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*u draw strength from everywhere. May*

*u draw strength from everywhere. May you draw strength from everywhere. May the circle of healing surround you. May you gather strength from those who love you, from those who listen to you and understand you.*



*May you have a complete healing of your body and spirit  
And may this healing come soon*

*Mi Sheberach*  
a focus  
on healing

# Editorial

Last November when we published two front pages with artwork by Irene Konig, she sent me the following email message.

"My daughter, who has been photographing my work and who, by the way, loves photojournalism and is really a great photographer, is named Joey Gidseg. If anyone wants to see her striking website, she is at [www.joeygidseg.com](http://www.joeygidseg.com).

"Under 'A Love Story' on her site, she has the photo essay of an older Jewish man, who took care of his wife Louise for years after she developed Alzheimer's. He wrote a book about this and would like to use part of that book along with Joey's photographs to tell his story. Since there are so many people in loving relationships who have Alzheimer's, it could be good support for them as well. He is 90 years old."

I replied to her email asking more details about the man and his wife. This was her reply.

"The wife has passed on, but Hymie Samuelson has spent much of his life helping Jewish institutions here in Austin, including small and large congregations and the Jewish schools and preschools. He was originally from New Orleans and became an engineer. He spent time in World War II heading a group of black soldiers in the South Pacific and afterward eventually settled in Austin. He is a beloved figure in the community. In fact, that is how I initially met him, when he took time off from his menswear business downtown and came to read stories to the four-year-olds in preschool at the temple, every morning for years and years.

"He had so much love for his wife when she had Alzheimer's....he dressed her, and bathed her, put her make up on, took her everywhere he went when she was in a wheelchair, and more. He continued to make life as sweet as possible for her."

I contacted Samuelson, and he sent me a copy of his book *Retrogrowth*. It was a most amazing read filled with lots of common sense, but unfortunately some of that has been lost and we need a reminder. For example, on the subject of medications he says:

*Are we missing out on something by taking pills for everything that ails us?... When pills control not only our physical health but also our emotions, preventing us from getting depressed, to feel anger, or even to feel undue enthusiasm, are we perhaps robbing ourselves of some life's greatest blessing: to really feel things and to react to what we feel.*

*I am not proposing that a person should not use medications. I am advocating that the fewer drugs a person puts into his body, the better off he might be...After all the human body has an immune system and combats ailments in its own sort of way that surpasses anything that drugs can do for it. Our own bodies have within it the greatest medical knowledge to treat internal ailments.*

*It produces its own set of drugs if given a chance to do so.*

Samuelson puts a fresh new twist on caring for a loved one with dementia. For him it was simply a natural part of life with its ups and downs just like any other of life's stages. Instead of looking at the loss of memory as a negative, he was creative with that situation and made the most of it. The following is a summary leading up to an excerpt from the book that describes how he took what could have been a sad time and made it fun.

On Sept. 8, 2005 their daughter Debbie, a nurse case manager convinced Hymie it was time to put Louise on hospice. In order to be accepted into that program it is assumed that one has only six months left to live. The family came to say their good-byes to Louise, but coming up was the couple's 60th wedding anniversary on Sept. 19. After they celebrated that, they began to look forward to celebrating Louise's 90th birthday on Oct. 20.

## "I was falling in love with Louise in a way that I had not felt before."

*Lots of good things were happening in our lives leading up to the big party. We were living our lives more fully than ever before.*

*After the party things continued to be good. Debbie had our annual holiday party. The entire holiday season was eventful and wonderful. It is difficult to explain the ecstasy I was experiencing. Every day was like a special present, and Louise was enjoying every bit of it.*

*Six months had passed since Louise was put on the hospice program, and she was still very much alive. They decided to extend the hospice care for another six months.*

*A strange thing was happening to me. I was falling in love with Louise in a way that I had not felt before. I wanted to be with her all the time. She liked it that way, too.*

*I always have had a pretty vivid imagination and shared my fantasies with Louise. She would laugh at me when I would pretend that we were lost in a foreign country, eating exotic food in a hut where the people had rescued us (when, in reality we were sitting in a local cafeteria). She did not participate in games I played, but she never criticized me for what I did.*

*With her progressive dementia another strange thing was happening. She was becoming more and more like a little child and listened with fascination to my make-believe.*

*I pretended that we were the only people in the world, that we were shipwrecked on a deserted island. It was fun. I'm not sure that she understood everything I was telling her, but she listened with animation, just like a four-year-old....*

*There were times when Debbie insisted I get somebody in to help with Louise....*

*"You will crack up," people told me.*

*I did not crack up. I enjoyed what I was doing. I was fascinated with the "growth" that Louise was experiencing. She was*



*Hymie Samuelson cares for his wife Louise as their daughter, Debbie Pearson, looks on. Photo by: Joey Gidseg.*

*going through all the stages of childhood in reverse order...She became my little girl.*

*The second six-month period ended. Hospice extended the program for a third six-month period.*

*...Louise continued to grow. To grow backward. I called what she was going through "retrogrowth."*

*...Louise had reached a point where she no longer could call anybody by name... When I asked her whether she knew who I was she would give me a big smile and say, "Sure I know who you are. You're my honey."*

While in her fourth six-month hospice period on Iyar 14, 5767 (May 2, 2007), she died peacefully at home with her honey Hymie.

I emailed him today to mention this editorial and this was his response:

*I am pleased that you plan to use excerpts from Retrogrowth. If any of your readers want to contact me, my email is: [hymiesamuelson@aol.com](mailto:hymiesamuelson@aol.com); my mailing address: 4012 Sierra Drive, Austin TX 78731; and my phone number: 512-345-0153.*

*I continue to attend our Alzheimer's Support Group. I also am active in Temple Beth Israel's "Circle of Friends," a respite program for caregivers who are dealing with people suffering from various stages of dementia. Every case is different; yet there are common conditions. This is true with people in general.*

*Thanks for contacting me again. Jennie Cohen 1-27-10. ☆*

# About the Cover

## The Circle of Healing

Konig tells us: "The Circle of Healing is a print that I created for bringing and concentrating healing thoughts to someone in need of them, someone recovering from a physical or emotional major



*Irene Konig.*

stress. I used a white rose as the center figure, and set it against some interesting bronze material. I put my calligraphic letters around the main figure, as if to encompass it. When we are healing, we need all the spiritual and earthly forces on our side. We want to know that the people who are important to us, still love us and are with us in the healing journey. It is this and the essential prayer for healing that I was hoping to create within this piece. Prints of *The Circle of Healing* have gone out to people who sent them to those in their own lives who were so much in need of healing."

Konig has created many works with Jewish themes, including works that have a tallit image as a background. The Jewish-themed works range from calligraphy and design prints for weddings to comforting works for those in mourning, inspirational quotes, excerpts from the Song of Songs, other Psalms, quotations from some of the greats in Jewish history, home and personal blessings, and many, many more.

In addition to this large collection of Jewish inspired art, Konig has also created many other art pieces, which encompass a wide range of feelings, thoughts, and experiences, all heartfelt. All master prints are made up by hand, and then prints are made from this master print. All in all, there are close to 300 prints, all available in modest prices, all made on

(see About the Cover, page NAT 3)

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# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

One of the wonderful and countless benefits about becoming Lubavitch is meeting and getting to know a lot of special people. Recently I met Yaakov, a patient in the neurology department. I gave him a smile and a blessing, and suggested he put on tefillin. He declined, saying he hasn't put on tefillin for many years. We got into a discussion, and he told me about himself. He had served as a combat soldier in the Israeli Army. Afterward he had worked as a security guard on El Al airlines and traveled all over the world.

Combat soldiers here are special people. They quite literally put their lives on the line many times to protect me, my family, and all of Israel. I asked him how old he is. He told me that he is 47. I was surprised. He looked at least my age, but was actually 12 years younger. I asked him about his medical problems and religious beliefs. He had grown up in a secular home, received a secular education and lived a secular life, but he did believe in a Higher Power, a Supreme Being. He had met with people from Chabad many times in the army and on his travels. He appreciated the efforts that they made to cheer up the soldiers and security guards and bring some holiday spirit, but had decided not to get involved.

I said that I want to tell him a story. He said fine.

"Hashem is our Father. We are His children, and He has a great love for each of us. He watches us 24 hours every day, and has great pleasure when we manage to overcome all of the obstacles down here and do good deeds, *Mitzvahs*.

"One day Hashem looked down at Yaakov. He said to himself, Hmm. What is going to be with my dear son Yaakov? He never talks to me. For years I've been sending him messengers and messages to encourage him to do more *Mitzvahs* and establish a meaningful relationship with Me. He just ignores everything. What can I do?

"Ah! I have an idea! I'll arrange for him to be a patient in the hospital near Kfar Chabad. There he'll meet Rabbi Cohen. This time he won't be able to excuse himself that he is busy and just walk away. I'll make sure that he is really worried about some health problems that the doctors don't know how to fix. I know my customers. Life down there on Earth is hectic, and when everything is well, my dear children often forget about Me. Rabbi Cohen will encourage him to pray, and he'll think about it very seriously."

I looked Yaakov in the eye. He thought for a minute and decided that he isn't putting on tefillin now, but if Hashem will help him and he'll get better, then when he gets home he'll put tefillin on himself, and also with his 14-year-old son.

We met again two days later. This time he wasn't in bed. He was walking out of the ward. He gave me a big smile and asked if he could put on tefillin. Not only did he put on tefillin, he asked me to teach him how to do it so he can continue to put them on himself. He told me that Baruch Hashem he is much better and was going home. We were both delighted. He was feeling better, and that made me happy. He had found Hashem, and that made me even happier.

I have told this story to many patients in our hospital, each time with slight variations, but the same basic idea. Chassidus teaches us that everything that happens is for the good. It is all part of Hashem's master plan.

What good comes from getting sick? From getting really sick? Yaakov is a good example. His illness greatly changed his life for the better. According to the secular view, life is just a meaningless accident. A few thousand atoms happened to stick together in a certain order, and that's how we got here.

## [Hashem] said to himself, Hmm. What is going to be with my dear son Yaakov?

Now Yaakov has found the real meaning of life. He has found Hashem, our Father, our Creator. This is no small accomplishment. Yaakov grew up in an antireligious culture. He was taught that religion is the opium of the masses, that religious people are backward, holding on to primitive beliefs from the dark ages. He lived a hectic life and didn't have time to sit down and think. Weeks went by, months went by, years went by. Life and health were taken for granted.

Until he got sick.

His situation can be compared to a person lost in the desert. All his life he had hardly thought about water. Whenever he was thirsty he turned on the faucet and had a drink. Now, lost in the desert, he spends all day desperately searching for water. When Yaakov got really sick, his health and his very life became his main concerns. Everything else became secondary. When I suggested that he turn to Hashem, the source of all life and health, he was willing to try.

This is another great benefit of joining Lubavitch. In Lubavitch you can find meaning and healing for your own life, and you can help others to find meaning and healing.

