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Post & Opinion

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Editorial

In honor of this seventh annual Appreciation Day editorial, I will give a brief explanation of what that means and then show my appreciation for a local businessman who has given so much of his time, energy and financial support to the city of Indianapolis, the state of Indiana and beyond.

Also without my asking him, one of our writers has written a column of appreciation to me. See below starting with "Dear Jennie." I am humbled by praise in this letter almost to embarrassment, but he worked hard on it and wants to see it printed.

For the past seven years, I have written about setting aside a day once a year to thank those who have done something to help us at a time when we were too busy, too young, or too preoccupied to thank them.

I called it Appreciation Day and suggested it be Nov. 2, because that is during the Hebrew month of Cheshvan, which has no holidays and it is in between the Canadian and American Thanksgiving Days. This year they fall on Oct. 12 and Nov. 26 respectively. Also it turns out that the very middle of Cheshvan – the 15th day of that month – is Nov. 2.

The example I gave was meeting my father's cousin Milton Rosenbaum, z"l, and his wife, Jean, z"l, at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on my first trip to Israel when I was 18. As I was introduced to them in the lobby of the hotel, we shook hands.

Jean took me aside and whispered to me that my extended hand was like a limp fish, and she showed me how to give a firm, confident handshake. I thought it was rude of her to tell me this, until I started having job interviews. Then I became grateful that she had taken the time to share that information with me. By the time I was mature enough to acknowledge her guidance, she had passed away.

Since last December and for more than a year before that, I have been meaning to write or call and say thank you to Michael (Mickey) S. Maurer of Indianapolis. For starters, he owns and publishes the *Indianapolis Business Journal* (IBJ), and he founded and is chairman of the board of The National Bank of Indianapolis, which now has eleven branches.

He also runs a nice big advertisement in our local edition, *The Indiana Jewish Post & Opinion*, for all of our holiday issues. Ads like this are what pay for the National edition. Without them there would be no newspaper.

The reason I mention last December is because that is when his \$35 million donation to the Indiana University School of Law was announced. This came at a time when the recession first hit, and everyone was feeling economically pinched. This news left me with a wonderful feeling and reminder that we live in an abundant universe filled with plenty. Also with education being at the top of the list for

Jewish values, this fit right in with his life-long service to the Jewish community.

As I looked through the bound volumes of this newspaper, I found that Maurer has served on the board of different local Jewish organizations (as well as organizations such as United Way) and has served as president of the Jewish Community Relations Council. In 2005, he was named president of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation and in 2006 was named Indiana's secretary of commerce by Governor Mitch Daniels. Now his children are following in his footsteps. Lately his outreach has expanded to include much more.

For example in the Sept. 23, 2009 issue of *The Indiana Jewish Post & Opinion*, we published a news story about the Arthur M. Glick JCC's live talk show where Maurer interviews notable Hoosiers. For the Nov. 5, 2008 episode of *Mickey's Corner* featuring Sylvia McNair, famed soprano, the show received an Emmy Award. This story can be viewed on our website at the following address: www.jewishpostopinion.com/9_23IN.pdf and the show may be viewed at www.JCCindy.org.

All this is only the tip of the iceberg; it's hard to believe one man has been able to accomplish so much. I don't think all of this would have been possible without the loving support of his beautiful wife, Janie Maurer, who also has served on the board and as president of some local Jewish organizations. She is a kind and generous woman in her own right, but together they truly make up one unit. I can't imagine what this world would be like without them.

Dear Jennie,

The true meaning of your name is graciousness. Your spirit and involvement in Jewish causes have certainly gratified you to many. After reading your editorial of July 29, 2009 (a reprint originally published July 3, 2003), I am convinced that you personify the values and teachings of your late father, Gabriel Cohen, of blessed memory.

The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 30b relates that there are three partners in man (woman), God, father, and mother. When a man (woman) honors his (her) father and mother, God says, "I regard it as though I had dwelt among them and they honored Me." The manner in which you succeeded your father not only glorifies his memory but ensures that his legacy of involvement in the cause of Jewish survival will be perpetuated for all time.

I am impressed with your desire to bring healing and encouragement to our people. You have been true to this conviction and this dedication reminds me of the quote from Pirke Avot, 2:16, "You are not required to finish the task, but neither are you allowed to desist from it completely." Each issue of *The Jewish Post & Opinion* is filled with timely comments from thoughtful individuals who complement your efforts and fulfill your aspirations.

(see Editorial, page NAT 11)

About the Cover

Photographs by Steve Schuster

Clockwise from top left corner: (1) Megillat Ha'esh monument, the "Scroll of Fire" by Natan Rapoport near Jerusalem. The two columns bear bas-relief images that depict Jewish history from biblical times through exile, shtetls, death camps, resistance in the Warsaw ghetto, and finally the creation of modern-day Zion in the 1948 war. (2) The first rays of the morning sun light the ruins at Belmont Castle built by Crusaders around 1160 at Tel Tzuba just West of Jerusalem. (3) Grapes in the Tzuba vineyard near Jerusalem. (4) A panel on Megillat Ha'esh. (5) Close-up of a panel on Megillat Ha'esh. (6) Entrance to Ein Sataf (Sataf Spring) – a natural spring cave near the ancient agricultural settlement of Sataf, first settled around 6,000 years ago, on the Eastern slope of Mt. Eitan near Jerusalem. (7) Sunrise view through the ruins at the Belmont Crusader castle (circa 1160) just west of Jerusalem at Tel Tzuba.



