding truth and reality for reasons that are still unclear but have perhaps something to do with the brashness, the unfeelingness of youth, the contempt of the young for the fantasies and compromises of the older generation, the purity and incandescent self-righteousness of our arrogant, untested innocence.

Why was it necessary to shred this middle-aged worker's dream? Why did his fantasy need to be re-grounded in solid realities? Perhaps he, like Lennie and George, needed his dream to live, to survive. Perhaps his reality, like theirs, was not enough to sustain a life, or at least a life with a spirit. For the young me, the answer would have been: "So get a realistic dream, and then work and make it real! Cut away these fictions and build something on a solid base!" For the young me, all things were possible.

Perhaps that was not possible for my barber for any number of reasons. Perhaps he lived encumbered in the web he had made, and if he knew at some level that his dream was only a dream, still it sweetened his tea, and made it drinkable.

I look back with pain on my young crusade for truth and reality, and think that perhaps I am a better rabbi and counselor because of the value I have learned to place on kindness. I hope that my barber had the good sense to ignore and forget the wonderful, realistic, practical advice that young man happily heaped upon him.

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com. ★

RIBNER

(continued from page NAT 4)

concealment, we have free will and the power to choose and co-create our reality.

Love has more meaning when it is a matter of choice, for God and for people as well. It is a heavenly gift that God allows us to love other people, and to love God. It is the love of God within us that enables us to love God and other people. When we truly love, we feel God's presence and that feels wonderful. Love is unconditional, not based on what we receive. But rather through love we receive the love we are giving. Reb Eliyahu Dessler in his book *Strive for Truth* provided much clarity on this subject and asked an interesting question. "Is giving the result of love or does love come from giving? Do we give to people we love? Or do we love people we give to. It is customary to think that giving is a byproduct of love. We love someone, so we give to them. Reb Dessler says if you want to love others, you should give to them. Become involved in something that is for their benefit. Giving breaks down the psychological barriers between people. We come to love the people we give to." (*New Age Judaism*, page 129.)

On Shavuot we celebrate God's gift to us. The Torah that we receive on Shavuot is God's love letter to us, containing all the secrets that lovers share in times of intimacy. For many of us, however, there are times when we read the Bible, we question its relevance to us today. In those cases, we need to search our hearts and pray that the secrets of Torah be opened to us. If the Torah were not relevant, did not contain the secrets of the universe, it would not be as treasured as it is. Finding teachers and books that make the Torah and Judaism exciting, vibrant and sweet is also essential.

On Shavuot we receive the Torah anew. By connecting and learning Torah, by living by the guidelines of Torah, we become attached to God. When we are attached to God, we know and love God, and that is the greatest joy. It was for this reason that we were created, yet it must also be our choice.

The deepest Jewish teaching that I know is that this world was created for love. Within God was the desire, but not the need, to love and be known. It was for this reason that God created the worlds. At the core of the heart of the human being, made in the image and likeness of the Divine, is also the desire to love and be known. And it is through love, that we know ourselves and God.

Suggestions for increasing love and intimacy in Sivan:

1. Appreciate and acknowledge others each day, especially your spouse and children.
2. Add romance to your life. Buy flowers and gifts for no reason.
3. Extend yourself by doing favors for others.
4. Be open to meet new and different people.

5. Fully receive with gratitude all that you are given from others. Appreciate and acknowledge every gesture of thoughtfulness.

6. Make "I" statements about what you want and feel. Refrain from criticizing others, especially your spouse.

7. If you find yourself upset and resentful, take time to be with yourself, and pray about what you are learning at this time. Consider what you can give to another person.

8. Spend time in nature.

9. Recharge and nurture yourself with meditation and learning Torah.

10. Speak to God in your own words. Express your gratitude and ask for what you need and want.

These suggestions come from *Kabbalah Month by Month*.

May we each be blessed this month of Sivan and on the holiday of Shavuot to open our heart to love God and other people in the deepest way. May we make the choices that promote goodness and love in the world.

Unless otherwise indicated, most of the words in this message are excerpts from my book *New Age Judaism*. This book contains an introduction to kabbalah, meditation as well as kabbalistic teachings on love, sexuality, transforming suffering, as well as many subjects that are associated with the new age like holistic healing, vegetarianism, and astrology.

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. ✨

SUBSCRIBE TO The Jewish Post & Opinion

Send to:

Jewish Post & Opinion
1111 E. 54th St., Suite 119
Indianapolis, IN 46220

Or Online at:

www.jewishpostopinion.com

- ☐ **3 years – \$91 (SAVE \$17)**
☐ **2 years – \$63 (SAVE \$9)**
☐ **1 year – \$36**

(Outside USA, payment must be in U.S. funds and you must add US\$10.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail us at:
circulation@indy.rr.com

GOLDFARB

(continued from page NAT 6)

and when these fail, upon the intervention of friends and spiritual allies – dead parents, angels, witches, and sorcerers from "the good side" – those who, in other words, practice "white magic" and have not been seduced by "the dark side." This transfer of saving grace to lesser than absolute entities points to a shift away from traditional religious certainties to what Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has called "The Paganization of Western Culture."

Nevertheless, one senses at the core of all these stories what in Hebrew is called *Hashgachah*, Divine Providence. In other cultures, similar terms are in frequent use to denote some power in the universe that rewards and punishes, some principle of justice that does not allow evil to prevail over good. The reluctance to name it, the avoidance of doctrinal certainty by the authors (though not by the limited consciousness beings who perpetuate evil), and his or her at-risk heroes and heroines, implies something else.

The definitions of G*d that have been handed down to us, and, by association, G*d His-Her-Itself, have come under deep suspicion, and what one might call a humanist faith in a redeemed world or a pagan reliance on elemental allies or a Gnostic embrace of shifting polarities have replaced monotheism in many people's minds. The unity in the diversity is hard to perceive and to trust, and the personal connection to G*d is hard to nurture. But the freedom to seek and discover the truth is something that people everywhere treasure. And the drive to be free, and the necessity of overthrowing tyranny in order to obtain or maintain it, is a constant theme of these tales. In this respect they are most in tune with contemporary values and yearnings. To my mind, G*d remains invisible and elusive, hidden, yet omnipresent.

During the perilous graveyard scene in *The Goblet of Fire* (#4), I cried out, "Shema Yisrael!" on Harry's behalf. Yet even the basic rudiments of the Judeo-Christian tradition are absent from Harry's world. How about reciting the Psalm for the fourth day of the week, *Tehillim* 94: "O God of vengeance, *HaShem*; O God of vengeance, appear! Arise, O Judge of the Earth, render recompense to the haughty. How long shall the wicked – O *HaShem* – how long shall the wicked exult?" Reading the whole thing, one senses that it is surely a mighty spell against the forces of evil and an encouragement to those who utter these words. But no awareness of sacred scripture seems to exist. Are the "muggles" therefore not merely square but representative of those who attend churches and synagogues, mosques and temples, rather than pagan ceremonies? Are these "straight" people really so out of it? Or are they materialists who lack all spirituality?

Much has been driven underground or forced back into the hills of Britain during the past several thousand years of human habitation. In the process of teaching a class I call "Poetry Immersion," I have noted the persistence of the world of Faery in English literary life, surely a reflection of the popular imagination. One doesn't have to look far to find evidence of that in the English and Scottish Border Ballads, in Spenser and Shakespeare and Keats, and in the 19th- and 20th-century fantasists, in George MacDonald and C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Philip Pullman, Peter S. Beagle and Neil Gaiman.

"The return of the repressed" in Harry Potter novels and movies shows us that far from being repressed, these elements of the folk imagination have merely been overshadowed and temporarily displaced by the most prestigious doctrine of the moment, be it Christianity or the Enlightenment or Humanism or Science or Pragmatism. Yet these primitive chthonic elements are still there, exerting their influence and, where able, surfacing with powerful assertiveness. Efforts to tame and domesticate these prehistoric images and beliefs have not succeeded in breeding the wildness out of them. They remain as inherent parts of the national psyche and take other forms in other lands, despite the presence of an official ecclesiastical establishment. They cannot be killed or transformed into something else. They are with us forever.