What is so special about Lubavitch? What gives them their strength? The Lubavitcher Rebbe. He is the leader of our generation, the prophet of our generation. When we follow him, we are following Hashem, and we have unlimited strength. I am not doing my own act. I am just a *shliach*, an emissary of the Rebbe to carry out the will of Hashem.

The Rebbe and his emissaries are bringing healing and redemption to all of

# Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

January 15, 2010, Vaera  
(Exodus 6:2-9:35), 29 Tevet 5770

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, *Va-era*, God reveals God's hidden and mysterious name to us. It is written *yud-heh-vav-heh*. No one knows how it is pronounced and according to tradition, it would have only been known to the high priest who uttered the name inside the holy of holies on Yom Kippur. Some have tried to tell us it is pronounced *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, but these are just guesses. When we pronounce those letters in the Torah today we say *Adonai*. The mystery of this ineffable name lends to the power of the name and the power of God. I believe that God is powerful and changes lives, changes relationships, changes attitudes, and more, but I don't believe that God is all-powerful – omnipotent – in that God controls the natural events that happen on this globe or throughout the universe.

These last few days we have witnessed, once again, the power of the earth working in ways that we can't control or even predict. Haiti was devastated by a 7.0 earthquake that toppled or destroyed nearly every building in its path. Most of us, I imagine, have seen pictures either on television, our computers, or in the newspaper of this unimaginable destruction. Several years ago we witnessed the terrible power of a tsunami. Powerful earthquakes have struck Turkey, Iran, the Philippines, and so many other places around the world including this country. Whether it is a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, tsunami, volcano, or another natural disaster, the power is awesome and dreadful and too often deadly.

For me, at these moments, when humans recognize their fragility, the power of God is greatest. In the face of these moments of calamity humanity rises to its highest level of compassion and energy. Haiti is a poor country that didn't build buildings to withstand an earthquake or a fierce hurricane, but it doesn't matter as the people of Haiti are human beings who are truly suffering. Yes the relief effort has been hindered by the severity of the destruction, but people are trying to get in to help. Doctors, nurses, search and rescue teams, engineers, and more will continue to pour into to Haiti to try save lives, keep order, and start the rebuilding process. God's strength enables people to do this extraordinary work in times of crisis and God's strength will help the survivors in Haiti to begin to rebuild their lives.

We shouldn't wait for a crisis or natural

the world. Join us by learning Torah and doing *Mitzvahs*. We want *Moshiach* now!

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

disaster to let God in to help or motivate. Finding a place for the power of God in our lives each and every day can make a huge difference in what we do and accomplish. Today is Jan. 15. Today is the birthday of an individual who let God into his life, saw the world around him, and used this relationship with God to make change. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King saw the injustices of this world and said that this isn't the way people should treat others and this isn't the way people should live and this isn't the way of God. His speech at the end of Aug. 1963 captured his vision of a better world; but if you read that speech it isn't just about people, but about God working through each of us.

We can't control natural disasters, but we can control our responses to help others. We can also control the way human beings relate to one another. It shouldn't only be when a disaster strikes, but each and every day so that we can bring about the messianic vision of a better world for all.

When you light your Shabbat candles tonight, light one for bravery of the survivors and courage of all those who have stepped up to help so many in need of a smile, a hug, a home, some care and comfort, and more. Light the other for the possibilities that God's strength affords every day of our lives.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ✨

## ABOUT THE COVER

(continued from page NAT 2)

request, and all matted for gifting, or for the individual, and enclosed in a crystal-clear envelope. Categories on the website, [www.artoflife.us](http://www.artoflife.us), serve to help in the search for the perfect piece. Konig will be glad to work with you to find what would be the best print, and gift certificates are available, if needed, in case you can't decide.

Konig likes to use interesting materials and incorporate them into the master print. She has used leaves and berries, ribbons, fabric, flowers of all kinds, jewelry, masks and other assorted objects. Often she puts into calligraphy her own words, expressing a sentiment that she could not find elsewhere as a quotation. Her works adorn many homes in the central Texas area and in other parts of the country. In addition, she has donated some of her artwork to the Jewish Community Center in Havana, Cuba, and to a hospital in Israel, Shaare Zedek.

Konig holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the City College of New York, as well as a master's degree in psychology from the New School for Social Research in New York. Just a little over half of her life has been spent in Austin, Texas, where she currently resides. Her other years were spent in New York. She is the mother of two young adult daughters.

Irene Konig may be contacted at [pleasure-to-behold@juno.com](mailto:pleasure-to-behold@juno.com) or at 512-835-2165. ✨

# Time is a gift

BY RABBI LEAH BERKOWITZ

Not long ago, I was speaking with a friend who had been ill for quite some time and had been in the hospital and then at home recuperating. Most of the time my friend could not do anything else but sleep. And then one day, my friend regained her health and strength. My friend went outdoors and took a walk in the park and was dazzled by the wonder of nature, by the laughter of children, by the movement of people. I asked her what she learned about during her illness. "When I was sick, I realized the importance of time and using my time profitably." Her observation struck me with the depth of its truth.

In Judaism, time is considered not a burden, not something that we look to "kill" but rather as a gift. Time is a gift from God and so is life. Each day we spend on this Earth is a gift from God. In fact, the very first thing that a Jew does upon awakening is to say "Modeh Ani, Thank you Thank you, God for another day of life, for more time." We Jews have always looked upon time as something that is also to be hallowed and sanctified. We never had large cathedrals in space, but we always had cathedrals in time, as we sought to provide time with the texture of depth, sanctity and meaning.

In Psalm 90, it says, "Teach us to number our days right, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." In other words, if we relate to time and the days of our life the right way, the spiritual way, it will give us a heart of wisdom and understanding. It is important that we realize that our lives are fragile and it is important to live each day with the awareness that it is a gift and to give back the day to God, at days end, with the realization that we have lived that day to the spreading of God's glory and God's kingdom.

God has given us health and time and we are accountable for how we use these gifts. God expects us to use them wisely and with intention.

In the period between Passover and Shavuot, we engage in a spiritual activity known as *sefirah* or counting. We count the days from Passover, festival of our freedom, to Shavuot, the festival of our liberation, as we once again receive the Torah.

I have always thought that it is not only enough to count the days but to also make our days count. That is the best way to prepare for receiving Torah. When we realize that each day is a gift, we will find it easier to make each day count and make the most of the opportunities presented to us. May God show us how to spend each day as a time of holiness and service. And most of all, may we remember, saying it each morning: Today is a gift. May I use it wisely!

*Rabbi Leah Berkowitz, a noted spiritual teacher works with American Jewish Heritage Organization especially reaching out to unaffiliated Jews and deepening the commitment of affiliated Jews. Her father,*

# Psychotherapy and Prayer

BY DR. JEFFREY LAST

## Breaking free from our own harsh judgments

While the concepts of psychotherapy and prayer may seem to be very different, it appears to me that the two are really quite related. In recent years in my psychotherapy practice I began to notice a number of similarities between the issues brought up by my patients and the themes expressed in the central prayer of the Jewish service, the *Shmoneh Esrei* (the Silent Amidah).

The *Shmoneh Esrei*, literally 18 (referring to the original number of blessings contained in the prayer) was written by the sages approximately 2,500 years ago. In it we address God with our most personal needs. It stands to reason that there should be a connection between this and the very personal communication that goes on in psychotherapy. While the *Shmoneh Esrei* is structured as a communication between the individual and God, a closer examination of this prayer indicates that it has tremendous relevance for our relationship with our fellow human being as well as our most private communications within our own heart.

The *Shmoneh Esrei* is structured around three main ideas. The first expresses looking upward to God in a way that we recognize the Almighty's awesome might in giving to us, controlling the world and creating a fabulously intricate, working universe. The second idea speaks to our request for the range of our human needs, both spiritual and material. The third relates to gratitude.

I praise You, I need You, I thank You.

Let us look at one example of how this connection between the *Shmoneh Esrei* and the issues of psychotherapy works. In the second section of personal requests is the blessing labeled "Restoration of Justice," or in Hebrew *Shoftanu* (Our Judges). The blessing reads:

*Restore our judges as in earlier times and our counselors as at first, remove from us sorrow and groaning, and reign over us, You, God, alone with kindness and compassion, and justify us in judgment. Blessed are You, God, King, Who loves righteousness and justice.*

In this blessing we request the return of our wise judges and counselors and the removal of sorrow and groaning. God will then compassionately reign. Our judges will help resolve matters among the people and our counselors, the Prophets, will



*Rabbi William Berkowitz, z"l, frequently appeared in the P-O with interviews of prominent personalities. ✨*

help to solidify our relationship with God.

We may ask, "What is the connection between judgment and the removal of sorrow?" One understanding is that without proper guidance we are destined to make decisions that we will regret. We can also feel deep sorrow that we don't merit more effective guidance in our generation. So the saying goes, "You get the leaders you deserve."

However on a more personal level we can also see that misguided judgment indeed can be a major source of sorrow. We can become trapped in our false, rigid judgments about ourselves and the world. This can cause us incredible grief. Conversely, clarity of judgment allows us to be aware of many options in meeting our personal challenges. As the blessing indicates, judgment is clearest when informed by a generous spirit of kindness and compassion.

...a closer examination ...indicates that it has tremendous relevance for our relationship with our fellow human being as well as our most private communications within our own heart.

### Practical Application

I had a patient, let's call him Joel, a recently married young man who was urged to consult with me by his wife. He revealed in the first session that while he had criticized his wife about her suggestion that he come in, "deep down" he knew she was right. We later discovered that his hesitation to come in on his own stemmed from his sense that he was really "too far gone" to get any help.

This initial presentation encapsulated the primary features of the problem and his treatment. He was overly critical of himself and others, yet "deep down" there was a more generous spirit that we would try to access. His harsh judgment indeed caused him much sorrow. Joel continually focused on the faults of everyone. This harshness flowed from his rigid standards for behavior, thinking and feeling. He consequently felt a continual sense of disappointment about his life.

Joel secretly yearned to be more carefree, yet was truly afraid of it.

In our work together, we came to identify certain unrecognized assumptions that guided much of Joel's outlook. He held the belief that without these very rigid standards his own "wild side" would break out and create "havoc in the world." He had to maintain rigid self-control. Others also "needed" to know when they were getting too wild. He saw this as a difficult yet ennobling task. There was a

certain sense of pride in being the "watchman of destructive forces in the world." He often spoke of "increasing the forces of goodness in a dark world." It took a while for him to see that in reality he felt more burdened than ennobled by this task. Instead of creating more goodness, he was creating resentment and irritation.

In a "moment of weakness" (i.e., strength), Joel revealed that he secretly yearned to be more carefree, yet was truly afraid of it. He acknowledged his own resentment of his self-imposed mission. He began to talk about his sense of misery that flowed from his rigidity. After vacillating for a long time, he started to test out the effects of judging himself and others more kindly.