Steve Schuster

Steve Schuster is a past-president of Temple Sinai in Worcester, Mass. He and his wife, Julie, have four children and six pets who were rescued from the streets in Israel. A writer and engineer, Steve is CEO and founder of Rainier, a leading PR agency for technology companies, including more than 20 Israeli firms. Steve travels to Israel every three months on business and is deeply committed to providing a voice in North America for Israel's innovation economy. Steve has BSEE and MBA degrees from Northeastern University and is an avid musician, hiker, photographer, gardener, and fitness enthusiast. Steve's wrote and published The Liberation Haggadah for Passover in 2009. ✨

Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

October 16, 2009, Bereisheet
(Genesis 1:1–6:8), 28 Tishri 5770

The first 5 1/2 chapters of the book of Genesis, *Bereisheet*, make up the first portion in the Torah. Most of this portion consists of stories with which we are all familiar. Have you ever stopped to really take a look at these first chapters? They move from a precise order of creation to the first murder in just a few verses.

Genesis, chapter 1 gives us an orderly seven-day unfolding of creation. Whether it is precise, accurate, or problematic, the writers of this chapter had a vision of order at the beginning of time. Not so in Genesis, chapter 2 which is a second creation story. There is a more frenetic and chaotic sense to this creation story. It is much more focused on Adam, the animals, and the eventual creation of Eve from Adam's rib, than it is on the seven-day orderly creation story.

Chapter 3 focuses on the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the deception by the serpent to get Eve, then Adam, to eat of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the center of the Garden. By disobeying God, Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden. Adam and Eve had no rules to follow except not eating that fruit and they break that command. As a result, they face the consequences of their actions. Finally, in Genesis chapter 4, the first crime occurs, which is the murder of Abel by Cain. In four chapters we move from a perfect world to the first recorded murder.

Our lives can feel this swing as well. There are days when we feel the calm of a "perfect life" with work, family, friends, and extracurricular activities all going well. We feel at one and at peace with the world around us. The plan we have laid out for our lives seems to be moving

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in the right direction and we can't but hope that our dreams will be realized. Sometimes it doesn't take much to swing to the other extreme. The death of a loved one, the sudden loss of a job, or unforeseen complications in our personal life spring up and grab hold of our Eden forcing us to confront the world around us unprepared for the new realities.

What can we use to steady our shaken rock? What can we do to maintain that feeling of Eden? For most of my life, certainly since my teenage years, I have found that centering to come from living my Jewish life. We've just finished the Holy Days, that cornerstone of our Jewish year when we gather and form community, praise God for the year to come and offer prayers of forgiveness for our actions over the past year. Sukkot, which ended last week, gives me an opportunity to say thank you for the food we eat and all of the other things we get from this earth that sustain our lives. The ethics, morals, teachings, holidays, and social justice opportunities help me realize my fullest potential as a Jew and a human being.

Without question though, the most important rock in my life is Shabbat. Beginning Shabbat with my Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation community lifts up my spirit. Having a Shabbat dinner with the blessings of candles, wine, and challah offer me the peace of this day that has sustained generations of Jews. Touching base with my children each week to wish them a Shabbat Shalom reminds me of the importance of family. I try to make this day different from the other days of the week by spending Shabbat afternoon doing something with family or for my peace of mind. It may be a book, a hobby, a walk, or something else, but Shabbat afternoon is my time to sustain and lift my soul in preparation for the next week.

Life isn't always the perfection of creation, nor does it usually fall to the level of total implosion, but life does have its ups and downs. Judaism in general and Shabbat in particular can be that anchor to help you through the difficult times and walk with you during the great times.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one to celebrate Shabbat. It is our special day of rest and renewal that comes once every seven days. It is up to us to figure out how to make it special. Light the other for those things in our lives that help steady us through the ups and downs through which we all pass. May this light give us strength to face each day.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ★

On this date in Jewish history

On October 21, 1781

Emperor Joseph II of Austria abolished distinctive Jewish dress.

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

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Baruch Hashem, we had a beautiful Succos and Simchas Torah. We sang and danced for many hours, and now I'm taking it easy and recuperating, but I have a beautiful story to tell.

The Torah teaches that Hashem pays us for all of our actions in kind. For example, the Egyptians threw our baby boys into the Nile River. Hashem paid them by drowning them in the Red Sea.

I see this all the time in my work. When I visit the sick, I try to cheer them up. I try to greet everyone with a smile and a blessing for a complete and speedy recovery. Many times they smile back and thank me. This cheers me up, giving me a double dose of happiness. Anyone who smiles at me makes me happy. And I'm also happy that I've just done the wonderful Mitzvah of visiting and cheering up the sick. I try to inspire people to do Mitzvahs. Many times I come away inspired myself.