Composed in Belmont, Mass., in Aug. 2009; Revised in Tzfat, Shevet Naftali, Medinat Yisrael, in May 2010.

Goldfarb is a poet, fiction writer, and essayist. His work has appeared in dozens of magazines, newspapers, and anthologies, and won several awards. He co-founded and edited AGADA, the illustrated Jewish literary magazine, taught Hebrew School in SF Bay Area synagogues, gave Adult Ed classes at community centers and national gatherings, and taught Freshman English at Merritt College in Oakland, Calif.

He received S'micha from Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi as Moreinu, Maggid, and Rabbinic Deputy in recognition of his years of service to the Aquarian Minyan, a vanguard Jewish renewal community based in Berkeley, Calif., where he and his wife Yehudit raised their family. They now live in Tzfat, where he convenes weekly sessions of Poetry Immersion and Short Story Intensive.

Winter address: Rechov Keren HaYesod 128, Artists Quarter, Tzfat 13201 Israel. Summer address (mid-June to end of July): 2020 Essex Street, Berkeley, CA 94703. Email: poetsprogress@gmail.com. ✨

On this date in Jewish history

On May 19, 1950

Iraqi Jews began to depart for Israel.

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



Notes from the Antipodes

BY DR. RODNEY GOUTTMAN

Point to make

From the European Enlightenment through to the present, the Jewish world has been racked by the question of "who is a Jew?" This has now degenerated into "who is your rabbi?" or even "who converted you?" In Australia, this question has recently taken a new form, which has nothing to do with the argument over Jewish religious authenticity. Rather it has become involved in solving what is now popularly called a "cold case."

To examine this, we need to return to the fateful attack by combined British forces on July 19, 1916, against the waiting German troops near the village of Fromelles in France. This assault lasted but a day, yet in this short time almost 2,000 Australian soldiers were slaughtered. It was their first major encounter with the enemy on the Western Front. Estimated among the dead were eleven Jews.

In this bloody military context, the slain were quickly buried in a mass grave with no identification. As time passed and another world war came and went in Europe, the site was forgotten – until recently – when military enthusiasts found their completely covered-over graveyard. They set about identifying its anonymous occupier, and the remains, in understandably poor condition, were DNA tested. These test results were then matched with the DNA of possible living descendants. Amongst the successful matches was that of one Jewish soldier.

The intention was to reinter the remains in a new cemetery at Fromelles, with those identified given their own separate grave. This process was to be accompanied by an appropriate ecumenical religious service, which in Australia usually refers to a liturgy with which all Christian denominations could feel comfortable.

Australia is a country that boasts about its multicultural credentials, insisting that all ethnic groups and religions are accorded a fair go. It was thus surprising that its military bureaucracy was taken aback when the Jewish community and descendants of this newly-discovered Jewish soldier objected to the religious ceremony planned. They insisted that as he had openly enlisted as a Jew, he should be buried according to Jewish ritual. A reluctant Ministry of Defense finally relented. In July, he will be returned to the earth in a traditional Jewish ceremony with an appropriate headstone.

This, however, has not been the only issue concerning Jews and Israel that the Australian government has been confronting. Specifically, there is the

massive existential threat Iran poses to the West, the Middle East, and especially Israel. And this particularly as Teheran continues, and will continue, to block any attempt to halt its inexorable march toward total nuclear armament. It can do this for three connected reasons. The first, despite statements to the contrary, is that the United States has taken the military option off the table. Secondly, Iran has influential nations such as China, Russia, and even uranium-rich South American states, in its back pocket. Finally, the European Union is too divided and weak to do anything about Iran, even if it wanted to.

Of course, the nuclear menace posed by Iran is only one prong of its aggressive program. It is also the source of terrorism, both directly and indirectly, through surrogates such as *Hezbollah* and *Hamas*. Teheran also spreads its odious ideas by funding Islamic centres of learning internationally.

To date Australia has cross-parliamentary support for following the impotent and already humiliated American line, which insists on diplomacy, and failing this, the application of economic and political sanctions. In the real world, Canberra has recently moved to invoke the little-known statute, the *Weapons of Mass Destruction (Prevention of Proliferation) Act*, to prevent a \$100 million plus contract between a local Australian company and Teheran. This legislation has been used only three times previously in its 15 year existence, twice against Iran, and once against Pakistan. The current spat is over refrigeration units supposedly destined for Iran's oil industry, but which intelligence services say could further Teheran's nuclear ambitions.

Like the USA, Australia has become increasingly edgy over the possibility of home-grown Islamic terrorism. Local Islamists have already been convicted for the planning of terrorist acts. One Islamist group of interest is the shady External Security Organization (*Hezbollah*). Sometimes it travels under the name Islamic Jihad Organization or *Hezbollah International*. It first attracted attention in Australia in the late 1990s when trying to source military supplies for Iran. Attempts to curtail its activities have been frustrated because of the keen support given *Hezbollah* among the Lebanese community in Sydney and elsewhere.

However, another part of the problem is Australia's own almost farcical approach to *Hezbollah*, which it considers a legitimate, mainstream Lebanese political party, branding only its militant wing as terrorist. As if the two are not intimately related!

There is also a current case before the courts in which an Islamic cleric is fighting an extradition order. He is accused of funnelling money from Iran to set up Islamic centres in Sydney and Melbourne. In 1999, there was the notorious example of the Iranian government's funding of a lectureship in

(see Gouttman, page NAT 18)



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

The Simpsons visit Israel

On a recent episode of *The Simpsons*, the first family of Sunday night cartoon sarcasm soaked in the sun and the spirituality of the State of Israel, also known as the Holy Land. The episode, written by Kevin Curran, was rather predictable *Simpsons* fare.

On a sultry summer's eve, Homer's backyard romps in the wading pool disturb his Evangelical Christian neighbors during their Bible study night. Neighbor Ned wonders whether Homer is beyond redemption, but the local minister insists that anything and everything must be done to save Homer: "Couldn't you find a way to reach out and bring him in?" Meanwhile, Curran knowingly mocks efforts to make the Bible "relatable" to restive teens and has the minister relate how God "lovingly destroyed" Sodom and Gomorrah.

Writer Curran depicts neighbor Ned as genuinely pious and concerned about Homer. In a moment of outreach with abandon, Ned invites Homer on a church tour of Israel. Homer rudely and ungraciously thinks aloud, asking whether he really wants to "take my family to a war zone, on a bus loaded with religious lame-o's, in a country with no pork, in a desert with no casino – where do I sign up?"

Yet Homer's wife, Marge is moved by the offer, and emerges from the house to chide her husband, "I can hear your sarcasm from inside the house." She commits the family to the trip and insists that they pay their own way – much to Homer's chagrin on both counts.

Daughter Lisa, wise beyond her years, observes of their neighbor: "I think he wants to get daddy to heaven." Son Bart chimes in, "Great. More Hell for me." It seems that if the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, the road to Israel can re-route those heading straight to Hell. Indeed, Krusty the Clown turns up on the trip, saying, "I believe that every Jew should make a pilgrimage to Israel before he dies....Don't want to end up in Hell." Lisa reminds him, "Jews don't believe in Hell." He thanks her, "Thank you, kid. You made my day." Of course, there are numerous references to Hell in the rabbinic literature, which has shaped Jewish belief for over two thousand years.

There are cute bits here, from the airplane landing with a particular "mazal tov" to parodies on *Fiddler on the Roof* and wailing walls. The church group is greeted with a cordial (though patronizing) "Shalom goyim." Bart learns about tough

Israeli girls. Homer refers to the "Tomb of the Unknown Savior." The writer imagines what an Israeli transformers action film would be like.