### Making It Real

The ability to make judgments is one of the essential qualities of being human. Besides knowing the difference between a delicious apple and one that is rotten, we use this faculty to come to conclusions in terms of our interactions with others. Let's say I plan to meet my friend for coffee at 10 o'clock in the morning. At 10:10 he is not there and I'm getting impatient. By 10:20 I'm starting to get a bit irritated. I give him a call, no answer. By 10:30 I'm mad. I begin to question our friendship and by 10:40 I question his worth as a human being. Then I start to get down on myself, wondering if I've really been a good friend. Finally I come to a judgment that zaps us both: "He never really cared about me and he's a pretty irresponsible guy anyway."

Infusing my judgment with a little compassion would have made my morning a lot more pleasant.

An hour later I find out that he was in a fender bender on the way to meet me. Oops! My initial judgment was hardly tempered with compassion. I saw my friend as someone who didn't care and I began to see myself as someone who didn't deserve it. Had I taken a little extra time to infuse my judgment with a little compassion, for both of us, my morning would have been a lot more pleasant.

The blessing of Restoration of Justice in the *Shmoneh Esrei* is just one example of how this powerful prayer can lead us to a richer examination of ourselves. We can be introspective about the nature of our judgments of others and ourselves. Are we judging with compassion? Can we give the benefit of the doubt or do we use our judgments to put ourselves and others into boxes that end up causing us needless grief?

*This is one example of using the Shmoneh Esrei for personal growth. Those interested in a fuller discussion of this may download Dr. Last's eBook Psychotherapy and Prayer, Insights into Personal Growth through the Shmoneh Esrei at [www.drjlast.com](http://www.drjlast.com).*

*Dr. Jeffrey Last, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist who has been in practice in the Detroit area since 1979, where he treats children, adolescents and adults. Dr. Last lives in Southfield, Mich. with his wife and children. ✨*

## Parsha Perspective



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

### Spreading Jewish Spirituality

The three major festivals in the Jewish calendar – Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot – are referred to as *Shalosh Regalim*. Of course, *shalosh* means “three” and *regalim* refers to “feet,” and they began as pilgrimage festivals. Every man was commanded to go up to Jerusalem three times each year for these festivals (Exodus 23:17 and 34:23–24, and Deuteronomy 16:16). And not uncommonly their wives and children accompanied them.

But why were they commanded to make these pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem?

We can imagine several reasons. The pilgrimage was an opening to acknowledge God’s gifts by making offerings from those gifts. The effect is to teach us that we are not alone in the responsibility for our successes and failures, but that there is a creative force for good alive in the world. The pilgrimage also strengthened and unified the family by acknowledging God’s role in human affairs. The effect is to bolster our moral character and that of our children, so neither they nor we are any longer alone when meeting life’s day-to-day moral challenges. And lastly, the pilgrimage strengthened the community and nation by joining us together spiritually as one people rejoicing before God. The effect is to support and sustain a community whose spiritual power spreads far beyond our families and ourselves, but nonetheless is dedicated to the moral well-being of each of us as individuals.

So the pilgrimage was not only for the individual and the family, but also for the community and nation. We learn from Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888): “Each one has to fit himself into the national circle in the ‘City of God’ with his own individual offerings...and there, not only enjoy life himself with his household but make the poorer people [which includes those who are spiritually as well as materially impoverished] also...get to know the blessings and happiness that flow from the Torah or God...and only by virtue of belonging to this national body to become conscious of his secure and untroubled position on earth.”

If we lived in those times, what would we think of the people who were not going up to Jerusalem? Maybe we would say to ourselves, “I’ll take care of myself and not worry about them,” or tell ourselves, “It’s none of my business if they don’t want to go up.” And it’s no

stretch of the imagination to see that we can think in similar ways about our own contemporary participation in Judaism and congregational life.

But Judaism teaches us to consider more than our own spiritual and religious interests. The rabbinic guideline of *lifnim mishurat hadin* (i.e., going beyond the letter of the law) teaches us that we should not consciously calculate to do the minimum required by the halakhah (i.e., by the rabbinic law, literally “the way” or “the path” for Jewish life). In effect, it would not be enough to make the pilgrimage alone or with only our own family if we personally knew other Jews who had lost their way from Judaism. If so, we would be obliged to inquire after their well-being and whether we could provide encouragement and support for them to make the pilgrimage too.

What does it mean to say that we are “obliged” by Judaism to act in a particular way?

The essence of such obligation is that one has incurred a debt, to which a duty attaches by contract or agreement, for something received. In this sense we are obliged to meet our duties in the Covenant, to recognize and respond to the design and workings of creation as blueprinted in the Torah, not because we can’t choose to ignore them, but because in meeting them we continue to be the recipients of God’s blessings. By way of an oversimplified analogy, when we fail to play any game by its rules, we cut ourselves off from the rewards of the game, in its place creating chaos and conflict that degrades individuals and their relationships with one another. Our obligations in Judaism are designed to have precisely the opposite effect – to foster unity in common purpose, which is uplifting to us communally and thus individually.

There are many teachings in Judaism to the effect that not only are we obligated to care for the property of our neighbor, but our neighbor’s spirit and soul as well. The Scripture says, “You may not hide yourself” (Deuteronomy 22:1–3), so the rabbis teach that we must not be indifferent to the loss of Jewish faith and practice by other Jews. For example, Rabbi Yosef Yozel Hurwitz of Navaradok (1848–1919), one of the giants of the Mussar movement,<sup>1</sup> teaches us that, “Accordingly, everyone must feel it his responsibility to come to the aid of anyone who, to his knowledge, finds himself in spiritual danger...”

But what is the uniquely Jewish spirituality that may be endangered?

Rabbi Hillel Rachmani (Yeshivat Har Etzion, Virtual Beit Midrash Project) describes the essentials of Jewish spirituality as taught by Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865–1935), chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community in Palestine, whose philosophy reflected the fundamentals of the kabbalistic system of the Zohar:

“Rav Kook describes two routes by which a soul’s connection to the supernal divine light can be improved. The first is common in Eastern mysticism and involves working with one’s consciousness,

one’s thought, one’s spirit. The second is found more in the Western tradition (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and emphasizes the importance of behavior and ethics...Ethical behavior as an expression of free will is not simply an external veneer, but effects an internal revolution. Spiritual metamorphosis occurs not only via meditative recognition of fundamental truths, but is also triggered by an individual’s decision to conduct himself according to correct ethical principles. In this way man can spiritually ascend and simultaneously deepen his personality by genuinely connecting with God. What a Buddhist attains with meditation, argues Rav Kook, should be arrived at by living a just life.”

David W. Weiss describes Jewish spirituality in terms of “A Mystique of Action” in *The Wings of the Dove*: “Judaism is permeated by a mystique of action. The archetypal concept for the Jew is *mitzvah*; the medium of redemption is action...It is the *mitzvah* that transforms, not declarations of faith...Man is obliged to reflect and reciprocate the attributes of the Divine in the thrust of doing; for the Jew the ground of action is the *imitatio dei* of *mitzvot*. The mystery is that in their course, man is transformed.” (Emphasis in original.)

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**The effect is to teach us that we are not alone in the responsibility for our successes and failures, but that there is a creative force for good alive in the world.**

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The religious obligation of reaching out to other Jews who are in “spiritual danger” of alienation from Torah and an ethical Jewish life is a far cry from our contemporary social and religious mores; it shocks our sensibilities, which reflect the valuing of individual autonomy and independence as our highest ideals. And yet we are not entirely unconscious of the anomie and alienation that accompany our contemporary way of life. We often find ourselves captivated by the nostalgic recollection of community that existed in the past, with its face-to-face relationships and mutual support, which invariably forms the underpinning of such obligations.

Rabbi Hurwitz elaborates on the communal implications of the obligation: “When one becomes aware of as grievous a failing within society as its present educational structure, which has taken such a tremendous toll of our youth – how much more so must he summon up all of his powers to guard the breach, remove the impediment, and raise up the standard of truth...This [is to be] accomplished through the formula of ‘Teach each other,’ by means of which...[is] cultivated... the goal of

community service...Where each is concerned with the spiritual perfection of his neighbor and objectively measures himself against the other to see where their respective strengths lie, there is no basis for propagation of Torah more solid than this.”

Rabbi Hurwitz also teaches a mussar lesson on the ideal of a congregation spreading Jewish spirituality, particularly “when the survival of Torah and the fear of G-d are at stake” – not entirely unlike our own times. The objective must be to train “community servants” or leaders, to create a “united fellowship” whose members can “teach each other.”

Lest we think that the obligation to spread Jewish spirituality has no relevance to life in the 58th century of our people, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986), the leading *halakhic* authority of his generation, teaches us that, “Another factor that enlarges the obligation on those who are capable of bringing others closer to Torah is the fact that many people who are far from a Torah life can be categorized as *Timokos Shenishbu*, people held captive by Gentiles [or by their worldview] since infancy (*Yoreh De’ah* 159:6). It is a *mitzvah* – an obligation – to bring such individuals back to the Torah and Judaism (*Mishneh Torah*, Hilchos Mamrim 3:3). When there is no one else to accomplish this, then one must even take time from his Torah studies to do so...How much time can and must one devote to this task...? As in charity, where one has an obligation to give a tenth of his income to the poor, so must one spend one tenth of his time working on behalf of others, bringing them close to Torah. If one is endowed with greater resources, he must correspondingly spend more of his time with others.”

Why, simply because we believe in and practice the Jewish way of life, should we want to lead other Jews to it? Why should we want to spread Jewish spirituality and committed participation in congregational community?

Because, stated most simply, the power of that spirituality and congregational commitment to uplift us and transform our individual life, our family, our community, and the larger world in which we live, is directly proportional to the numbers of us who are invested in them. Spreading Jewish spirituality is not only in our own individual self-interest, but also in the interests of the Jewish people and all the communities in which they live.

But *how* are we to lead other Jews to it? What can we do, and what should we avoid doing?

We certainly won’t lead them by promoting it to them like we would sell

(see Parsha Perspective, page NAT 11)

<sup>1</sup> The Mussar movement arose in the 19th century “for the education of the individual toward strict ethical behavior in the spirit of halakhah.” It was a community movement in response to the destructive effects of mid-19th-century ideologies that were undermining fear of G-d and Torah learning.



## Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

### Shevat began Jan. 16

It may still be the heart of the winter in many places, but the month of Shevat marks a hidden and mystical time of new beginnings. Shevat is a time of rebirth, new inspiration and creativity. The first part of the month may still feel dark and harsh, but that all changes after the 15th of the month, the full moon, and the holiday of Tu B'Shevat.

We may have lived through a cold winter this year, but spring is coming! Be patient. Something new is going to come forth within you. Prepare yourself for the new revelation of light and blessing that is available to us during this month of Shevat.

In this last month of Tevet, we purified ourselves of anger and learned new ways to respond to challenges in our lives. Through these efforts, the seeds of our vision for expressing our potential have been planted deeper within us. In the month of Shevat, the seed is sprouting. Say "Yes" to the newness of life once again. Invite the awesome potential within you to come forth. Believe that you will bear new fruit and you will.