Such was the case with Nissim. I met him in the internal medicine ward of our local hospital. He was happy to see me holding a pair of tefillin. He had been hospitalized in the middle of the night and had forgotten to bring his tefillin. I helped him put on tefillin, and he was very grateful. The next day I also helped him. When he finished praying, he told me that he wanted to tell me a story that happened to him. I said sure. I love to hear and tell stories.

"In 1973, I finished my service in the Israeli army and got married. My wife and I contemplated going on a trip to see the world. A very popular destination in those days was New York City. However, there was a problem. My father, Shlomo, was very ill.

"I told my father of our plans, and also about our concern about his health. He encouraged me to take the trip, and assured me that with the help of Hashem, he would be all right.

"With mixed feelings, we made our way to New York. I mentioned my father's condition to my friends there. They recommended going to 770 Eastern Parkway, to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"I went to 770. I think it was Purim. I was amazed. There were thousands of Chassidim listening as the Rebbe spoke for hours. The Rebbe spoke in Yiddish, which I don't understand, but the feeling was very special, and I stayed till the end. I was spellbound by the Rebbe's radiant appearance and holy countenance.

"The Rebbe finished speaking. Some of the Chassidim went up to the platform where the Rebbe was sitting, and he gave each of them a pack of dollars in order to give three dollar bills to everyone in attendance. I was puzzled, and asked one of the young men who spoke Hebrew about the meaning of this custom. He explained that this is one way that the Rebbe encourages people to give charity. When the Rebbe gives people dollars, he

is asking them to be his messenger to give this money to some worthy cause. However, the young man advised me to hold on to the dollars from the Rebbe, and give charity with other dollars in their place. Just as the Rebbe is a holy man, the dollars that he is giving are holy and work miracles.

"Our trip ended and we returned to Israel. My brother met us in the airport, but instead of taking us home, he drove us to the hospital to see our father. I was shocked. Our father was lying unconscious, hooked up to a respirator and many others tubes and infusions. The doctors said that nothing could be done, and we should prepare ourselves for the worst. I asked my brother why he hadn't told me what was happening. He answered that he didn't want to spoil our vacation.

"I put the three dollars from the Rebbe under my father's pillow and sat and prayed for his health till late at night. We were exhausted, and went home to sleep for a few hours.

"Early the next morning, we returned to the hospital, and again I was shocked. I walked into my father's room. He was sitting on a chair and eating breakfast! I stood there thunderstruck and astonished. I couldn't believe that this was the same person who only a few hours ago was unconscious, hooked up to tubes all over his body. Even the doctors agreed that this was a real miracle.

"I showed my father the dollars and told him about my visit to the Lubavitcher Rebbe. We both understood that the Rebbe's blessings had brought him back to life. Baruch Hashem, my father, of blessed memory, lived for another 14 good and pleasant years."

Now it was my turn to thank Nissim, for telling me this wonderful story. I've been a follower of the Rebbe for 40 years. I myself have seen many miracles from the Rebbe, large and small. When my own father, of blessed memory, was 96, he started to sleep 22 hours a day. He hardly ate or drank. The doctors said that there was nothing to do, and he didn't have long to live. We asked the Rebbe for a blessing. Soon my father came back to himself, and lived another two years.

Besides the miracles that I personally witnessed, I've heard and read about thousands more. But each miracle is unique and inspiring. Nissim didn't ask the Rebbe for a blessing, or even speak to the Rebbe at all. He was standing together with thousands and listening to the Rebbe. The Rebbe didn't hand him the dollars, he just gave a packet to someone to distribute three of them to everyone. And the three that Nissim got were enough to make a wonderful miracle, to bring his father back to life and give him 14 more years.

We believe that the Rebbe is Moshiach, and right now he is ushering in our long-awaited redemption. The miracles that the Rebbe makes are also meant to inspire us to learn more Torah and do more Mitzvahs. Each Mitzvah brings our redemption a little closer.

News

Israeli woman awarded Nobel Prize

Biochemist Prof. Ada Yonath, born in Jerusalem in 1939 and member of the Weizmann Institute of Science, was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize for chemistry jointly with Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, England, and Thomas A. Steitz of Yale University "for studies of the structure of the ribosome, which translates the DNA code into life."

The award announced Wed., Oct. 7, includes a \$1.4 million purse.

"As ribosomes are crucial to life, they are also a major target for new antibiotics," said the Swedish award statement. Prof. Yonath's pioneering work has contributed to the understanding of how cells build proteins.



Prof. Ada Yonath.

All three laureates have generated models showing how different antibiotics bind to ribosomes. They are now used to develop new antibiotics.

Prof. Yonath is only the third woman to win the prize for chemistry since 1963. She was awarded the Albert Einstein World Award for Science in 2008. Yonath's award brings the number of Nobel Prizes won by Israelis to nine, including three for peace, one for economics, and one for literature. ★

Bit of Wit

The Army of God

Moishe Goldberg was heading out of the synagogue one day, and as always Rav Mendel was standing at the door, shaking hands as the congregation departed.

The rabbi grabbed Moishe by the hand, pulled him aside and whispered these words at him: "You need to join the Army of God!"

Moishe replied: "I'm already in the Army of God, Rabbi."