Yes, there is some fun made of Evangelical Christians. Upon arriving in the Holy Land, neighbor Ned prays, "Lord, thank you for letting me see this wonderful place where the end of the world will soon begin." There is a rather pointed remark about the people at Masada dying for no reason. Compared to the other Fox Network cartoon sitcoms, however, that rather nasty turn remains relatively gentle. Mostly there are mild jokes about Krusty inserting a request into the Western Wall for the fixing of parking tickets, and Bart Simpson reading the prayers in the walls and ignoring them – "just like God," he rationalizes.

But the episode shows no mercy to the Israeli tour guide. Or rather, it suggests that when the Israeli tour guide feels insulted, he reveals his own bravado and lack of mercy. The tour guide is depicted as both pushy and emotionally fragile. After a while, he behaves quite aggressively toward the Simpson family. At first he is simply overbearing and vain.

When Marge blurts out, somewhat in exasperation, "You people are so pushy," the tour guide explodes, "What, Israeli people are pushy? How about you experience a couple of genocides and see how laid back you are....You stay there surrounded by your great enemy Canada. Try Syria for two months. Then we'll see who's pushy." He then fulminates about how unfair it was for the Jews to have been thrown out of Spain (in 1492!), because he would have preferred to have lived there!

Things get a bit scary when the tour guide tries to win points with Marge by offering the privilege of holding his gun. "I used it in Entebbe," he brags. "I killed three Ugandans." Why have the Israeli guy boast about killing Africans? Was writer Curran given the mandate to make the main Israeli character as outrageous as possible? Or was that the work and the taste (?) of Sacha Baron Cohen, who gave voice to this character?

Even when the church tourists first meet the guide and express concerns about the possible dangers in Israel, he dismisses their concerns by saying that the only danger is possible dehydration. Right away, he asks whether the warnings in a brochure carried by the tourists were written by "the same shmuck who wrote the New Testament." So early on he is portrayed as berating Christian scriptures. The line is left to linger without interpretation. Perhaps it suggests that both the brochure and Christian Scriptures malign Jews and their land. But if a point is being made here, why are we not told as much?

Does the show's writing and production staff believe that it is fair to diss the Israeli (or at least depict him as volatile when angry) because, in the end, a lot of the church tour group members are

(see Gertel, page NAT 19)

WEINER

(continued from page NAT 7)

that is the hallmark of its greatness as are all Jewish Americans.

That does not mean that I do not have a spiritual and historical tie to Israel, its people and its significance as it reaches to proclaim its inalienable right to survival. The two are exclusive.

I understand, full well, the intent of our president, to reach out to the entire world and attempt to connect with all mankind to ensure humanity's survival. I understand, as well, the need for our country to stretch out its hand in friendship thus encouraging all people to realize their potential.

I understand, only too well, the desire for all people to live in peace and security. None should be afraid of their neighbor or live in fear for their lives. To accomplish this requires great fortitude and courage but above all strength of purpose surrounded by truth.

What I don't understand is that there are those who believe that to accomplish all this requires some to be sacrificed on the altar of misplaced allegiance, while undermining the security of others. What I don't understand is that ignoring past alliances and commitments because of an attitude toward looking at what should be rather than what is, will not, in the long-run, achieve salvation or survival.

We deal with reality, not supplant it with dreams that have no basis in fact. We speak to the issues with clarity and understanding not with disdain and ignorance of fact. We can't be called "honest broker" if we truly do not believe this to be our mission. We should not insult our friends to find favor with our enemies.

Scripture makes it very clear when it states: "Those who bless Israel will be blessed, and those who curse Israel will be cursed" (Gen. 12:1-3). That does not mean that a blank check is given to obtain the blessing instead of the curse. What it does mean is that we have an obligation, a sacred trust, to ensure that the People of Israel are secure in their homes and accepted among the nations of the world as living proof of the redemption that has arrived because Israel lives and will continue to live long after all others have vanished. History records this truth.

Friendship means peace and respect

When the prime minister of Israel is a guest in our country it is expected that he will be treated with the dignity accorded all heads of state, especially allies and friends. The lack of regard for Benjamin Netanyahu was an exercise in disdain and contempt. One only has to witness our president's acceptance of Hugo Chavez, an avowed dictator and enemy of our republic, to realize that friendship is not the requirement for acknowledgement, but insistence on extending a welcome hand to all who

profess to hate us. As though a gesture or a handshake or a smile will change feelings and make everything right.

To add insult to injury, we are now witnessing our president welcoming with open arms a man he despises, the president of Afghanistan. He is wine and dined and even dined with Vice President Biden and his family. This is a man whose hands are drenched with Poppy lava. This is a man who has disdain for our country and even said so. This is a man who represents a country where our men and women have shed their blood to support it and keep it afloat.

Not one single member of our armed forces has fought or died for Israel. The only thing we have done over the years is support the rights of people to live in peace and tranquility through their own efforts. And yet, we are told by our government that the loss of American lives can be attributed to the intransigence of the Israel. How utterly ridiculous and even laughable.

We do not murder innocent people because of their religious identification. We do not behead people to throw fear and to intimidate. We don't send our children strapped with bombs to blow-up innocent men, women and children in the name of some mistaken belief that this will bring about capitulation.

In all my years I have never seen such a display of childishness and arrogance. The United States of America was the first country in the world to recognize the legitimacy of the rebirth of Israel. For 62 years we have stood by this country, born from the ashes of despair, to assist in its desire to become a nation of laws and acceptance.

No president, no administration, has ever turned its back on the right of Israel to survive in words and deeds. We, the American people, are responsible for the success of a nation that opens its hearts to all who hunger for freedom and nobility.

No nation is perfect and Israel is no exception. Democracy is an experiment and is in a continual state of flux. That is one of the hallmarks of democracy. It is a never-ending attempt to adjust to current modes and trends so that it grows. Our Constitution is living proof of a journey into human salvation by constantly interpreting its message as determined by the Supreme Court. That is called the rule of law. And we are a nation that prides itself on the adherence to law and the benefits derived from that understanding of human behavior. Treating a friendly head of state with such contempt does not speak to this.

Friends disagree at times and even have arguments. But friends understand, as described in a famous Hasidic folk saying, that each may have faults but if you are looking for a friend who has no faults, you will have no friends. Most of all friendship means that you are concerned for the peace and security expected from that relationship.

The impediment to lasting peace

We are constantly led to believe, and the main stream media is part of this conspiracy, that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved by Israel conceding everything in exchange for nothing. For example: The Oslo accords. Analyze all that has happened since those documents were signed. Peace was never achieved; battles are constantly fought; Palestine is still a dream because the intent was not to live in harmony but rather to continue the armed fight for total domination; corruption and in-fighting exists between factions of terrorist organizations. The net result of this accord was the systematic arming of people determined to annihilate a sovereign nation from off the face of the earth as stated in its manifesto.

Prime Minister Menachem Begin who built his reputation as a fighter knew that to achieve lasting peace, there must be a partner in that quest and there must be compromise attached to that completion. The Sinai Peninsula, filled with mountains of much needed oil, was returned to Egypt. This country who made war on Israel during its holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, finally realized that war was futile and President Anwar Sadat made a historic trip to Jerusalem, not Tel Aviv, to convey that message.

During President Bill Clinton's term in office a serious attempt was made with Prime Minister Ehud Barak to concede 97% of the West Bank and all of Gaza, and the division of Jerusalem, to appease the critics who constantly claimed that Israel was not forthcoming or reliable as a partner for peace. The result of that gesture was a complete rejection of what would become, if enacted, a troublesome episode in Israel's history. But Israel was willing to take the gamble and move forward for final peace and security.

Since that time new obstacles have been placed in the road to independence for a people in great need of redemption and dignity. Now we are told that settlements are a deterrent – settlements being built on Israeli soil and agreed to by past United States administrations. A new glitch has been added – the return of those who left Israel during the War of Independence. People, I might add who were told to leave because after the defeat of Israel, they would be welcomed back to a land free of Jews.

Time and again the stakes are readjusted to accommodate new thoughts and new ideas to complete the task of "driving the Jews" into the sea that could not be accomplished by military means.