The energy of the month is best represented by the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. Kabbalistically, it is one of the highest and most joyous days of the year. It is called the New Year for the Trees. Though the trees may still be barren at this time, we are told that the new sap begins to flow on Tu B'Shevat. We once again trust in the cycle of life that will produce new leaves, fruits and flowers.

The Torah tells us that the human being is likened to a tree. Like the sap of the trees, our creative juices begin flowing on Tu B'Shevat, so we too will bear new fruit and flowers in the spring.

#### Meditation for the month of Shevat

Imagine yourself as a tree. Your branches are now barren, but your roots are hidden, strong and deep. Go deep inside, open to the new creative energy stirring within you now. Breathe deeply and open to this new flow. Open to a new beginning. Keep breathing deeply as you do this simple opening to the new. Let go of the past limiting beliefs of who you thought you are, or what is possible in your life, and open to simply being present. Open your heart, open your mind. Say "Yes" over and over again. Say it silently to yourself, say it out loud, sing it, shout it, whisper it. Breathe deeply. Yes, Yes, Yes. You will bring forth beautiful flowers and new fruit this year. Amen.

In the month of Shevat, do not waste your time focusing on what you physically see before you, what you have and what you do not have. Much of what we see

around us is what we have already birthed previously in our consciousness. The outer world is a reflection of the inner world. Everything has its roots in the spiritual and invisible realms of Being.

Now in the month of Shevat we became pregnant with new possibilities if we open to the new flow of blessing available during this month. Focus on what is not yet visible, what is the unexpressed potential. Let's empty our minds of the past and call out to receive new inspiration. The internal creative process that will bear fruit later in the year begins in Shevat. It will not be immediate gratification, so be patient for in the month of Shevat our fruit, the manifestation of this new opening in our consciousness is not yet visible on the physical plane.

How do we bear new fruit in our lives? How do we open to newness? We know that a tree needs firm roots to grow and it needs water. In the month of Shevat we refine and strengthen our roots. If we want to change what is happening in our lives, if we want to birth new possibilities for ourselves, we have to change our consciousness, our thoughts, our feelings and our connection to our bodies. Our consciousness is the roots that create what occurs in our life. Prayer, meditation, learning Torah and therapy are powerful tools to change our consciousness.

Interestingly enough, the area of healing this month is eating. Eating is also a mysterious inner process of renewal. We do not just eat physical food, but we ingest all kinds of food. What we do for recreation, the movies, the television, the books, the music, the friends, the work we do, everything we take into ourselves is food and has the ability to strengthen or weaken us. This month asks us to become conscious of what we take within us.

How appropriate that we welcome this new month of Shevat with the Torah portion of Va'era. There is a new revelation of God that is introduced now in this Torah portion. "I am Hashem (*Yud, Hay, Vav and Hay*). Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know God as this Name. They did not need this revelation of God, like we do now. This Name is a divine name associated with infinite compassion.

In this week's Torah portion, Hashem says to the Jewish people and to each of us, "I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt, I shall rescue you from this service, I shall redeem you. I shall take you to Me for a people, I shall be a God to you and you shall know that I am Hashem your God Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I shall bring you to the land..."

These are the same phrases that we will say later during the holiday of Passover. There is a direct connection between Tu B'Shevat, the month of Shevat and Passover, the Passover *seder*. It is powerful to repeat these words to yourself every day. Many times each day, in our *davening* we remember leaving Egypt, Mitzrayim, the place of limitations and boundaries. I love these words from the morning prayers, "I am Hashem, your God who



## Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### One year after the Gaza conflict – a visit to Sderot and Ashkelon

The first time I visited Sderot was the day after Gilad Shalit was kidnapped, as part of the Hadassah delegation to the World Zionist Congress, summer 2006.

The second time I visited Sderot was with Barry, end of January 2008, on a trip sponsored by the Kiwanis of Belgium.

Now Barry and I were privileged to be part of a special media tour one year after the end of Operation Cast Lead sponsored by the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem.

As soon as we boarded the bus at 8 a.m., the first person we met was Shmuel Bowman, Israel director of Operation Lifeshield. This Toronto man, who has been in the Jewish nonprofit field for 15 years, had been brought into this organization soon after it was started.

#### Operation Lifeshield

What is Operation Lifeshield? A grass-roots response, begun in 2006, by a group of people of diverse backgrounds – a rock music producer, a building constructor, a rabbi, a businessman – who wanted an answer to what we can do in the Second Lebanon War. Conferring with the Israel Manufacturer's Association, founders, American Israelis and business partners, Shep Alster and Josh Adler, found out there was a lack of public air raid shelters in public spaces in areas under attack. They began a campaign outreaching to ministries, synagogues and interfaith groups for funds. Alster had worked in the building industry, and Adler was a contractor and construction supervisor.

The first shelters, designed in May 2007, were built according to Israel Defense Force Homefront Command specifications. They are constructed with 12-inch-thick steel reinforced solid concrete walls and ceilings and steel

raised you from the land of Egypt, open wide your mouth and I will fill it." Sometimes I literally open my mouth like a baby ready to receive. It is very awesome practice.

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sheeting lining the interior walls and ceilings for additional strength. The bus stop shelter, which holds about 15 people, weighs 30 tons and costs \$19,000; the larger shelter, which holds up to 50 people, weighs 70 tons and costs \$35,000.

#### Moshav Mavqim

By 9:40 we have reached Moshav Mavqim, three kilometers (a little over 1 3/4 miles) south of Ashkelon, two kilometers (1 1/4 miles) from the border to Gaza. We stand in awe as the yellow concrete shelter is lowered off the truck and placed next to the Moadon Noar, youth clubhouse.

This small holder's community was founded by Holocaust survivors and was waning. A few years ago, a group of 25 Israelis, evacuated from the Gaza area Jewish communities of Gush Katif, moved here and breathed new life into the small community. We are served refreshments in the community center, which the International Christian Embassy (ICE) renovated and dedicated in October 2009.

Shalom Hemoh has been living here for five years since he left the Gush Katif area. He gave the group a big thank-you. In Hebrew, which was translated for the press, he said, "Those who save one soul, it is as if they saved the whole world. It is very important that the youth clubhouse is next to the shelter."

His 11.5-year-old son was killed in an accident, and the youth clubhouse is dedicated to his memory. All during Operation Cast Lead, it was closed because it was insecure.

Malcolm Hedding, ICE director, responded that the ICE mandate says its purpose is to insure Israel lives in peace and security and "this is an example of the fulfillment of our mandate. To provide this bomb shelter is a privilege. To stand with your community is a blessing."

To date, 60 shelters have been placed from Sderot in the south to the Kerem Shalom crossing with Gaza. The intention is to place one at every bus stop in Sderot, and south to kibbutzim and moshavim along the Gaza border.

They are also now working from the Erez Crossing to Gaza up to Ashkelon.

The International Christian Embassy is responsible for 15 of these shelters and today, we had seen the first of two put in place from the trucks bringing them to the sites.

#### On to Ashkelon

By 10:20 we are met at City Hall by Yossi Greenfield, security chief for the municipality, who gives us a briefing. From the center of Gaza City to the center of Ashkelon is 10 kilometers (6.25 miles). Ashkelon was the oldest and largest seaport in ancient times and dates back many thousands of years. It was reestablished by Jews in 1948. This seaside resort-like community has 123,000 residents and 25,000 studying in five universities. There are three high schools.

(see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 12)



## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### Response to terrorism

For those with families in Israel, we can tell you that when the next successful terrorist raid occurs in the United States, the discussion about personal rights will end. Whatever naïvete that still remained, will be gone, and we will not talk about being in war, we will be in war.

Since 9/11 we have been told that it will not be the last act of terrorism against the United States. People in government have been prepared, waiting, and somewhat confused by the peace that has prevailed. We live in a porous country. Those who are most knowledgeable concede that anything is possible, and while we are "on guard," how do you protect everything?

Because the first acts of terrorism occurred with the use of planes against targets, we seem to be lulled into a belief that if we protect planes, then terrorism will be somehow abated. We know from the experience in every other country of the world, that is not the case.

The Nigerian "underwear" terrorist would have had no problem entering into the United States, and then free to put his bomb together, blown up the Detroit airport. He could have done the same in any airport in the United States. It is only when you are ready to board, that there is security, and not before.

Hundreds of thousands of illegals come across our southern borders every year, some to work, others to find work, and others to sell drugs. What would stop terrorists that has failed to stop illegals? And what about targets that would "terrorize us more." We have unprotected power sources, unprotected water sources. One half million people pass through Times Square every day. Why should we suppose that someone who is willing to die for a cause has limits on the people he will kill?

If all the systems worked correctly, the Nigerian terrorist would not have been on that flight, but there are thousands of other people coming to the United States every day who are not on lists, and should we not assume that whatever materials he was bringing from Yemen, he might have found in the United States?

Does it make sense to you that we should protect the airplanes, and not deal with the real issues of the war against terror? In Israel there is a nation "at alert." The whole nation, men, women and children are watching for any sign of terror, and even then, it occurs.

The Christmas attempt revealed some of the issues of management. Was I the only person in the United States who didn't know that over 100,000 Nigerians live in Houston? Have you been to

Dearborn, Mich., gone into a mall, and believed you were in the Middle East?

We're simply not in Kansas, Toto, and we're not going back. When a terrorist succeeds in Israel, everything stops. But it is temporary, because you can not avoid buses or bus depots, or crowded streets.

The Israelis have superb screening in the airport, but it continues everywhere in the society, and that is squarely where we are. We just don't like it. We just don't want to admit that we have to change our way of life.

The pictures of Yemen, like Afghanistan, reveal poverty and want, and we know that desperate people do desperate things. We need to reevaluate why people hold their own lives with so little regard, that an educated Nigerian, a Jordanian doctor, and an American psychiatrist at Fort Hood are willing to kill for a cause.

With regard to poverty, we have already learned that having nothing contributes to being easily manipulated by powerful ideology than the prospect of no future. There certainly were alternatives to loneliness for this young Nigerian, and some other avenues of protest.

We need to join the war effort. We need to become more interested in ending pockets of desperate poverty. We need to awaken the world to what will happen if there is not a joint effort to fight this plague of violence.

We also have to get a handle on the emerging picture of escalating terror. What we know right now, does not compute. Until we know more about the enemy, we will continue to focus on the barn door that was left open, and not on the next window of opportunity.

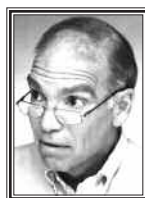
Our experts are telling us that it is only a matter of time. There is no question that we have what seems to be a "plate that runneth over" already, but we need some political triage. We need to devote ourselves to the measures that will protect us now.

Part of the distorted thinking that is present in the "drug" debates can easily take over every debate. The notion is being floated that if we legalize social drugs, then the cartels that threaten our streets and our population will be bankrupted. Does that make sense to you? Shall we relieve overcrowding in prisons by releasing convicted felons to home arrest, and only returning them to prison after the next crime?