The rabbi questioned: "How come I don't see you except for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?"

Moishe whispered back: "I'm in the secret service."

Submitted by Arnold Parris, Louisville. ★

Start by praying for Nissim, who was kind enough to tell me this story. His Hebrew name is Nissim, the son of Sarah. Say some prayers, learn some Torah and do some Mitzvahs in order that he should have a complete and speedy recovery, and in order to bring Moshiach now!

Rabbi Cohen lives in K'far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at bzcohen1@neto.bezeqint.net. ★



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

The meaning of faith

I am very fond of old-time radio. I listen religiously to satellite radio because one particular channel plays radio programs from the Golden Age of Radio.

Naturally they bring back memories of my childhood. For example, I remember the coal truck delivering coal to our apartment building. The coal was burned in huge furnaces and the heat from the burning coal was transferred to each and every apartment through radiators. You could hear the steam escaping through the pipes.

There are many such memories: During the summer, the Good Humor man would ride around the neighborhoods to bring relief in the form of ice cream pops or popsicles. Following him would be the ice truck delivering ice to people with no refrigerators. While he was delivering his ice, we would sneak up to the truck and chip off a piece to suck in our mouths.

There were street games, such as stick ball or curb ball. Some of my friends who had roller skates would get large orange crates and nail their skates to the bottom and create scooters to ride the streets.

It was a time of dreaming and innocence. It was a time of heroes like Joe DiMaggio and Yogi Berra and Jackie Robinson. It was a time of unmentionable courage as everyone joined together to support the war effort. Rock and Roll was born. The corner candy store was our meeting place and all was well with the world, our little corner of the world, that is.

One particular program on satellite radio that caught my attention is called Family Theater. It was originally started by a Catholic priest to offer faith and encouragement during the bleak times of the depression and the war. Eventually it became a program for everyone to listen to.

One story I heard recently on that program speaks to who we are and what we are capable of being and of faith. It was a story of a man who spent 35 years on one job and was getting ready to retire. Unfortunately his wife died before they could realize their dream, the dream they saved for over the 35 years, the dream of traveling around the world.

After his wife died, he decided to move into a rooming house rather than live alone. The owner of the rooming house was a woman who had a son who desperately needed an operation to fix a back problem that prevented him from walking without pain. He became attached to the boy and would read to him and bring him little treats. And he had a co-worker, a young girl, who always wanted to be an artist but could not attend art school because the scholarship she needed was not available.

I think you can guess the end of the story. He took the money he and his wife had saved and paid for the boy's operation. He put the girl through art school and even donated the balance to the town fundraising effort for a new hospital.

Yes, it's corny. The end of the story is easy to determine even before it's told. But as I listened tears swelled in my eyes. I knew it was mushy and sentimental, but I couldn't help but feel the pain of all concerned. And then I understood why it filled me with such emotion.

My youth returned, my childhood memories and I remembered those days. And as I thought about them I turned my attention to today. Here we are, at this time in our lives always asking for remembrance and kindness from God; asking Him to remember who we are and help us in our attempt at daily living.

Our purpose in life is not only its fulfillment but the opportunities presented to us to make life bearable for others as well. The everyday experiences should teach us to realize that we are not alone in this journey of life. There are those less fortunate, those who depend on the charity of others to survive.

How many times have we witnessed poverty and homelessness only to turn our backs and pretend that it doesn't exist? How many times have we had the ability to extend a helping hand only to withdraw that outstretched effort because of selfishness or indifference?

Memories are mostly fun because they contain only good thoughts. Memories are designed to enhance our faith in our ability to survive. After all we did survive the past and are now seated here in the present knowing full well that we have a future because of our faith in ourselves and in God.

However, there are those who renounce faith like it is some kind of yoke, a burden. There is the story of a man driving his car too fast down a treacherous mountain pass. The car goes over the cliff, and the man barely survives by reaching out and grabbing a clump of bushes growing from the side of the mountain wall.

Dangling in space, the man pleads with God. "Please help me." God calls out to the man. "You want my help?" "Yes," says the man. "Anything." "Anything." "I'll help you on one condition." Says the voice of God. "Anything." "All right," says God. "Trust me and let go." The man hears the message. Thinks about it for a minute. And then shouts: "Is there anybody out there who can help me?"

Yes, there is someone out there to help us and be with us and guide us and care for us. All it takes is a little faith and remembrance of those days gone by and the faith in those yet to be.

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



Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Lech Lecha, the Jewish search for meaning and purpose

If I got paid for the amount of time I spend looking for my car keys or cell phone, I could quit my day job. My husband is no better. Sometimes he passes me in the hall, sleuth-like and squinting, because he can't find his glasses or wallet. I'm wondering if this new ritual is symbolic of something deeper when I hear him call, somewhat annoyed, from the bedroom. "Where did you put my wallet?"

"I hid it in your pants pocket, the ones that are still in the dryer," I call out gaily as I victoriously find my cell phone under the newspaper.

On a serious note, most of us spend a great deal of our lives searching – for love, meaning, identity and purpose. In our youth, we seek parental approval, friendship, social acceptance and new experiences. As young adults, we look for loving relationships, a quality education and career, freedom of expression, perhaps our first home. And for many years thereafter, we continue the search – for the right partner, the best opportunities for our kids, meaningful friendships, spiritual fulfillment and communities in which we feel accepted and appreciated.