The list is endless and the results the same. No peace. No statehood for Palestinians. No serious effort on the part of the world to act as peace broker without intimidation and fear. The only exception has been, until now, the United States. Our country has made every effort to establish a clear understanding of what is required for lasting peace and fulfillment.

Inspiring terrorism

We are at a crossroad right now. We can continue to stand for justice and freedom or we can maintain the path undertaken to inspire people of ill-will to make war and destroy the very essence of humanity's desire for tranquility.

By displaying an outright hostility toward a friend the universe will probably see itself embroiled in a conflict that may not be possible to correct. We see this with our attitude toward Iran and North Korea. Soon these rogue regimes will succeed in creating fear throughout the world when they join the nuclear club of nations. Their attitude and behavior suggests that they will not be contained or restricted in their determination to annihilate Israel. They now are engaged in bringing into their sphere of influence another rogue nation such as Venezuela.

This sphere of influence will not diminish but grow and get bolder as we attempt to undermine the viability of Israel. Can there be no doubt that once the world thinks the United States will no longer be considered the defenders of a free Israel, there will be chaos unmatched in human history?

By turning our back on the very ideals and principles for which we are known, we encourage violence and regret; the violence of murderers and terrorists and the regret of friends who once thought we could be trusted.

Where is the unifying credential that elevated our president to his office? Where are the deeds that should be part of the constant reminder of our dedication to the survival of Israel? Where is the still small voice that repeats and repeats the words of the Prophet Jeremiah: "You are always on their lips, but far from their hearts." The Prophet, the true Prophet was his cry to those who profess to speak for God but speak falsely and wickedly.

This should be our answer because in the words of the Prophet Micah: "What is it that God expects of you? To do justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with God." And what better way is there to accomplish this than to be what we say we are and to do what we say we will do in honesty while searching for fulfillment.

Israel is our friend, and we need all the friends we can get for one simple reason: We are not perceived as being honest or trustworthy. As a citizen, as a person of faith, as a human being drawn to the Divine, I simply state that we need to remember our roots and our heritage as a nation dedicated to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is not only our right but something we fought for and died for on behalf of all humanity.

Let us resolve to listen to the right Jeremiah in that it will be the answer to our survival. Let us not feel threatened to speak out in an attempt to correct the wrong. We are Americans. This is our calling.

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

Environment

By JEFF GLICKMAN AND JAMIE SCHMIECHEN

An Energy Policy for America

ובכל ארץ אחותכם גאלה תתנו לארץ

The Waxman-Markey *Cap and Trade* energy bill, designed to combat global warming, passed in the House of Representatives last year, and some version of it will come before the Senate very soon. The legislation puts an upper limit on the amount of CO₂ that a business can produce in a given year – the “Cap” – and also allows businesses that come under their quota to sell the right to create this deficit green house gas – the “Trade.” Given the cacophony of voices calling for a reduction in man-made CO₂, this bill sounds like a reasonable idea, but the devil is always in the details. Critics say it is the only real hope we have of addressing global warming while others demonize it as either ineffective or injurious to business and to every American who pays an electricity bill.

The legislation is designed to regulate green-house gasses through a market. In our free-market economy, business and consumer decisions are based primarily on cost – what is the cost to produce a good and what is the cost to buy it? Something that has no monetary price should have no effect on business or consumer practices, yet it may have a very real effect on our lives. An example of this phenomenon is pollution: It does not cost a business anything to make air pollution that falls under the legal limits, but it may harm us all. To a consumer, an item may be cheap, but if its manufacture creates pollution that harms their health, there is a hidden cost.

In economics, these hidden costs are termed “externalities.” As long as the CO₂ created by burning oil, gas and coal does not cost energy companies or consumers anything, it is an unaccounted externality of the market. An environmentalist might look at this situation and regulate CO₂ directly by either taxing its production or legislating a hard ceiling on its emission across all businesses. The *Cap and Trade* bill attempts to soften the regulatory blow by letting the market affix a cost to greenhouses gasses, allowing Adam Smith’s “unseen hand” to decide where and how best to reduce CO₂. In the starkest political terms, the bill uses conservative methods to achieve a liberal goal. Call it cynical or call it effective, like all of Obama’s policies and Clinton’s before him, this is a triangulation to the exact center of political opinion.

Despite the claims of far-right politicians and industry lobbyists, there is no point

discussing the existence of global warming. The exact details may be unclear, but there is an overwhelming consensus that human activity is creating a harmful rise in atmospheric temperature. However, the question that does deserve discussion is whether cap and trade legislation will achieve its stated environmental goals and at what cost? The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the average household will pay an extra \$250 a year under the bill, but critics have pointed out that the timeline of the bill’s components is purposefully rigged to create a false CBO score. A June 26, 2009 *Wall Street Journal* editorial makes the point clearly:

To get support for his bill, Mr. Waxman was forced to water down the cap in early years to please rural Democrats, and then severely ratchet it up in later years to please liberal Democrats. The CBO’s analysis looks solely at the year 2020, before most of the tough restrictions kick in....

The hit to GDP is the real threat in this bill. The whole point of cap and trade is to hike the price of electricity and gas so that Americans will use less. These higher prices will show up not just in electricity bills or at the gas station but in every manufactured good, from food to cars. Consumers will cut back on spending, which in turn will cut back on production, which results in fewer jobs.

It seems safe to assume the policy would eventually cost the average household more than \$250 a year in higher energy costs. In fact, as the *WSJ* piece points out, the price tag is the point of the proposed law. The policy is designed to exact a fee from businesses and consumers to alter their behavior in regards to energy production and use. Exactly how much it will cost the average citizen is difficult to estimate. Not only would the law raise the price of electricity, it will impact the bottom line of all businesses affected by the cost of transportation and shipping. However, the law would also spur growth in the green energy industry.

As well, if the policy is in fact successful in lowering greenhouse emissions, many very large, but somewhat nebulous costs to society will not accrue. Increasingly violent weather, air and water pollution and eventually, raised sea levels are all tied to the production and use of fossil fuels. While scientists may not have a clear timeline or be able to show causality in specific cases, over time it is inevitable that fossil fuel use raises property insurance rates, increases medical costs, depresses fishing and tourism and occasionally causes enormous, nearly incalculable damage such as when New Orleans was struck by Hurricane Katrina.

If sea levels rise enough New York would be faced with the choice of building an enormous sea wall or relocating Manhattan. It is very difficult to predict exactly how things might have been different if a certain policy were not enacted, but our current near-total

dependence on coal, oil and gas will inevitably carry an enormous price-tag so the meaningful debate is not exactly how much the law will cost, but rather will the eventual environmental and economic benefits of the law warrant the immediate expense.

The best critics of the bill’s efficacy do not come from fiscally minded conservatives, but from environmentally minded liberals. Laurie Williams and Allan Zabel, a married couple that work for the EPA, deride the bill for very different reasons than the *Wall Street Journal*. They have posted a video on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=SR9kf2yQdT0) that gives a much more detailed and salient critique of the bill than most print media. Readers should look at it for themselves, but essentially the couple says the “Cap” portion of the bill that passed in the House of Representatives will only provide incentives to make small adjustments to power plants that will not significantly lower emissions.

They also criticize the “Trade” provisions of the bill. Under the bill industries will be able to trade the right to produce CO₂. They will also be able to purchase “offsets,” meaning they can pay someone to not perform an action that would have produced CO₂, such as not cut down a section of forest, and then make that amount of CO₂ themselves. It sounds reasonable, but because it is difficult to predict exactly what anyone may or not have been planning to do with their own property, an offset may just be a payday for someone who wasn’t going to fell their trees anyway and a free pass to allow a company to produce over their CO₂ cap. As well, the couple points out that in this scenario the total demand for wood will not be reduced so another party will almost certainly cut down more trees somewhere else.

Williams and Zabel make a cogent argument that trading the right to produce carbon emissions is an unreliable regulatory tool that creates unpredictable fluctuations in the price of energy and sometimes perverse incentives to actually create more CO₂ overall. What they recommend in place of a cap and trade model is a gradually rising tax on carbon emissions that is used to give a rebate directly to energy customers. This policy does not allow for as much market flexibility, but it is simpler and would make the transition from low to high fees on CO₂ predictable so industry can plan ahead to build green energy plants. As well, the rebate to customers would offset higher energy prices.