When senators, governors, mayors, police chiefs and the like share headlines with Tiger Woods and Hollywood idols, you see a measure of the decline of morality. Recently the Catholic Church of Ireland gave a full list of 170 pedophile priests that they had been protecting to the civil government for prosecution. Ireland is a small country, and 170 is a large number to hide, and the cooperating partner was the Church.

All of the foundations on which we were brought up are in disrepair. More than ever before in my time, we need to begin with reassembling a foundation on which we can walk safely.

(see Karsh, page NAT 11)



## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### Again with the settlements?

The sad, star-crossed nation of Haiti has been much in the news these past three weeks. Much has been said and written about the hurricane and the relief efforts. Let us for a moment look at Haiti and its history.

It is instructive to note how and why the country was founded. Instructive in looking at the Middle East and Israel today. A colony of France, the Haitian natives revolted in 1804 and took over the country, declaring it an independent state.

The United States, or more correctly, the Southern senators and their planter constituents did not like it one bit. They felt that the example of black African slaves revolting against their white masters might foment the same thing in the U.S. and the slaves of the South might rise up and burn down the big house.

It is an easy analogy to see what happened in the Middle East when a democracy was thrust on a sea of restrictive governments, dictators and medieval customs. Israel. Not a pleasant example for the dictators who run Egypt, Syria and Iran. The Arab nations tried to strangle democratic Israel at its birth. They failed. Likewise in 1956, 1967, and 1973. Things have not changed that much since.

Especially since Israel works. They have produced more Nobel Prize winners per capita than any other nation on earth. Israel's high-tech creations are utilized all over the Western world. With all their problems, they are a developed nation whose GDP per capita is 12th in the world.

Getting back to Haiti, the only field hospital up and running in Haiti three days after the earthquake was from Israel – complete with a neo-natal unit.

And therein lays the problem. The Arab sheiks and the Shiites of Iran are troubled by the success of Israel and by its overly democratic form of government. It is a living, breathing example of all that is wrong with the other nations in the Middle East.

And so, they discuss solutions to the "Israeli-Palestinian problem." They have been doing this for the 62-year existence of the Jewish State. The solution from the Israeli side is very simple: Leave us alone, already. From the Arab side it is just as simple: Go away.

Well, the people of the Book are back in the Land of the Book and are not going anywhere. The two-state solution sounds easy. Draw some lines on a map and presto! There's Israel, there's a State called Palestine. Not that simple. The basic problem is that the Arab Nations plus the Persians have no desire for that to be the final answer. They want Israel gone.

So while the BBC prattles on that Jews have no history in East Jerusalem – which their own bible will dispute, America says no more settlements and rockets continue to fly into Sderot, there really is no desire by the Arabs to have a solution to what really is a very convenient problem.

The Jews have through history provided a convenient problem to authoritarian regimes, dating back to the Middle Ages. Kings of the city states of Europe when in trouble had the Church convince the people that the root of all their problems was not the King and his taxes or their lack of decent living conditions. It was of course, the Jews. So a good pogrom or a few burnings or some blood libel show trials would exorcise their anger, and the King and his nobles could get back to living high off the labors of the people.

The international focus in Israel now is on settlements. Yes, Israel has to crack down on those religious fanatics who place an old RV on a hilltop and declare a new town. This is without regard for those living nearby or the eventual need for infrastructure to make the "settlement" viable. But, as the State expands its population, natural growth must take place.

Is there a limit? Of course. But the major immigration is long past. The growth now will be mostly internal. Israelis becoming second- and third-generation Israelis. Besides, settlements are not the problem. The Arabs complain that much of the settlement activity is in areas where they want to expand. So, we are back to the border thing. But the Arabs want borders that would hem in the Jewish state like it was before. With a nine-mile neck that the rockets could continue to terrorize.

And they would. Because while there might indeed be literally thousands of Palestinians who would love to live peacefully with Israel and draw on their economy, the rest of the Arab world cannot tolerate that successful democracy in the middle of their sphere of influence.

So, Hezbollah and Hamas continue to exist because of the money that flows to them from The Persians and the Saudis. They are viable surrogates to prevent peace from ever becoming a reality.

And, we have addressed this before: Can you prevent a sovereign nation from having a military force? An air force? Can they not sign treaties with other States? States like Iran.

So dear ones, it ain't settlements. It's the mere fact of a successful Jewish State in their midst. Proving that with all its warts, democracy in any form works. And that is one thing that the Arabs with their dream of another Caliphate cannot stomach.

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## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### An Education

Upon leaving the movie theater after seeing *An Education*, I overheard an 18-ish woman from the cleaning crew describing the film to two co-workers of the same age. She said it was about a bright, pretty high school girl who loves to speak French and wants to attend Oxford, but is pursued by an older man with a fancy car and lots of money who gives her expensive gifts and agrees not to deflower her until her 17th birthday, and who takes her to Paris, and then proposes marriage.

Though she knows that he makes his money through some kind of art and real estate theft, she decides to leave school, forgo her college education and marry him because she is bored with her parents and with her own life. She discovers letters addressed to "Mr. and Mrs." while foraging through his car's glove compartment for cigarettes the night that they were to celebrate their engagement with her parents, and, when he is cornered, he says he will divorce his wife. She insists that he tell her parents everything, and he drives off, never to see her again. But in the end all this strengthens her resolve to attend Oxford.

It was a good summary, and I suppose I should feel relieved that the clean-up crew member with a slight Spanish accent, relating the narrative to two African American teens, did not find it important to mention a point of identification that the film repeatedly and deliberately made – namely, that the man, David Goldberg, an exploiter and a serial betrayal of trust, introduces himself at every opportunity as a Jew.

This film, whose screenplay by Mark Hornby is based on a memoir by Lynn Barber, is not an upstart indie affair. It has the full sanction of BBC Films. And what a to-do it makes of David being a Jew. The story is set in 1961 when morals were reputedly more firm and strict, so one would have to have been perverse to have been a seasoned sexual predator in an era that most people still regard as more naïve than our own.

When 42-year-old David Goldman (Peter Sarsgaard) first sets eyes upon beautiful Jenny (Carey Mulligan), she is waiting at the bus stop in the pouring rain carrying her cello. David offers to shelter the cello in the car and to have her walk alongside if she has qualms about the propriety of getting into the car with him. When she wittily asks how she can be sure he won't just drive off with the cello, he hands her its monetary value. That meeting is metaphoric for several other episodes involving that car in which he wins her back with fancy wheels and

flowing coins, often against her best instincts. The question is whether she has better judgment or simply ambition. Our better judgment tells us that there is nothing right with his pursuit of Jenny or with his way of living, not to mention his way of making a living.

From the moment he takes Jenny and her cello into his car, David connives to latch onto her through classical music. He drives slowly to show her that he savors every moment. When he hears that she is to participate in an Elgar concert, he comments that "Elgar and the Jews don't mix well." When she answers, "I'm not a Jew," he says, "I am."

Indeed, the only thing that David is direct and forthright about is his Jewish identity. He uses it as a litmus test to see whether the victims of his sexual addiction will accept him in their lives. Then he works on their parents to see whether he can charm them as a Jew, should the word come up, or should he bring it up, as he does.

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### ...David Goldberg, an exploiter and a serial betrayal of trust, introduces himself at every opportunity as a Jew.

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He soon talks Jenny's parents into allowing her to accompany him on a trip to Oxford, telling them that he wants to visit his old professor, C.S. Lewis, and that this would be her last chance for quite a while to accompany him on such an important pilgrimage. He makes sure that she returns with a phony autograph from C.S. Lewis. Her father cannot resist this "opportunity" for his daughter because, as he puts it, "Becoming a famous author isn't like knowing one."

She sees him wheeling and dealing near strange buildings in out-of-the-way neighborhoods. She is curious as to what business he has with blacks. He opines, "Shvartzes [black people] have to live somewhere. It's not that they can live off their own kind." Though there is a racist ring to the end of this sentence, we still want to believe, at that early point in the film that David's heart is somehow in the right place, if for no other reason than for Jenny's sake. Yet we soon learn that his "business" is alarming old ladies with the prospect of blacks moving into their neighborhoods, and getting them to sell him their valuables and homes for a pittance before they flee.

Jenny is with him when he steals a valuable old framed map from one such old lady. He rationalizes the theft of the map by saying that the "poor dear didn't know what it was," that it should not spend its time, as it were, on the wall of someone who cannot appreciate it. If he and his partner were not "clever" in this way, they could not offer Jenny fun, good food and fine liquor. She wants to accept

this excuse and does, in the presence of David's partner Danny (Dominic Cooper) and his empty-headed girlfriend, Helen (Rosamund Pike). Jenny tells David: "You have no idea how boring everything was before I met you."

So is Jenny a victim? After David runs out on her, David's partner, who also has designs on Jenny, says that he no longer speaks to David, but chides her, "You watched David and I [sic.] help ourselves to a map, and you didn't say that much, either." Her parents do nothing to protect her. She takes them to task for this when she tells them that "high school girls are always getting seduced by glamorous old men, but what about you?"

At the end of the film her father sheepishly confesses that he had recently learned that C.S. Lewis was living at Cambridge rather than Oxford, and never took her or David to task for their lie. But the lie was, of course, a lark for Jenny. She had even bet David that he could not trick her parents. So in a way she became victim of the dare of her own making, as well as of neglect – and abuse – by the adults in her life.

The film makes the point that her English teacher and the head mistress at the expensive all-girls school were in fact watching out for her and warning her that she must get an education or she will not find fulfillment. Yet both memoirist and screen-writer want to make a buffoon of the head mistress, probably because she spoke foolishly in "real life." When the latter, horrified by the prospect of such young marriage, mentions a church wedding, Jenny replies that the wedding will not take place in a church because David is Jewish. "You are aware, of course," the headmistress (Emma Thompson) replies, "that the Jews killed our lord." Jenny retorts: "You are aware, of course, that our lord is Jewish." The headmistress then opines that while she is sorry "for what happened in the War" (that is, the Holocaust), there is no reason for propaganda that Jesus was a Jew.

Could it be that the screenwriter and memoirist want to beat such bigotry to death by suggesting that David embodies every canard about Jewish deceit and lies to show that even if this is true about one Jew, those who would guide and instruct others undermine their position of persuasion by giving voice to prejudices?

Jenny says that her choice is not to engage in hard and boring education, but to "marry my Jew" so that she can go to night clubs and have fun. She points out that the only options for women who attend Oxford are to teach or to go into the service professions, and that these roles might not satisfy her, anyway.

True, authors Barber and Hornby want to remind us of the plight of women, especially of young women, in the early 1960s. At the end, Jenny seeks out David's address, which is very close to hers, and waits for a peek at his family. She doesn't have to wait long, as his wife and child emerge from the house on their way out. Does Jenny want to understand David's

"Jewish" context?

Spying Jenny, the wife assumes that Jenny is one of her husband's women and asks her if she is pregnant. Jenny instinctively runs away from this woman with the speed in which she should have fled David long before.