Looking at this story with contemporary eyes, I am amazed at Abraham's courage and *chutzpah*.

As different as we are from one another, the human need to find and make meaning from our life is a common bond between us. Whether this need stems from the ego, our inner voice or Divine Guidance, the search for identity, belonging, and self-worth is what drives us to develop ourselves and reach our highest potential.

The questions that drive our search for meaning are often framed as: What is my purpose? Am I on the right path? What is my passion? But the obstacles we most often place in the way are questions that sound like this: Am I good enough/ talented enough/smart enough? What if I fail? What will others think and who will I disappoint if I change?

The quintessential "search story" in Judaism is found in the Torah. It begins with one person, Abraham, who was called upon by God to journey with his wife to a foreign land. God told Abraham: "Lech Lecha! Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your

father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation; and I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing."

Abraham was asked to give up everything he knew, to sever all ties with his family, friends, community and home, to follow God's lead. Looking at this story with contemporary eyes, I am amazed at Abraham's courage and *chutzpah*. Here was a man living in a world ruled by multiple gods and myriad superstitions who followed a voice that no one else could fathom, let alone hear. By our standards it seems, I don't know...crazy? Undoubtedly many thought so at the time. Dangerous? Most certainly, as he encountered enemies, famine and war on his journey to Canaan. Inspiring? Most definitely, if we let the message of *Lech Lecha* become a directive for us in our lives today.

God's instruction to Abraham to leave his past was enhanced by the promise that Abraham's future would include children, in fact multitudes of descendants, which was no small thing considering that his wife Sarah, at the age of 65, had not yet conceived. He was also told he would become great, a standard by which others would measure and bless themselves. Simply put, Abraham was given a Divine purpose that helped him understand the significance of the journey he was about to undertake.

Abraham was able to follow his heart because of two important reasons: He had faith and he had trust. Faith in the Divine guidance he received, which enabled him alone to hear and understand. And trust, that no matter how difficult or dangerous the journey might be, it would be worth it because he would become the man he was destined to become.

The story of *Lech Lecha* beckons us, as human and as Jews, to take risks and travel into the unknown in pursuit of our true purpose or purposes in life. It encourages us to listen to our intuitions, to pay attention to the inner voice that more often directs our heart than our head. It teaches us that we may have to leave what we know and move away from areas of comfort, stability and ease, in order to develop our potential and become our most authentic selves. Like Abraham, we may appear crazy for leaving a job that seems perfect or a lifestyle that others covet. But like Abraham, if we hear the call, we must remember to put our faith in that inner voice that guides us along the way, whatever or however we define it, and trust in our strength, ability, creativity and talents that if we make the journey, we too, may find our own "promised land."

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



Jews by Choice

BY MARY HOFMANN

There's nuthin' like a good book

It's beyond me (and everyone in my family) how anybody can resist a good book. Just the other day, a Jewish friend brought over some children's books, including *Lon-Lon's Big Night* (by Miri Leshem-Pelly), a relatively new picture book in English and Hebrew about a curious Israeli sand fox pup who gets lost in the desert one night following a jerboa. After meeting numerous nocturnal desert mammals on his wandering, Lon-Lon is saved from the talons of a fearsome eagle owl by a rocks hyrax who hides him in a gap in the rocks and later walks Lon-Lon home.

My four-year-old granddaughter, Lyra, took one look at *Lon-Lon* and suggested, "What do you say we read this, Momou?"

I, of course, complied, adding an invitation to five-year-old Aidan to join us in The Big Chair. Aidan, already reading at second grade level, peeked at the book and shook his head with a look on his face that said "that's baby stuff."

It took only into the second page, however, and Aidan was crawling up on my lap as well. It's simply impossible for him to resist a good book, and this was a good one indeed.



Mary Hofmann reads to her four-year-old granddaughter, Lyra, and her five-year-old grandson, Aidan.

Along with *Lon-Lon*, my friend (a university professor who also can't resist a good book store) brought *Across the Alley* (Richard Michelson) and *The Yellow Star* (Carmen Agra Deedy), both of which are also excellent. The former, a stereotype buster, takes place in a 1950s New York tenement in which a little Jewish boy's grandfather pressures him to play the violin while he'd rather play baseball, like his best friend across the alley, a black boy, whose dad coaches the neighborhood team. The boys teach each other and, while both happily end up on the same team, it is the black friend who becomes the violin prodigy.

The Yellow Star, of course, is the World War II legend of King Christian X of Denmark, said to have worn the Star of David on his chest when all Danish Jews were given that decree, thus inspiring the

rest of Denmark to don them as well.

I haven't read the second two books to the kids yet and am in the process of deciding when to do it. The questions rolling around in my mind are the same kinds of questions I grapple with in teaching Torah in my Shabbat School class (which includes my Aidan and Lyra and five other kids from four to six years of age).

I keep flashing back to the old joke about the little girl who asks her dad to tell her where she comes from. Dad takes a very, *very* deep breath and proceeds to explain the facts of life, only to have the girl look puzzled and respond, "Wow. And Jenny comes from Cincinnati."