Their argument is hard to refute. However, if the cap in *Cap and Trade* is low enough, it would essentially have the same effect as a carbon fee. The CO₂ limits in the current bill are meant to increase with time so the bill is a decent place to start. As the problems associated with global warming become more dire and more apparent, hopefully the political will to lower the caps will materialize

and the regulations will become strident enough to make green energy profitable.

Last year Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) proposed a version of *Cap and Trade* in the Senate that would give money back to consumers and would bar banks from participating in the trading of rights to produce CO₂. These are improvements that ameliorate concerns over volatile energy costs under the House bill. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Joe Lieberman (I-CT) and John Kerry (D-Mass) have also worked to find bipartisan ground for a Senate energy bill. Recently Lieberman and Kerry unveiled the *American Power Act* that, along with many other provisions, includes cap and trade provisions with the changes originally proposed by Cantwell and Collins.

It is unclear if these efforts will produce a signed law, but it is clear that global warming is an imminent crisis that one way or another will exact a great national expense. If we are to avert further harm, we need to alter our personal behaviors and be willing to collectively spend a significant amount on green energy infrastructure. Halting climate change should be at least as important a national priority as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet politically, there is almost no will to enact a policy with any real costs. Why is there a bottomless well of debt for war, but green energy must be hogtied by short-term financial concerns? What does this inconsistency say about us?

The Torah commands that “in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption for the land” (Leviticus 25:24). The context of this commandment shows it to literally mean that if you come to own a piece of land that previously belonged to another citizen, you should eventually return it to its former owner. In fact every piece of land everywhere has belonged to another at one time and will one day belong to someone else again. The broader implication is that we do not own the land the way we own an object, to do with as we wish, but as we “own” a child, to care for it. It is our right to use natural resources to provide for ourselves, but our brothers, and the generations that will follow need the same soil, the same air and the same water so it is our responsibility to maintain their value and integrity.

Cap and trade is not perfect; critics on the right believe it is too expensive, and critics on the left believe it does not accomplish enough, which is a decent indication that it is a reasonable compromise. If current events such as flooding in Tennessee and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico produce an enormous groundswell of environmental concern, Congress might pass a much stronger green energy bill. What seems much more likely is any legislation that even slightly limits CO₂ production (see Glickman/Schmiechen, page NAT 19)

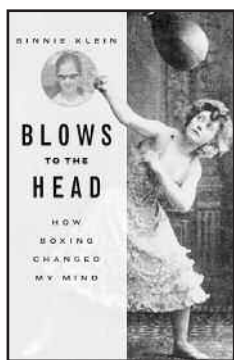
Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

How a middle-aged Jewish woman became a boxer

Blows to the Head. By Binnie Klein. Albany: Excelsior Editions, State University of New York Press, 2010. 197 Pages. \$19.95.

This delightful memoir is the sprightly story of how a middle-aged Jewish woman became a boxer. She is a psychotherapist who is married to a man younger than she. They have no children. He is an aspiring actor and their marriage is going through "a dry spell."



Klein came to boxing as a consequence of an accident in which she fell, breaking her ankle and her foot. The lengthy treatment that ensued included physical therapy and boxing. When her therapist indicated that she needed a "real boxing coach," she eventually hooked up with John Spehar, a former boxer, who was written up in an AARP newsletter as someone who trained women boxers. He gave her a workout and decided that she possessed what is required to become a true boxer. The saga of their relationship and her progress as a boxer fills pages of this sometimes hilarious, sometimes serious book.

Along the way, we are treated to a history of Jewish prize fighters, mostly through Binnie's imaginary encounters with them. She recounts her "discussions" with Daniel Mendoza, Benny Leonard, and Barney Ross. Mendoza, "the Star of Israel," was "boxing's first Jewish superstar." "Few people know that the Father of Pugilism was Jewish." Benny Leonard, "The Ghetto Wizard," served in the American army during World War I and then made a "small fortune" as a fighter, all of which he lost in the Depression. He was described as "the nearest thing to a perfect fighter boxing has ever seen." Barney Ross, "Beryl the Terrible," was the world champion in the lightweight, junior welterweight, and welterweight divisions. Often ranked with Hank Greenberg as "the most admired Jewish athlete in America," Ross enlisted in the army after Pearl Harbor and won a Silver Star for heroism at Guadalcanal. Unfortunately, his injuries led to morphine addiction, downplayed in the movie, *Body and Soul*, in which John Garfield was cast as Barney Ross but highlighted in a second film, *Monkey on My Back*.

The context for this discussion of Jewish fighters is Klein's brief account of her family's immigration to the United States and the anti-Semitism they encountered. Her father, an unsuccessful traveling salesman, "was addicted to the racetrack and knew some shady characters." This leads to a listing of Jewish gangsters as further evidence that there were "tough Jews."

All this information and more are wittily put forward, lending an amusing and informative air of authenticity to the presentation. Throughout, there are thorough descriptions of Klein's progress as a boxer, highlighted by her reaching the point where she actually sparred with her coach. Interspersed with these sketches are stories about Klein's childhood and her lack of Jewish observance. Although Friday night meant "roast chicken and challah," she did not attend Hebrew school, had no bat mitzvah, and her family did not belong to a synagogue. She says that her marriage to a non-Jew was partly a consequence of these marginal connections to Judaism. Nevertheless, there are many references to Jews and Jewishness throughout the book.

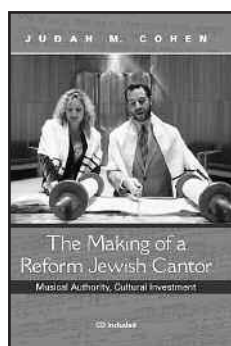
Klein offers a light-hearted, self-deprecating, and entertaining romp through her unusual experiences as a boxer, using them to connect with her current activities, her past, and her Jewish identification.

Understanding the making of cantors

The Making of a Reform Jewish Cantor. By Judah M. Cohen. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. 320 Pages, with CD. \$39.95.

The research method used by anthropologists to study another society is called "participant-observation." It usually entails living in a strange environment for about a year to witness and take part in the annual cycle. During this "field work," the researcher tries to learn about the beliefs, customs, knowledge, laws, art, folklore, skills, language, and morals of the culture under study. In more recent years, the technique of participant-observation has been used to gain an understanding of smaller groups within our own society.

As indicated by the title of this book, author Judah M. Cohen, who is an ethnomusicologist, has used the anthropologist's approach of participant-observation to study Reform cantors, particularly the process through which they achieve this status. Based on his field work from August 1999 to May



2002, he has produced a vibrant, descriptive analysis of cantorial education from the time of admission to the educational institution, School of Sacred Music, Hebrew Union College, to graduation in a ceremony called "investiture." At the time of his research, the course of study lasted four years. A fifth year has since been added. The first year is spent in residence at the Hebrew Union College campus in Jerusalem and the remaining years are at its New York City location. Cohen conducted his research at both places.

Cohen was quickly accepted by the cantorial students since he made it clear that his field work was to be the basis for his doctoral dissertation so that he was seen as a fellow-student. He sat in on cantorial classes and took part in School exercises, including public choral concerts. When the School's ethnomusicology professor went on leave, Cohen was invited to teach a course on American Jewish music. Soon after he began his field work, Cohen became engaged to the daughter of a Hebrew Union College professor, giving him still another observer perspective. His multiple vantage points enabled Cohen to enhance his understanding of the educational process that transformed the students into full-fledged cantors.

The courses, the students, and their instructors are described. For those readers who are competent in reading music, examples are provided. Other aspects of the educational process are presented, sometimes requiring a sophisticated knowledge of music. For example, the students demonstrate their musical competence through the Practicum in which they offer a liturgical program of music to the entire community. Cohen's detailed chronicle of these occasions calls for musical understanding that many readers may not have.