This sequence, I'm sad to say, introduces a new villain into the drama – the enabling Jewish wife, who is more frightening (and contemptible?) to Jenny than David himself. So husband and wife are indicted in the end for being a threat to the morality of a proper, if lower middle-class, British community.

Is *An Education* an orgy of anti-Semitic themes that condemns snaky Jewish men and mousy Jewish women? I suppose that it is. Unfortunately, it shoves its way into the "fact based" category because it is inspired by a "real life" memoir by a Gentile woman exploited, or willing to be exploited, by a rather contemptible Jew. Sadly, there will always be Jews who will not only resent, but represent, anti-Semitic stereotypes.

So what can we say of Mr. Hornby's film? Dr. Irina Bragin writes that Hornby planted references to Jack Elgar and his "The Apostles" oratorio. She suggests that Hornby Judas-ized David and Jesus-ized Jenny, and "consciously, deliberately and artfully evokes the British cultural history that gave birth to Fagan and Shylock."

Why did Hornby do that? Bragin concludes that Hornby actually believed that he could combat anti-Semitic stereotypes by invoking such images and also the name of the British slumlord gangster of the 1950s and 60s, Peter Rachman. By making David so distasteful and the rank-and-file British so disdainful of Jews, he planned, Bragin suggests, to have all the negatives cancel each other out, resulting in a coming-of-age story, which happens to have had one bad Jew and a morally challenged British family.

Bragin cites Nick Hornby (cinemablend.com) to the effect that he kept David Jewish because he discovered in his childhood that "an awful lot of my elders and betters were anti-Semitic and racist in various ways." Clearly, Hornby believes that featuring a cad of a Jewish man is a good reason to raise anti-Semitic slurs in order to expose them. What is exposed here is a lack of imagination on his part. To overturn such stereotypes, one can take the liberty of reversing characters or introducing new characters. After all, Ms. Barber's memoir was not gospel. Or does Hornby think that it was – at least in his decision to focus on the Jew as exploiter and outsider?

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

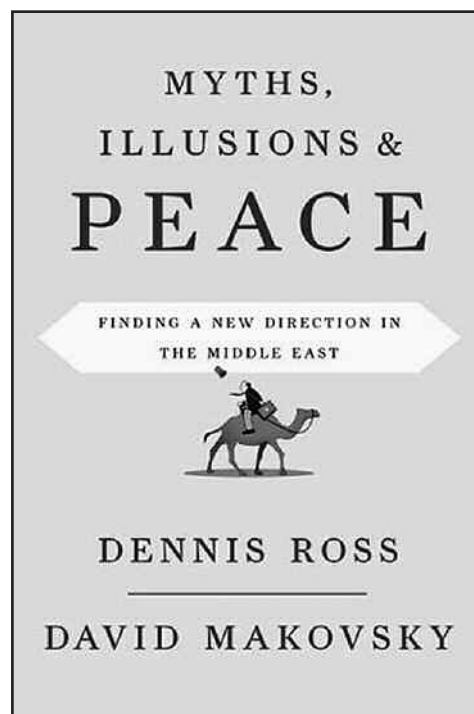


## Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

### Debunking myths about Middle East

*Myths, Illusions, & Peace.* By Dennis Ross and David Makovsky. New York: Viking, 2009. 380 Pages. \$27.95.



Two experts on the Middle East have teamed up to make out a case for a sophisticated approach to peace in the Middle East that would replace what they call “the myths and illusions” that have loomed large in guiding American policy to date. This laudable objective is somewhat odd since Ross, the senior author, has been deeply involved in the Middle East for many years as the chief peace negotiator for the United States. He served in this role under Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Why didn’t he use the insights that he and his fellow-author offer here when he carried major responsibility for Israeli-Arab peace negotiations? One can only hope that the penetrating judgments offered in this book will guide him in his present assignment on the Obama administration’s National Security Council.

Makovsky makes a significant contribution to the analysis presented here from his non-governmental vantage point as a journalist with years of experience in covering the Middle East. His writing has appeared in newspapers, magazines, and books. Also, he has contributed to many TV programs. From 1989 to 1997, he was the diplomatic correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post* and he filled a similar role for *Ha’aretz*, Israel’s leading daily from 1997 to 1999. He is now a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The impressive credentials of the authors give considerable weight to their ideas. They analyze and criticize the

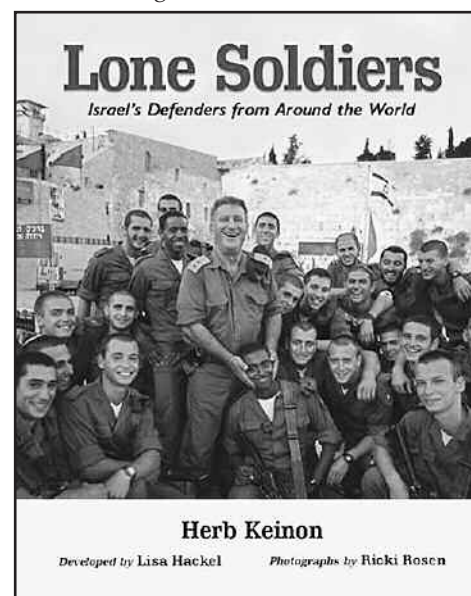
“realists” and the “neoconservatives” who have advocated special approaches to peace in the Middle East. Ross and Makovsky claim that many of the ideas presented by these two groups are based on myths. They particularly disapprove of the notion that links all conflicts in the Middle East to the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. They call this “the mother of all myths.” Their trenchant analysis persuasively censures both the realists and the neoconservatives.

Three excellent chapters deal with Iran, which “looms as one of the most formidable” challenges faced by the Obama administration. After reviewing “competing mythologies” about Iran and America’s diplomatic options, Ross and Makovsky urge the establishment of a “direct, secret back channel approach” that might succeed in persuading the Iranians not to develop nuclear weapons. They recognize that this may fail but they urge it be tried before accepting the conclusion that “sometimes even the best efforts at statecraft do not work.”

Finally, the authors assert that American foreign policy needs to be guided by “an amalgam of interests and values.” They claim that the right balance between these considerations can best be struck by “debunking the myths that have misled American foreign policy.” Their book is a valiant effort to achieve this desirable objective, but it fails to acknowledge fully the bleak prospect that peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians may simply not be achievable. It is an American myth that every problem has a solution!

### Young people come to Israel to serve in IDF

*Lone Soldiers.* By Herb Keinon. New York and Jerusalem: Devora Publishing, 2009. 160 Pages. \$27.95.



A “lone soldier” is a young man or woman who comes to Israel from another country in order to serve in the Israel Defense Forces. Moved by a variety of motivations, these individuals volunteer for military service in Israel, usually spurred on by Zionist ideals. This book

tells the stories of 14 such people, prefaced by a chapter devoted to Tzvika Levy, an Israeli lieutenant-colonel in the reserves who, after a distinguished military career, became the founder and director of the Israel Defense Forces Program for the Kibbutz Movement. His task is to look after these lone soldiers by offering emotional support and through meeting their material needs.

Israeli soldiers usually go home for Shabbat, but those who come from abroad have no families with whom to spend Shabbat. In 2008, there were 4,000 lone soldiers who needed a place to go over the weekend and who also needed planned events for those occasions when families were welcome to visit the military bases to spend time with their sons and daughters. Levy and others provide services to the lone soldiers whose special status is recognized by their being granted an extra 30 days furlough every year. Levy arranges with kibbutzim to provide housing and “adoptive families” for the lone soldiers. Having grown up on a kibbutz where he continues to retain his membership, Levy is in a special position to carry out these activities. He also intervenes for the lone soldiers when they deal with the often intransigent army bureaucracy.

Levy served as a paratrooper in the Six-Day War of 1967 and was involved in subsequent wars as a reservist until 1995 when he was asked to direct the program for lone soldiers on kibbutzim. He travels around the country to raise the awareness of Israelis about the lone soldiers and their special needs. Following the description of Levy’s impressive activities, the book focuses on the stories of 14 lone soldiers.

Five of the lone soldiers come from the United States; the others arrived in Israel from Great Britain, Morocco, Ethiopia, Russia, Belgium, Argentina, Canada, Dominican Republic, and Australia. Four of them are women and the rest are men. One of the men, an American named Michael Levin, was killed in the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

Accompanied by color photographs, the book devotes one chapter to each of the volunteers. The stories of their relationships with their families and how they decided to come to Israel are set forth. Also described are their experiences in the Israeli army and their off-base lives. A careful effort is made to explore the reasons why these people decided to leave their usually comfortable homes in order to serve in the Israel Defense Forces.

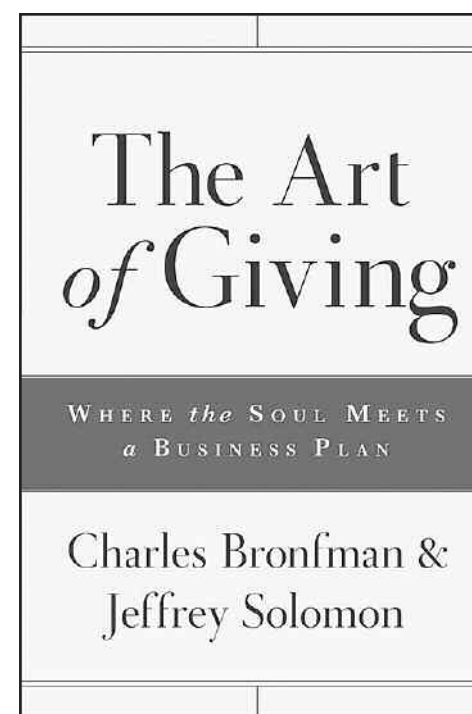
The actions of these 14 soldiers help to refute the notion that Israel and Zionism have lost their appeal for Diaspora Jewry. Author Herb Keinon is living evidence that this is not the case, having made aliyah from Denver in 1981. He is a reporter for the *Jerusalem Post*, having served as its diplomatic correspondent for the last nine years. He worked on the book just as his oldest son was meeting his military service obligation.

Ehud Barak, former prime minister and currently defense minister, wrote the

foreword to the book, expressing the hope that it will inspire others to become lone soldiers thus “fortifying the existence, and strengthening the security, of the State of Israel.”

### Guidebook for philanthropists

*The Art of Giving.* By Charles Bronfman and Jeffrey Solomon. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. 285 Pages. \$29.95.



Are you very rich? Do you have lots of money to give away? Are you having trouble deciding where to make your donation? If you answer yes to these questions, then this book is for you. The rest of us can look on enviously as we get a peek at the prosperous world of philanthropists.

The authors of this guide for the affluent are Charles Bronfman, a billionaire, and Jeffrey Solomon, the professional who presides over Bronfman’s foundation. Bronfman inherited his money from his father, Sam, who made a fortune manufacturing and selling liquor. After working in the family business for many years, Bronfman established the Andrea and Charles Bronfman foundation, named for his late wife and himself. Originally housed in Montreal where native Canadian Bronfman lived, the foundation moved to New York in 1996. Unlike most foundations that allocate funds to non-profit applicants, Bronfman’s organization engages directly in program activities, spending about \$220 million a year on its work. In recognition of this distinction, it is named the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. The institution plans to use up all of its financial resources by 2016 when Bronfman will be 85.