Of course we have to consider what our children are ready to hear when we teach them. Torah – and Jewish history – is rife with incidents our preschoolers might not be ready to learn about yet. *Across the Alley* is set in a time and place that, to little kids from rural California, might as well be on the moon – or 4,000 years ago in Eretz Yisrael. But it, at least, is benign and positive. *The Yellow Star* is Holocaust. With no insular Jewish culture to support them, do we really want to tell the tiny ones there are people out there who want to kill them because they're Jews?

The current hot word in education is "scaffolding" – using language and situations at kids' levels so as to move them along with meaning. Scaffolding prejudice is tough. Scaffolding mass murder is quite a challenge.

I grew up as a Christian and, I'm sorry to say, my training all the way through confirmation never got past the happy, cheerful Bible stories. Not that Bible stories have ever been happy or cheerful, but my Sunday school teachers always presented them as if they were. It was something of a shock when I went back and re-read them as an adult. I only heard about the Holocaust in whispers until I was in high school – and I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood!

If I'm too chipper with the kids, I fear I run the danger of having their perceptions of religious history frozen in preschool or elementary school terms as mine was. As Jews we pride ourselves in grappling with Truth, with History, with struggle and heartbreak and prejudice and villainy. But when kids are very small and live in a rural community where they are the only Jews in preschool or primary school, do we really want to show them the dark side so soon?

As a parent, grandparent, and teacher, I want these little ones to cherish who they are and to love everything about being Jews before they have to cope with the painful and dangerous aspects. I want them to love Judaism like I do and know that being Jewish is worth whatever they may have to deal with as they get older. But when to broach the sensitive stuff? How? Where do we begin?

I'm thinking in bits and pieces – and always, of course, through books. I'm not ready to talk about the Holocaust with kindergarteners, but there will be hints at



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

"Some kind of Judaism" leaves us morally bankrupt

A reader, responding to my column on Senator Ted Kennedy's death, asked if I thought that the world would be a better place, given a review of the Kennedy's acknowledged accomplishments. I said it would be a better place.

And that was only days before we were assaulted by the movement to free Roman Polanski and now, to forgive David Letterman. Our moral fabric is under attack. On the freeway, I pass a sign board, featuring a gay family, titled, "It's All about Love." Is it?

Are we to believe that without the Kennedy's, the world would have stood still? I think not. Was Bobby Kennedy a part of the Civil Rights Movement, or was it that he was the attorney general of the United States of America, and there were signs in the South that law and order were wheeling, and someone had to take charge. If we are reluctant to make Abraham Lincoln a feverish abolitionist, which he was not, it would be wise not to crown Bobby Kennedy with any Civil Rights Awards.

Roman Polanski deserves to be repatriated to the United States and face justice. John Edwards needs to display some moral background and make the paternity results public. Elliott Spitzer needs to give up the idea that he can return to politics. And David Letterman, who is being defended for his "self abnegation," well if any of it were true, we wouldn't have to talk about it.

When people of prominence scoff at morality and ethics and brush aside their responsibilities, the whole moral fabric of our lives is tarnished. Our children come to believe that money and power mean more than right and wrong.

Would there be anyone left standing, I was asked? Well initially, there would be a



Purim and Passover that all has not always gone well. Once they seem to understand that, then perhaps we'll be ready for King Christian and the wonderful Danes (oh, how I hope that legend is true!) and some other stories that hint at the dreadful and dangerous while concentrating on the heroic. Meanwhile, between my own years as a parent, a school librarian, and my friendship with a wild woman professor who cannot stop herself from buying any Jewish children's book she sees, I think I'll be ready when the questions come.

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

great many vacancies, but we would find, I believe, people of better character, morals and ethics taking their jobs. We have been bruised for years by "morality determined by being caught." Is that really a code we want to adhere to? Will you be content to be less of a scum-bag than someone you know, and feel good about it?

Do we all need to ratify every perverse behavior. In the very same verses in which we are taught about sexual law, homosexuality is included with the condemnation of incest and bestiality. Will that be the next national fight? Will there be liberal states where anything is okay, perhaps Nevada?

None of the people we have been talking about killed anyone, well, there is some question about that, but the others are only accused of raping a child, adultery, lying, cheating, stealing, misrepresenting, breaking oaths, vows, promises.

A column gives its author a chance to stand on a platform and yell out a message. I've seen some soap box orators in Trafalgar Square in London, and though entertaining, they were all equally ineffectual. We are being assaulted from every side. We are at war, and our souls are at risk. There are more and more names on my list of people I would never like to meet.

Dennis Prager is coming to Milwaukee on the 18th of October. The publicity indicates that Mr. Prager, who has attained fame on a radio talk show, is coming to say that without Jews practicing some kind of Judaism, Jews and Judaism will cease to exist. I am going to the program to find out if it is not "some kind of Judaism" that has gotten us to the place we are.