Brief background information is given about the history and role of the cantor but there is surprisingly little information about the relationship between the rabbi and the cantor. This omission is striking, given the recent decision by the Jewish Theological Seminary to bring its cantorial school and its rabbinical seminary closer together under the leadership of the rabbinical seminary dean. Aside from the cost-saving rationale for this consolidation, it was justified on the basis of the need to integrate the training of rabbis and cantors.

This book is an excellent illustration of how an anthropological technique can be used to illuminate a contemporary professional educational program in our society. Cohen brought to the task he set for himself – understanding the education of cantors – special knowledge about music and about being a participant-observer. The result is a sterling presentation that will be of interest not only to cantors and their teachers but also to rabbis, congregations and everyone concerned about the future of the Jewish community.

What happened to Jews in Polish Shtetls in WWII

The Death of the Shtetl. By Yehuda Bauer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. 224 Pages. \$35.

The statement that six million Jews died in the Holocaust has been repeated so often as to lose some of its ability to shock us. By contrast, this deadly chronicle of murdering Jews in Poland details time and place, often mentioning names, thus making it a devastating book to read by virtue of its factual specificity.



Author Yehuda Bauer is a noted Jewish historian, specializing in the Holocaust. Born and raised in Prague, Bauer moved to Palestine with his family in 1939. He won a scholarship to Cardiff University, Wales, but returned home to fight in the 1948 War of Independence. After completing his degree in Wales, he studied at Hebrew University, earning his doctorate in 1960. A year later, he joined the Hebrew University faculty and except for four visiting professorships in the United States, he remained there until retiring. He is now professor emeritus as well as academic advisor to Yad Vashem and the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education. Bauer has written more than 40 books on the Holocaust and, for his outstanding erudition, he was awarded the prestigious Israel Prize in 1998.

Bauer has argued that the Holocaust was the worst case of genocide in history. Also, he is noted for his contention that there was Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and that it is incorrect to assert that Jews went "like sheep to the slaughter." He insists that what is surprising is not how little resistance there was but rather how much. In this new book, he convincingly documents his position, devoting the longest chapter in the book, "Rebels and Partisans," to a compelling argument, buttressed by persuasive evidence, in support of his view.

As indicated by its title, this book is devoted to an analysis of what happened during World War II to the Jews in the Polish shtetls where 30 to 40 percent of prewar Poland's 3.3 million Jews lived. By the end of the war, there were no Jews left in Poland and there are no more shtetls. When the Russians completed their recapture of Poland in July 1944, it was "too late. The shtetl was dead."

The infamous August 1939 pact between the Germans and the Soviet Union opened the door for the Nazis to

(see Teicher, page NAT 19)



Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Cheesecakes for Shavuot and summer

Anthropologists have found cheese molds dating back 2,000 years. Matthew Goodman, a writer of the "Food Maven" column in *The Forward* newspaper, once wrote that he learned from British cookbook author, Evelyn Rose, that Jews first encountered cheesecake during the Greek occupation of then Palestine in the third century BCE. He also says a recipe for cheesecake even appears in a second century BCE cookbook.

Kraft Foods, which produces Philadelphia cream cheese, advertises that Greek athletes at the first Olympic Games ate a cheesecake-like confection in 776 BCE, and a version of the dessert was described by Roman historian, Cato, 600 years later.

Cheesecake was also a favorite of Eastern European Jews who made it with curd cheeses from cows, such as farmer's cheese and pot cheese, and flavored it with lemon rind, eggs and sugar. The creamy cheesecakes favored by Central and European Jews were called *kaesekuchen*.

Cream Cheese

How did cream cheese come about? The story is told that in 1872, an upstate New York dairyman, William Lawrence of Chester, N.Y., accidentally developed the cheese when he wanted to duplicate the popular French Neufchatel cheese. Instead he came out with a creamier cheese, which he wrapped in foil and distributed in 1880 under the Empire Company name. He called his cheese Philadelphia Brand Cream Cheese.

In 1903 the Phoenix Cheese Company of New York bought the business and the Philadelphia trademark.

In 1912, James L. Kraft, founder of Kraft Foods, subsequently invented a method of pasteurizing cheese. The cheese was not mass marketed until 1920 when two Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, Joseph and Isaak Breghestein, mass marketed their cream cheese through their company, Breakstone.

Kraft Cheese Company bought Philadelphia Cream cheese in 1928 and still owns and produces Philadelphia Cream Cheese today. It was this type of cream cheese that was used in the well-known "New York" cheesecakes made famous by Lindy's Restaurant, the late-night, New York hangout for Broadway stars. This cheesecake was made from eggs, heavy cream, sugar, vanilla and lemon zest.

In 1952, Charley Lubin, a Chicago baker, found a way to freeze cheesecake, and his cheesecake came to be called Sara Lee. Here are some different cheesecake recipes.

Mini Mocha Cheesecakes (approx. 30)

1/2 cup crushed chocolate cookies
1 tsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. melted margarine
2 2-ounce squares semi-sweet chocolate
8 ounces soft cream cheese
1/4 cup sugar
1 egg
1 tsp. espresso coffee powder
1/8 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. vanilla

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line miniature muffin pan cups with paper liners. Blend chocolate cookies, 1 tsp. sugar and melted margarine. Press 1/2 tsp. into each paper-lined muffin cup. Melt chocolate. Beat cream cheese until smooth. Add sugar, egg, coffee powder, cinnamon and vanilla. Add in melted chocolate and blend until mixture becomes thick. Fill each muffin cup with 2 teaspoons. Bake in oven for 18 minutes or until tops are firm when pressed with finger tip. Remove from oven and let cool 15 minutes. Remove from pan.

I am often asked to give recipes for people who live alone or when there is only a couple, so here is a small cheesecake for two.

Cheese Cake (2 servings)

3 Tbsp. flour
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. margarine
3/4 cup cream cheese
1 Tbsp. sugar
1/8 tsp. grated lemon peel
1/4 tsp. vanilla
1 egg
2 Tbsp. sour cream, strawberry or pineapple yogurt

1 tsp. sugar
Preheat oven to 325°F. Combine flour, sugar and margarine. Press into a 4 1/2-5 inch diameter pan. Bake in oven 15-20 minutes. Remove from oven. Mash cream cheese in a bowl. Blend in sugar, lemon peel, vanilla and egg. Pour into baked crust. Bake in oven 15 minutes. Mix sour cream or yogurt with 1 tsp. sugar. Remove cake from oven and spread on top. Chill.

My Mother's Fancy Cheesecake

(8 servings)

Crust

2 cups crushed graham crackers
1/2 cup margarine
1/4 cup sugar
dash cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F. Blend crackers, margarine, sugar and cinnamon. Pat into a spring form pan. Bake in oven for 10 minutes.

Filling

1 1/2 cups cream cheese
2 eggs
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. vanilla

Whip cream cheese, eggs, sugar and vanilla with a hand mixer until fluffy. Pour into baked crust. Bake in oven 30 minutes.

Topping

2 cups sour cream
2 Tbsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. vanilla



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

Say "ah!"

In the 1950s, the demand for Hebrew teachers greatly exceeded the supply. Predictably, many unqualified teachers were hired, who proceeded to confuse students with misinformation: Among other misstatements, they proclaimed that the Hebrew alphabet had multiple "silent letters" and multiple letters for identical consonant sounds. Pupils quickly grew confused and frustrated, believing that Hebrew was hopelessly unpredictable and unlearnable. The next several columns will begin to dispel some of this misinformation, beginning with the distinction between the vowels *qamatz* and *patach*.

Spoken language consists of vowel sounds and consonant sounds. A vowel is the sound produced by passing breath over vibrating vocal chords, without significant obstruction. Altering the shape of the lips and the position of the tongue produces the different quality vowels of a language. By contrast, producing a consonant requires a partial or even a complete obstruction of the breath.