Solomon had a distinguished career in social work before 1997 when he became the president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman’s Philanthropies. (Bronfman’s (see Teicher, page NAT 11)



## Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### What is more "healing" than chicken soup?

When I read that the theme for this issue was "healing," immediately the idea of chicken soup popped into my head. I recently read an article that said a University of Nebraska study indicated chicken soup has an anti-inflammatory mechanism it to ease upper respiratory tract infections; it is nutritional and adds liquid to the body and was also said to inhibit mucus production associated with colds and flu. Even more startling was a study saying chicken soup was effective for osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. We also know that Moses Maimonides, the 12th-century Spanish physician, wrote about the value of chicken soup for medical purposes. So, cook up a big pot of the "Jewish penicillin," and freeze it in easy-to-defrost containers.

#### My Mom's Chicken Soup (6-8 servings)

My mom used to make her chicken soup in a pressure cooker, but it also works in a soup pot.

- 5 pound chicken
- 8 cups water
- 2 cut-up onions
- 6-8 cut-up celery ribs with top greens
- 6 cut-up carrots
- salt and pepper to taste

Place whole or cut-up chicken in soup pot. Add water, onions, celery, carrots, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until chicken falls off the bones when touched.

#### My Chicken Soup (6-8 servings)

In the U.S., I always added parsnips and frequently added turnips. In Israel, I haven't found rutabaga and just recently found parsnips, so I often add kohlrabi and fennel, and sometimes potatoes and pumpkin to really make it a vegetable chicken soup.

### On this date in Jewish history

On January 27, 1980

Border of Israel and Egypt opened.

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

- 2 pounds chicken pieces
- 8 cups water
- 6 tsp. pareve chicken soup powder
- 2 cut-up onions
- 4 cut-up celery ribs and greens
- 4 cut-up carrots
- 1 cut-up rutabaga
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- paprika

Place chicken, water, chicken soup powder, onions, celery, carrots, rutabaga and parsley in a soup pot. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Sprinkle with paprika and simmer 1 to 1 1/2 hours until the chicken falls off the bones.

#### Auntie Rivka's Chicken Soup

This recipe comes from Empire Kosher, Inc.

- 1 or 2 large roasting chickens, whole or cut up
- water
- outer peelings of 4 onions
- 4 large halved onions
- 4-6 ribs of celery with leaves
- 6-8 peeled carrots cut in 2-inch pieces
- 2 peeled parsnips cut in 2-inch pieces
- 15-20 sprigs fresh parsley
- pepper to taste
- dill

Place chicken in pot. Add water to top of chicken. Cover and bring to a boil. Skim surface after 10-15 minutes of boiling. Add carrots, onions, celery, parsnips and parsley. Add onion peels. Reduce heat and simmer 2 to 3 1/2 hours. When ready to serve, garnish with dill.

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

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## As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

### Choir is a credit to their Temple

From time to time I receive some CDs from different sources. Most of these are pleasant and welcome. This is a good example of that. I received a CD from Temple Israel of Greensboro, N.C. The disc had the music from their Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services of this year. The musical director was Lane Ridenhour and their cantorial soloist was Mitchel Sommers. Their female soloists included Emily Siar, Rachel Gains, Jeanne Fischer and Debbie Thacker.

A variety of compositions were performed, all from the repertoire of the Reform congregations. All the selections were well performed (incredible for a live performance!), and much credit should be given to their director as well as to the performers. Since they were kind enough to send the disc to me, I will only briefly comment on those things I found amiss, and these are open to interpretation as well as taste. There was ever so much more positive than otherwise.

I thought that the Sinai Mountain Ramblers klezmer-style treatment of the Barchu melody was not suitable for either of the High Holiday services. While the piano accompanist was really very good, if I had my druthers they would have employed an organ or electronic keyboard with an organ stop. The almost continuous eighth note motion found in the majority of compositions in the piano part did not add to the effectiveness of the program. (Blame the composers.) It was fine for one piece but not in more than half a dozen of them.

Rating special notice were the performances of Janowski's *Avinu Malkenku* and soloist Jeanne Fischer. I thought the rendition of Bernstein's *Twenty Third Psalm* was excellent, and young Eli Whitehouse deserves a pat on the back. While kudos are being handed out, the choir and their director deserve one. The choir is well trained, disciplined, sings with good ensemble as well as intonation and would be a credit to any temple. While I am at it, Ms. Thacker and company really shined in Finkelstein's setting of *L'dor vador*.

The musicians (more properly referred to as instrumentalists as the vocalists were musicians as well) included: Amy Mack, piano; Janel Ornstein, violin; Brooks Whitehouse, cello (who was superb in the *Kol Nidre*); and Heather Lewis, bass. My thanks to Rabbi Fred Guttman, as well as the temple music committee for sharing this CD with me. They have every reason to take pride in their music program.

*Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor, educator and a music/drama critic. He may be reached by email at: [drmortongold@yahoo.com](mailto:drmortongold@yahoo.com). ✪*

## Letter to the Editor

**Freedom of the Press** – The Post & Opinion encourages readers to send letters. All letters to the editor should be addressed to The Jewish Post & Opinion, 238 S. Meridian St., Suite 502, Indianapolis, IN 46225, or by e-mail: [jpostopinion@gmail.com](mailto:jpostopinion@gmail.com).

Dear Editor,

I love every issue of the *Jewish Post & Opinion*.

Jim Shipley wrote a particularly important article about Russian Jews who were raised without Judaism (Shipley Speaks, Dec. 30, 2009). He did mention the spectrum of Judaism from ultra-Orthodox to Reconstructionist or JewBhus. What he omitted was the Secular Humanistic Jewish movement with over 50 congregations and communities in North America. This movement should be particularly attractive to many Russian Jews. The locations can be found at [www.csjo.org](http://www.csjo.org) and [www.shj.org](http://www.shj.org).

*Shalom, Edward J. Klein, Madrikh, Queens Community for Cultural Judaism, 179-54 80th Road, Jamaica Estate, NY 11432, Madrikh@PeoplePC.com, 718-380-5362. ✪*

#### Major or Minor Fun

Dear Bernie DeKoven,

As a regular reader of the *National Jewish Post & Opinion*, I enjoy your columns. The one in the Dec. 16, 2009 issue on "New Dreidel Games" was especially of interest to me. You have some new and clever ideas, which are certainly worth pursuing.

I, too, over the years, as a teacher and mother found it necessary to create some holiday games. I'm sending you copies of two games that were popular. Latke Bingo doesn't use dreidles, yet it was fun and all ages liked it. The Dreidel Spin is challenging and usually fun too.

*Helen Tomsky, Sun Valley, Calif.*

P.S. Games can be Major or Minor Fun. ✪

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**PARSHA PERSPECTIVE***(continued from page NAT 5)*

soapsuds or real estate, or by arguing with them about it like we do about politics or public policy. We certainly won't lead them to it by pushing synagogue programs that compete with secular education and entertainment, or by ridiculing their religious and spiritual beliefs or lack of them. And we certainly won't lead them to it by acting publicly as if we're indifferent or embarrassed by our own Jewish belief and practice.

What are the alternatives that are likely to be more productive?

First, we can help to build up a congregational community that values the unique potential contributions of each individual member and that teaches the relevance of Torah and Jewish spirituality to the day-to-day pressures and hopes of every member.

Second, within the context of a congregational community, we can organize ourselves to act as neighbors – “brothers” in the language of Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) – to honestly show loving-kindness in practical ways. Traditionally that has meant providing hospitality to the stranger or visitor, visiting the sick, helping the needy bride, comforting the mourner, and making peace between one person and another and between husband and wife – and, of course, our communal loving-kindness need not be limited to these examples.

Third, we can organize congregationally to ensure that there are opportunities to share from the heart, at appropriate times and places, our own experiences of being uplifted by Torah, Judaism, and congregational life. Although, of course, such “testimonials” should be free of ideology and exhortation.

And fourth, we can contribute to the development of leadership within our congregation by offering support to others, by asking them respectfully to do something in a Jewish way for the sake of the community, something that they haven't done before, and by following up to mentor them afterward.

At Mount Sinai, when the Torah was given to and received by the whole people, the children of Israel said, “We will do and we will hear.” First we will do what we believe to be God's will. Then we will come to understand why it is to be done. At that moment we were a unified people. As the Sages said, “Like one person with one heart” – every Jew became responsible for every other Jew.

We too could be a unified people, spreading Jewish spirituality, leading those who are alienated from Torah and Judaism to a more fulfilling Jewish life for all of us.

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

**KARSH***(continued from page NAT 7)*

We have one. If we go to shul, synagogue or temple, we see it being brought out to read every Shabbos. For Jews it is a safe harbor.

We cannot save the world, save our country, save our city, save our community, save our block, save our family, until we save ourselves. As the world stops twirling, with G-d's Grace, we can begin to look at and face the monumental challenges of our time.

*Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc. His e-mail is [howkar@wi.rr.com](mailto:howkar@wi.rr.com). ✨*

**NEUSNER***(continued from page NAT 12)*

reply to my question on his scholarly progress, he told me that volume II of his *Jesus of Nazareth* would come out in about six months and that would be the last book he would write. But, he explained to me, he has other work to do that will keep him busy. It would have been disingenuous to ask what this work was, and I dropped the subject – with regret. But that's the price exacted from a major scholar who is elected Pope, bishop of Rome, the deputy of Peter.

And that was before we even sat down. The news that he was writing his last book struck me as sad. I said so, and he reminded me that he is older than I – as it happens, it is by five years. That his book writing days are coming to an end closed off discussion of the book I had hoped to write with him – dialogue on the apostle Paul's theology of Israel in Romans – and I didn't bring it up. He asked me what I'm working on. I started, “Form analysis of the Rabbinic canon...” Seeing his eyes glaze over in response, I broke off and took the occasion to give him the copy of my new book introducing the Talmud (*The Talmud: What is it? what does it say?*), published just now in Italian, and the German translation of my *Rabbi Talks with Jesus*. He appreciated the book in his native German and thanked me that the Talmud book was not too long to read in the time he had for reading. Teaching, scholarship, publication – the things professors do and discuss with good humor – marked the boundaries of professors' chitchat.

He told my wife that reading my *Rabbi Talks with Jesus* gave him comfort when his sister died. I left with a vivid picture of a humble and good natured man wholly devoted to the service of God. With his bright blue eyes, he looks you square in the eye and looks back when you respond. He is generous in his appreciation of others and does not take for granted the appreciation of others. I leave it to others to speak for the Jewish People in the coming negotiations that will engage us over issues of common concern between Judaism and Catholic

Christianity. I cherish the memory of the man I met in Rome.