Some things were simply not meant to be tinkered with.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc. His e-mail is howkar@wi.rr.com. ★

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Psychological Perspective

REVIEWED BY EDWARD HOFFMAN

Maimonides: Pioneer of positive psychology

For more than 800 years, Moses Maimonides has been a towering figure in Judaism. Not only did he become the leader of world Jewry in a tumultuous era, but his religious works including the monumental *Mishneh Torah* and the *Introduction to the Mishnah* remain avidly studied today. His *Guide for the Perplexed*, seeking to integrate classic Greek thought with Hebraic monotheism, has exerted an enduring influence on Western philosophy. And yet, Maimonides' extensive writings are both important and relevant for another, rapidly growing field of knowledge: namely, positive psychology. In this article, I'd like to highlight Maimonides' teachings related to this important new specialty: what its originators have called "the study of character strengths and virtues."



The Science of Positive Psychology

The mental health field today is rightfully accepting "character strengths and virtues" as vital to understanding human nature. This development is long overdue, for more than a century ago, William James urged the budding discipline of psychology to explore the heights of human attainment, including altruism and transcendental experience, rather than focus on laboratory studies involving the sensations of average people. Unfortunately, James' call was largely ignored for nearly a half-century, until Abraham Maslow in the 1950s and 1960s co-founded the field of humanistic psychology. Maslow's approach to studying emotionally healthy and high-achieving persons – those whom he termed self-actualizing – had great impact on both academia and American popular culture, but eventually lapsed significantly after his death in 1970. Then, about a decade ago, Martin Seligman and his colleagues launched the field of positive psychology, drawing partly upon humanistic conceptions of personality – but stressing empirical research to validate its viewpoint.

Since then, positive psychology has grown tremendously, with courses offered at more than 200 American colleges and universities, several new academic journals established including *The Journal of Happiness Studies* and *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, and popular books like Seligman's *Authentic Happiness and Happier* by Israeli psychologist Tal

Ben-Shahar catching media attention.

Central to such works has been a focus on hope and optimism, gratitude and wisdom, love of learning, the mind-body relationship, and happiness. Though the leaders of positive psychology are generally secularists, they have recently turned their attention to the writings of history's great religious thinkers for insights into character-building and the attainment of life-meaning and direction. In this regard, a major figure in Judaism is highly relevant: Moses Maimonides. Though living long ago, he can be aptly viewed as a pioneer in this domain – as both a brilliant rabbinic thinker and esteemed physician.

Due to space-limitations for this article, I'd like to highlight five aspects of Maimonides' teachings relevant to positive psychology today:

1. Human beings are creatures of habit.

The notion that habit plays a key role in molding personality was first advanced by William James back in the 1890s. As the founder of American psychology, he famously described habit as "the enormous fly-wheel of society" – propelling our lives in ways that lie outside our conscious awareness. Consistent with this longstanding view, positive psychology today has affirmed the efficacy of making habitual various forms of character-building activity, such as daily writing in a gratitude journal to "count one's blessings" or maintaining a diary to strengthen "learned optimism."

The mental health field today is rightfully accepting "character strengths and virtues" as vital to understanding human nature.

Maimonides repeatedly stressed the importance of habit in fostering ethical and altruistic behavior. It's fascinating to note that he specifically highlighted the importance of repetition in building positive habits. For example, in his influential formulation on charity, he observed that performing many small acts over time is more conducive to building character than if we perform one stupendous act with the same philanthropic value. Why? Because we are inwardly changed by our own behavior and thereby become more compassionate.

Maimonides' emphasis on the psychological significance of "small-act repetition" is precisely consistent with recent research in marriage and couples counseling – revealing that marriages disintegrate mainly due to many small acts of hurtfulness or indifference between spouses, not one huge calamitous event.

2. We are powerfully affected by our social milieu.

The twin values of individualism and self-reliance are considered the bedrock of American culture, but since Alfred Bandura advanced social learning

theory in the 1970s, developmental psychologists have known that in childhood our attitudes and behaviors are shaped by our social milieu: specifically, by those with power to dispense rewards and punishments, namely our parents. We imitate what they do, not what they say, in order to gain their approval and affection. Based on this viewpoint, positive psychology has begun to unravel how desirable behaviors of kindness, altruism, and empathy arise in certain social settings but rarely so in others.

Consistent with Talmudic thought, Maimonides stressed the role of social surroundings in affecting individual behavior. Though readily acknowledging the influence of heredity, he contended that its impact on human conduct was much less than our daily social milieu. Relatedly, Maimonides recommended that we seek teachers, mentors, and even friends in order to uplift our daily conduct – even paying for the opportunity, if necessary, to be positively influenced by moral exemplars. Conversely, he repeatedly warned against associating with unethical companions for their detrimental effect on our character. If there are no ethical people with whom to associate, Maimonides advised, then dwell alone in a cave rather than succumb to harmful social influence.

3. Develop good social skills.

Among the major interests of positive psychology today is the development of what are known as social competencies or collectively as social intelligence. Recent research in organizational psychology has shown that socially oriented traits like conscientiousness and extroversion are predictive of workplace achievement as well as job satisfaction. Clinical studies, too, have revealed a strong relationship between mental health and the presence of friends and confidants in one's life; conversely, social isolation is an important indicator of depression at virtually all ages. In Maimonides' relevant view, the cultivation of such social attributes as cheerfulness, friendliness, helpfulness, generosity, and kindness is not only ethically important, but also represents a true path for success in life. Thus, Maimonides endorsed the teachings of *Pirkey Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers) that positive social relations are the hallmark of the sage.