In normal speech, there is a tendency to lengthen the duration of a vowel in a syllable that ends in a vowel. A syllable that ends in a vowel is also known as an "open syllable." Conversely, there

Beat sour cream, sugar and vanilla in a bowl. Remove cake from oven, spread on top. Return to oven and bake 10 more minutes. Remove from oven. Top with pie cherries, crushed pineapple or strawberries on top.

Lemon Cheesecake Squares

(16 squares)

Crust

9 graham crackers, crushed
5 Tbsp. margarine

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cover a square baking pan with foil and butter the foil.

Melt margarine and add to crumbs and toss. Press onto bottom of pan. Bake in oven 12 minutes or until brown. Remove from oven and cool.

Filling

8 ounces cream cheese
1/3 cup sugar
3 Tbsp. sour cream
1 egg
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 tsp. grated lemon peel
1 tsp. vanilla

Beat cream cheese and sugar. Add sour cream and egg then lemon juice, lemon peel and vanilla. Spread batter over crust. Bake in oven 30 minutes. Cool then chill 2 hours. Cut into 16 squares.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ★

is a tendency to shorten the duration of a vowel in a syllable that ends in a consonant. A syllable that ends in a consonant is known as a "closed syllable." Comparing the duration of the "ah" sound in the following two informal words for "father" demonstrates this point: The vowel in "Pa" an open syllable, is pronounced slightly longer than the vowel in "Pop," a closed syllable.

The scribes who developed Hebrew vowel marks in about 600 CE heard this vowel-length distinction, and they preserved it in the vowel marks they developed. When an "ah" sound occurred in an open syllable, the scribes wrote that sound with a *qamatz*, a mark shaped like a "T" beneath a letter. When an "ah" sound appeared in a closed syllable, the scribes wrote it with a *patach*, which is shaped like a "—" beneath a letter.

Knowing the distinction between *qamatz* and *patach* can help us understand the intended meaning of words in a text. For example, the words "לָחָה" and "לִּחָה" are identical except that the former is spelled with a *qamatz* beneath the *yod* and the latter with a *patach*. Because a *qamatz* occurs in an open syllable and a *patach* in a closed syllable, we know that the first word must be pronounced as "yah-le-DAH," a three-syllable word meaning "she gave birth," but the second must be pronounced as "yal-DAH," a two-syllable word meaning "girl."

An attorney and Semitic linguist with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford and Univ. of Calif., Seth Watkins (pen name, Ben-Mordecai) merges linguistic analysis with legal sleuthing to uncover lost meanings of ancient texts. His *Exodus Haggadah* uniquely includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. His 20-year-old *ocicat* has, sadly, gone to her reward. Email: Seth@Vayomer Publishing.com. ★

GOUTTMAN

(continued from page NAT 14)

Persian and Islamic studies at Canberra's prestigious Australian National University. Surprise, surprise, this unit has become well known for its strident pro-Iranian and anti-Israel outlook.

The Fromelles venture was intended to bring a respectful closure to a tragic event in Australian history. Today, it is Iran that is threatening to harm others on a grand scale. The pity of it is that there are still so many in the West who believe that the target is only Israel, which they see as dispensable.

Dr. Gouttman is a former senior academic at the University of South Australia, current senior political analyst with the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission (Australia's ADL), and associate of the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. He is one of the founders of the Australian Jewish Studies Association. He is married and has a daughter who lives in Jerusalem. He can be reached at rmgoutt@melbpc.org.au. ★

WEILAND

(continued from page NAT 8)

Well, all went okay on this special day until I met the rabbi at the shul. He saw I was in a sweat and said: "Don't fret. A lot of boys get that way." He made a joke, bought me a Coke to keep in my pocket, just in case.

After nearly 50 years as a newspaper reporter and editor, Weiland retired from daily journalism and became the editor of a Florida magazine for several years until it went bust. Now he has returned full-time to his first love, poetry, and has developed a unique new style of verse, which he calls Rhyme on Rhyme on Rhyme. He has written nearly 1,000 verses on a wide range of topics and averages about five new pieces a week. Comments are welcomed, especially from fellow bloggers. To read more, go to: wegads.blogspot.com. ★

LETTERS

(continued from page NAT 9)

once. They would be included among the 50 to 55 million on Jan. 27, with other Jewish martyrs on Tisha B'Av, and on Yom HaShoah. The six million deserve no less.

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

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page NAT 10)

and she had been born in Shanghai. Eventually they wound up in New York where we met. I always remember her wonderful parties, the fashionable black dresses she would wear, and her bubbly personality.

We reconnected when I lived here in the 1970s and later, when I would come for visits. Dov was a lawyer with the Ministry of Tourism, and I knew they had been on shlichut several times.

She taught English and some other courses at the Hebrew University for many years. She was a gracious and talented hostess and creative cook (she once won a Queen of the Kitchen contest). She was a gifted artist whose works graced their home. They traveled extensively, but on their last trip last year, she became ill in China and in London. I had the feeling she never really recuperated from those experiences.

We spoke when she could, and I was very distressed a few weeks ago to hear she had been so ill.

All three lived in Jerusalem. All were special friends. I know anyone who knew any one of them will feel the deep loss I feel.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, lecturer, and food writer who returned to live in Jerusalem 20 months ago from Overland Park, Kansas. Her husband, who photographs for her stories, is a new immigrant. They both love exploring their city. ★

BACKALENICK

(continued from page NAT 11)

Eleanor Reissa herself, in top musical form, added further songs. While much of the entertainment was in Yiddish, overhead translations in English (and Russian) rescued the non-Yiddish speakers.

The gala managed to integrate pleasure with more serious moments – balancing the acceptance speeches with the entertainment. Among the honorees was Joel Klein, Chancellor of the New York City Public Schools and, in memoriam, Yosl Mlotek for his contributions to Yiddish culture. Special presentations also went to Aaron Lansky, founder of the National Yiddish Book Center, and Bryna Wasserman, artistic director of the Segal Centre for Performing Arts and director of the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theater, Montreal. There were also special tributes in memory to Yiddish actors Mina Bern, Sara Rosenfeld, and Avrom Sutzkever.

A good deal of time was devoted, by documentary and on stage, to the life and career of Yosl Mlotek (father of Zalman Mlotek, artistic director of the Folksbiene). No doubt the senior Mlotek, throughout his life, made monumental contributions to the cause of the Yiddish language and culture. And how appropriate to have acknowledged his work on this particular date (which is his tenth Yortsayt)! But, since the real star of this gala was the Folksbiene itself, on its 95th birthday, planners would have done well to have considered a program of less Mlotek, more Folksbiene.

But why quibble? This tribute to Yiddish theater was a joyous occasion for Folksbiene lovers, who were happy to see that the venerable old lady continues to thrive.

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

GERTEL

(continued from page NAT 14)

depicted as dissembling a bit themselves under the sun of the Holy Land.

It seems that Israel's epidemic is "The Jerusalem Syndrome," a kind of messianic fever. Homer comes down with an extreme case. He believes that he is the messiah and that he will unite all faiths. He heads straight to the Dome of the Rock mosque on the Temple Mount and brings his message, in Jesus-like fashion, to a mixed audience of Jews, Christians and Muslim Arabs.

At first the audience is hostile to Homer's message, but in the end they

warm up to it: "Attention, Christians, Muslims and Jews. I have come to gather you into a new faith. From now on you will be called ChristMuJews. Because when you get down to it, aren't all religions the same? They tell you what to eat, when to pray, how this imperfect clay that we call man can mold itself to resemble the divine. But we can never attain that ultimate grace while there is hatred in our hearts for each other. Celebrate your commonality. Some of us don't eat pork, some of us don't eat shellfish, but all of us like chicken."

What wins them over is the mention of chicken. Homer has them all shouting in unison, "Peace and chicken." But the demagogic oratorical flourish wears off once the other would-be messiahs start spouting their lines and demonstrating their dementia.