*See page NAT 12 for photo(s) of this meeting.*

*Jacob Neusner is Distinguished Service Professor of the History and Theology of Judaism and Senior Fellow, Institute of Advanced Theology at Bard College Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. ✨*

**KAPLAN/ISRAEL***(continued from page NAT 12)*

Gaza.” We see a short video of Noam Bedein explaining their work.

Jacob and Shalom then walk us up the block a short distance from the police station, across a yard and down into a basement shelter, the “command center” of Sderot's government where they run the town in times of emergencies. Then at the end of the day, they discuss what happened and how to prepare for the next day.

Shalom shows us a screen with the photographs of the 10 people killed in Sderot between June 2004 and 2008.

**On the way to the Sderot Lookout to Gaza**

We go by bus to a lovely residential neighborhood, learning that Sderot was founded in 1951 as a tent camp for immigrants from Iraq, Iran, Kurdistan and North Africa. After being in tents five to six years, they were given 36-square-meter apartments (387 square feet), which they thought were palaces but housed families of sometimes 10 to 15 persons. The 1960s saw an influx into Sderot of Russian immigrants; in the 1980s immigrants came from Ethiopia; in the 1990s more immigrants came from the Caucasus, Bukhara and other parts of the Former Soviet Union. Today Sderot's population is about 24,000.

Standing less than 1,000 meters (a little over half a mile) from Gaza, we can see along the skyline Gaza City, whose entire length is 70 kilometers (43.5 miles); then we see the buffer zone between the security road and Gaza City, the Ashkelon power plant, which provides Gaza with 65% of its electricity, and Ashkelon.

Kory tells us that until Operation Cast Lead, the people of Sderot endured seven years of assaults from the terrorists in Gaza and the responses from Israel were minimal. With the building of a security fence around Gaza, terrorist attacks were deterred so now they shoot over the fence or through the tunnels.

“ Hamas currently has four times more than it had before the war, readying for the next war with weapons coming from Iraq. In the next conflict there will be over 300 rockets emanating from Gaza each day.”

As we climb back down the hill and see the bomb shelters attached to all of the homes, Kory says, “It's not just a bomb shelter that saves lives; it's being able to have peace of mind to live a normal life that shelters allow.”

It is 3:45, and we have had a full day.

*Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ✨*

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

title is chairman.) He worked in the fields of family service and aging in Miami before moving to New York where he was the chief operating officer of the UJA-Federation. Solomon makes excellent use of his education and experience in making perceptive expenditures of the Bronfman money. He is especially proud of Birthright Israel, an innovative program designed to foster Jewish identity by sending young Jews to Israel on a free ten-day trip.

Drawing on their knowledge and their experience, Bronfman and Solomon offer this practical handbook for those seeking to make effective donations. They begin with the donor, describing various types of individuals “who have more money than they need” and who want to do something worthwhile. According to the authors, what these people get in return is nourishment for the soul. This somewhat esoteric assertion is sparingly spelled out as “the joy of giving,” which brings “spiritual forms of value.” What follows is more practical as the various types of donors are considered as well as the ways in which they can maximize the results of their gifts. Even more pragmatic is the listing of 26 areas into which non-profit organizations can be categorized so as to help donors decide where they want to give their money.

In the second section of the book, the authors explore how donors can heighten their impact by working with existing agencies and by trying to make them more effective. There is specific and useful advice about being a competent board member. Also described is an alternate for distributing money, which consists of establishing a family foundation where several generations can join together in making gift-giving decisions.

The third section, “The Gift,” deals with the financial and tax implications of donations. It also spells out the various kinds of largesse. The importance of measuring the impact of the gift is stressed. To assist further with the items covered in this section as well as the preceding ones, the final section of the book lists specific resources that can be helpful.

As indicated at the outset, this is a guidebook for rich people. The rest of us, including those who aspire to be rich, are given a useful glimpse of a dilemma that confronts wealthy individuals. How can they best live a philanthropic life, making intelligent and informed choices about their donations? The step-by-step instructions are augmented by interesting anecdotes with the result that this is a clearly written manual, which fully deserves the attention of the well-heeled people for whom it was prepared.

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## Jewish Scholar

REVIEWED BY JACOB NEUSNER

### Visiting the Vatican

A visit to the Pope in his office in the Vatican that was accorded to my wife and me on Jan. 18, the day after the Pope visited the synagogue in Rome brings about an awesome visual experience in an elegant museum. The walk in the papal apartments leads through five long rooms, richly decorated in antiques and hangings and paved with marble. The windows in the room adjacent to the Pope's office overlook St. Peter's square and from the window right outside to the Pope's office you look out and see what the Pope sees when he blesses the city and the world.



If you think our walk to the heart of Catholic Christianity precipitated long, long thoughts of history and family – what would the first Jacob Neusner, my grandfather from Koretz in Volhynia Gubernya and Beverly, Mass., who died 77 years ago, a few months before I was born, have thought today? How many Jewish scholars had had occasion to walk through those palatial rooms and what brought them to call on the Pope? and as guard after guard saluted my wife and me, how often kippah-wearing visitors received the Swiss guards' salute? If you thought it was these thoughts of who and where I was, you're mistaken. Midway through the walk from room to room, I had the awful thought that my fly was open. I checked. It was – but not for long.

Waiting outside the Pope's office, we wondered what he would want to discuss. We need not have worried. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and I have in common and have talked about what professors always discuss: What are you working on, and what will you do next? how are you feeling, what do you think of the students these days? So when my wife and I spent our 25 minutes by ourselves with Benedict XVI, I asked him how he was progressing with volume two of *Jesus of Nazareth*, and he asked me whether I'm still publishing a book a month. I asked him what he was planning for his next book. In reply to questions on the student generation, I told him I adore the students at Bard College, the best I've known in 50 years of teaching, and in

(see Neusner, page NAT 11)

### KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page NAT 6)

We drive through the old part of the city, settled in the 1960s by immigrants from Morocco and Algeria, and stop at the Amit Technical Religious High School, which has 180 students. On Thursday of this week (in four days), they will receive a bomb shelter. Why? Here in this lovely courtyard with classrooms all around and wall paintings of scenes from the Bible, was the place where the first rocket fell in 2006 on a Saturday, three days after the Operation Cast Lead ceasefire.

All of the walls of the school were pushed back, and it was out of use for six months.

After the first Katyusha hit Ashkelon in 2006, every three to four days missiles were shot at the city.

Mr. Greenfield explains that "this changed the whole way of life. The alarm system was always open. Everyone was looking for a place to run if he heard an alarm. Now everyone here knows where to run."

Subsequently, 200 missiles hit Ashkelon in one month.

We were then welcomed by the First Deputy Mayor Shalom Cohen, who thanked the International Christian Embassy for its help and explained that when an alarm sounds people have 20 seconds to look for shelter. "We didn't plan schools for this situation," he said.

ICE Director Malcolm Hedding responded that we appreciate the threat you live under. "The enemies are not quiet. They are rearming themselves. Our desire is that your people and the city will live in quiet and security."

We learn that only a few days before, a missile hit in the southern part of Ashkelon.

The school principals are having a meeting today requesting shelters and trying to find criteria for who gets the shelters. Most likely the criteria will be where the most students can find shelter, because those shooting from Gaza look to where they can meet the most casualties.

In Ashkelon, 20 institutions do not have shelters.

Before we leave, Security Chief Greenfield takes us to the beach area and marina and points out the hotels nearby. He tells us that before Hamas took over, there were business connections between Gaza and Ashkelon, and people from Gaza are still coming to the Ashkelon hospital for medical treatment.



Shelter being lowered behind kindergarten.



Kindergarteners with their teacher inside the new shelter.

### Moshav Talme Yafa

Seven kilometers (4.33 miles) from the Gaza border, we arrive at this small village at 12:20 where a truck is waiting with a small bomb shelter on its back. Sitting outside the kindergarten building by the sandbox are 18 small children and their teachers. In front of them are 18 painted tires with flower gardens inside each and a child's name.

When the yellow concrete shelter is unloaded next to their kindergarten, the two teachers lead them into the building and explain its use.

### Sderot

By 2:00, we are in Sderot at the police station, in the backyard where glassed cases hold examples of the Katyushas shot into Israel, and some metal shelves hold row upon row of more shells. This shelling of Sderot began in October 2000 and has not stopped.



Sybil with Kassam rockets remains in yard of Sderot police station.

Kory Bardash, a charming, knowledgeable young man from Parsippany, NJ, who has been with us all day, is our guide. Kory is married to an Israeli, has five children and lives in Jerusalem. He is serving his army reserves now and is a spokesman from the Israel Defense Forces Spokesman's office.

He tells us there are no light poles in Gaza City because Hamas take light poles or other similar poles, add fins, pack in 20 pounds of explosives along with glass, nails and bolts, settle themselves in a mosque, a school, or a house where there are civilians and shoot into Israel. The most likely times for Kassams to land are between 7 and 8 in the morning and between 3 and 4 in the afternoon – when parents are taking their children to school and going to work.

"Their range has improved," Kory tells us, "as has their manufacturing intelligence." They could now hit Tel Aviv.

Three years ago, Israel evacuated

10,000 Jews out of the Gush Katif Gaza area after 7,000 Kassams had fallen. A year ago, Israel initiated Operation Cast Lead to try to stop the Kassams falling in Sderot. That ended a year ago, and since then, 300 Kassams have come from Gaza to Sderot.

"It is incumbent upon our country to fortify so each citizen has a place to go for protection," Kory said.

The "Tseva adom," red alert indicates by voice and alarm that a Kassam is coming in and people have 15 seconds to find cover. Damage comes not only from the Kassam itself but from the spray of the glass, nails, bolts and other objects.

### From a Citizen

Shalom Haber, a representative from City Hall, an assistant to the mayor in the spokesman's office, comes to greet us. He is a handsome man in his 60s or 70s with grey-white hair pulled back in a pony tail. He has lived in Sderot 40 years and was a high school principal; his parents came from Yemen.

He relates stories of parents taking one child at a time to school and then returning home in between in case there is an alarm.

The schools are not protected enough; until a year and a half ago, 80% of the apartments had no shelters. There are about 1,000 shelters now in Sderot; they need 4,500 more.

He tells us that "no destroyed apartments are visible." Why? The government sends people to check the damage and repair them as soon as it happens. In Gaza, they use the money they get for weapons and leave the ruined apartments unrepaired, and the citizens of Gaza suffer.

"We need to throw out the terror organizations. We pray the international community will cooperate with us to throw out the terror organizations," he says.

### Sderot Media Center

We then meet Jacob Shrybman, a young man from Silver Springs, Md., who moved to Sderot over a year ago, to assist Noam Bedein in the three-year-old Sderot Media Center, a non-profit regional news service for Sderot and the Western Negev, to document what is going on and assist the media.



Gaza City from Sderot lookout point. All photos by Barry A. Kaplan.

He tells us the last Kassam to hit a home was May 19, 2009. "There are thousands and thousands of stories here, and we are the only information source countering the information coming out of

(see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 11)