Is this episode exposing glib spirituality, or mocking any messianic doctrines, traditional and newly minted alike, or simply saying that all religious talk is by definition glib, and all pilgrimages to Jerusalem or anywhere likely to degenerate into madness? Is it preaching that religions are only as good as their commonality, or exposing the superficiality of those who captivate crowds with such claims? Or is it simply being typical *Simpsons* fare, hurling sarcasm and one-liners and leaving them to land or to resonate however they may do so and wherever the chips may fall? In any of these scenarios, does this episode do any good or inspire anyone to do what is good, or is the put-down to be regarded as the goal of entertainment and edification, and not so much the formulaic denunciation of "hatred in our hearts"?

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. 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 P-O since 1979. ★

GLICKMAN/SCHMIECHEN

(continued from page NAT 16)

will face stonewall opposition from conservatives and weak support from centrists. Bismarck said, "Politics is the art of the possible" so even if the final energy bill is not a complete solution to global warming, sensible people should support it because currently it is all we have.

Jeff Glickman and Jamie Schmiechen are cousins, two of the 25 grandchildren of Gabriel Cohen, z"l, founder of this newspaper. Glickman received a degree in environmental studies from Oberlin College and currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area. Schmiechen, a high school English teacher, lives in Bloomington, Ind. He and his wife Sarah are the proud parents of Jacob..★

TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 17)

destroy the Polish army in September 1939 and for the Russians to occupy Poland a few days later. During the next 21 months, "the communist regime destroyed an ancient civilization... speedily and effortlessly." Bauer offers some explanations for "the meekness of the Jewish response," contrasting it with the resistance that was organized after the Germans abandoned their treaty with the Russians in June 1941 and mounted a major attack.

While some Jews fled, most of them were engulfed and murdered by the advancing Nazis. A few were temporarily spared to work as slave labor but their life span was brief in the face of the German genocidal policy and the collaboration of the local population. By the time that the Soviet armies successfully counter-attacked, there were very few Jews left.

Using documents, diaries, testimonies, and archival evidence, Bauer tells what happened as tiny numbers of Jews in the shtetls resisted and others escaped to the forests. The groups were small and their struggle "was a matter of last resort." Bauer describes what happened in several shtetls and examines three resistance units: the Zhukov brigade, the Zorin detachment, and the Bielski partisans. He reviews their battle against enormous odds and he claims that the fact that they saved some Jews, no matter how few, "was an unequalled, heroic deed."

This powerful depiction of an unspeakable tragedy adds considerably to our knowledge about the disastrous annihilation of six million Jews and the death of the shtetl.

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

Call/Write for Free Books

We are 100% Judaism; not disguised of any other science

Jack Botwin

Books by Morris Lichtenstein

FREE BOOK by Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein

Applied Judaism Jewish Science

**11 AM Sunday • 109 E. 39 NYC
All Welcome/Friendly/Free**

**12301 San Fernando Rd. #406
Sylmar, CA 91342**

(818) 367-4532 (24 Hr.)

www.appliedjudaism.org



Musings from Shiloh

By BATYA MEDAD

Jerusalem! 43 Years since liberation-unification

Here are some photos I took recently in Jerusalem.

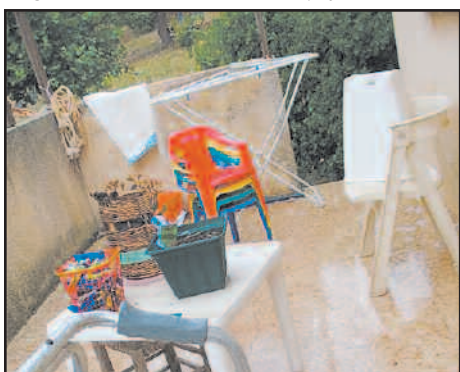


Even Pina (The Cornerstone) "The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." Written by King David, Psalm 118, part of the Hallel Prayer of Praise.



Well-timed washing

Recently, post-Lag B'Omer bonfires left the air disgustingly smelly. The air felt dirty. It was not a day to hang out laundry or even take a walk. So, when it began to drizzle I was overjoyed.



Just enough rain fell to clean the air and rinse the dust off of the solar panels that heat our water. Thanks to G-d who really is merciful.

Here it is: The "Scrap Hat!"

A few days ago, I mentioned that I was crocheting a "scrap hat" made of yarn leftover from other hats. Recently, when in Jerusalem, one of my daughters said that the scarf she was wearing didn't



match the outfit she was going to change into. Suddenly, it hit me. The "scrap hat" would match. I ought to finish it immediately. And I did.

Okay, so I'm guilty...

...of not pruning. So, sue me!



A long time ago, I bought a whole bunch of rose bushes, every color but red. Unfortunately I've never taken proper care of them, but every spring they flower, sort of forgiving me, just a little. If you look carefully here, you'll also see that the grape vines have spread and they touch, the roses and grapes, at least the leaves and branches.

Simple, healthy, nondairy spread

I used to be the cook for the local day care center for babies and toddlers from three months to three years old. I did this for at least four years. At the same time, I was the girls gym teacher. The logistics could be very complicated, but I liked having two totally different jobs. I guess my extra weight, which eventually put me in the obese category, began piling on after I stopped those jobs. Some of the food I cooked was my usual recipes from home and others I learned or adapted from professional lessons they arranged for us.

One thing I learned was Halva Spread. Halva is sweetened sesame seeds made into a candy. As candies go, it's pretty healthy. We were taught how to take the ground unflavored seeds, sold in many stores for *techina* and turn it into a spread, good for sandwiches or for spreading on crackers.

This is really easy, just three ingredients of similar quantities. Don't obsess over measuring exactly. You may like it sweeter or less so, thinner or thicker. You won't get arrested for playing with the proportions. Mix together unflavored sesame paste, honey, boiling water and that's it. It sure beats peanut-butter and jelly, the sweet sandwiches of my childhood.

Not for a heavenly reward

As many know, certainly no secret, I've been taking care of my elderly father since October. My mother can't do it. She's supposed to be selling their house and moving to Israel. My father now lives with us, an unexpected reversal of the empty nest.

I never expected to be doing it. But here I am. That's life. I'm pragmatic. It needs to be done. Ironically, I didn't have all that much to do with my father when I was a kid. He was busy working. But there actually were a couple of fun things. Sometimes we'd go swimming on weeknights at a nearby high school pool, Bayside High School. I don't know how many times that happened; maybe a handful. Another thing was once a friend of his, who had daughters no sons, decided that he and my father should go on a father-daughter fishing trip. So they rented a boat and we went. That happened once.

Back to purpose of this message.

A few neighbors keep telling me that I'll be rewarded for caring for my father, in *Olam HaBa*, (the World to Come). They say that my ticket to *Gan Eden* (The Garden of Eden) is reserved for me; my name is on it. Actually, I find it offensive to think that someone takes care of parents for ulterior motives.

Israeli flags forever flying!

Through thick and thin, no matter what the world wants and says. Wind is *ruach* (spirit).



Just like we see in Jewish History, we will overcome our enemies.



We just must let our *ruach* (spirit) prevail.



Happy Israeli Independence Day Being a "Real Israeli"

One of my pet peeves, those things people say that "press the wrong button" is when I hear "olim" (immigrants) and "Israelis" referred to as two different categories of people here in Israel. I first heard it about 30 years ago from an Abie Nathan groupie when some friends and I were demonstrating against his hunger strike.

The groupie began calling out to passersby:

"Don't listen to them; they're not real Israelis."

I was outraged and marched into Nathan's tent to ask him if he thinks Israelis with accents (obvious immigrants like myself) aren't real Israelis. He seemed genuinely upset by what the young groupie had done. Making aliyah, choosing to live one's life in Israel should be considered on a higher level than those who were just born here, like an accident of fate.

Here I am decades later still with accented Hebrew. We'll soon be celebrating 40 years in Israel, though I may not sound very Israeli.

Many people say that there's an "express lane" to being an Israeli. It's not a pleasant road. This week we'll be celebrating Israeli Independence Day, which is preceded by Soldiers and Terror Victims Memorial Day. Losing a family member or close friend in war, army action or terror attack introduces us to a different level of the Israel experience.

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. ★