4. Avoid negative emotions, especially anger.

To maximize mental health, positive psychology is concerned with strengthening such life-affirming emotions as optimism, gratitude and admiration – and lessening the force of our negative emotions. This view is consistent with increasing evidence from behavioral medicine that chronic anger exerts severe wear-and-tear on the body and leads to premature aging and reduced longevity. Here, too, Maimonides was a pioneering thinker, for throughout his Judaic and medical writings, he repeatedly warned against negative emotions for their debilitating effects.

For example, in the *Mishneh Torah* (Book II, chapter 3), Maimonides asserted



Teen Outlook

BY SIGAL TAVEL

Giving back to Emily

In this poem, I try to quantify my appreciation for one of the best American poets of all time, Emily Dickinson, by using the first line in her poem: "Bring me the sunset in a cup" as a starting point for my own poem. As such, I decided it would be a perfect submission for this special Appreciation Day edition. What better way to show appreciation than by writing something inspired by that very author whose famous poetry has influenced not only my own writing, but so many others?



In addition, it struck me that most of those poems were published after she died. She didn't have the pleasure of seeing her writing published while she was still alive. My poem, *Giving Back to Emily*, is my way of not only saying thank you to Emily Dickinson, but also a way of thanking every writer and reader whose work and feedback has influenced all the writers of this generation.

*Bring me the sunset in a cup,
And I'll give you the sky to put over the sea.
Bring me a paint brush made of the wind,
And I'll paint with the sunset for all to see.*

*Give me ink black as the night,
Give me a pen to pour out what's in me,
Give me a paper to hold it all in,
And I'll give you a story, shining bright as can be.*

*The sun is sinking into the sea –
Will the world forget Emily?
No, even though she's fading, she's shown the world
Just how bright she can be.*

*The sun is sinking, sinking, sinking,
Into the waves of time.
The icy white stars poke holes
Into the now smooth black velvet sky.*

*The moon remains and tries to sing,
Never quite there, never quite gone.
But the day will break again
Because we can never forget the sun.*

Tavel is an eighth grade student at Hasten Hebrew Academy in Indianapolis, Ind. She can be reached at: sigalmt@gmail.com. ★

that "Anger is a most evil quality. One should keep aloof from it to the opposite extreme, and train oneself not to be vexed even by a thing over which it would be legitimate to be irritated." In the same volume, he contended that, "The life of an angry person is not truly life. The sages (see Hoffman (Maimonides), page NAT 15)



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Before and during Simchat Torah

Sukkot week was very busy in Jerusalem. Besides being invited to eat Sukkot dinner in several sukkot, Barry and I went to the Tsadah, the annual march into Jerusalem, where companies and individuals and all sorts of groups participate in varying lengths walks, ending in Jerusalem in time for a march through the streets.

We stationed ourselves near Mamilla Mall, opposite the David Citadel Hotel, and what a great place to watch and for Barry to photograph. In addition to the 27,000 Israelis and soldiers, 8,000 Christians from 70 countries were here to attend the annual Feast of Tabernacles sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. For the past 30 years, Christians have been coming during Sukkot week for prayer services, workshops, seminars and teaching at Binyanei Haooma (Convention center). Many booths of souvenirs and information were also available.

One evening our Baptist pastor friend, Al, and his wife, Billie, invited us as their guests to Israeli Guest Night. We were entertained by an orchestra, singers, a fantastic youth choir from Estonia, and dancers who went into the audience to engage people in dancing. We kept meeting Christians at our bus stop during the week and on buses and helped a number of them find their way.

Then it was Simchat Torah, the most joyful of holidays in Israel, except maybe for Purim, and at our synagogue, Kehilat Moreshet Avraham, it is especially *freilich*.

On the night itself, which was Friday, Barry and I arrived with our guests, the Baptist pastor and his wife, around 6 p.m. All of the *Torot* were removed from the *Aron Kodesh* and laid on the *bimah*, which is in the middle of the room. Then for the first *hakafah*, *Cohanim* were called. The number of teenage and army boys in our congregation seems large, and they were there in full spirits to lead the dancing in the adjoining *kiddush* room.

Second *hakafah* were *Leviim*. And the dancing continued. After that for the remaining five *hakafot*, various members of the congregation (men and women) carried *Torot*, including one *hakafa* just for women and one for new immigrants. The singing and dancing in between each *hakafa* lasted at least 15 minutes. One rabbi, who heads the Jewish Theological Seminary program for rabbinical students, carries a crib sheet in his pocket in case a song isn't begun spontaneously when one ends.

Next morning, we were there around 9:30, and soon it all began again; but this

time with some special touches. When the *chatan torah* and *eshet chayil* and others were honored, four friends or relatives carried a *chuppah* to where each was sitting and brought each to the *bimah*.

At the end of the Torah reading, an especially nice thing occurred. The last verses were continually repeated until every member of the congregation, singles or couples, received an *aliyah*. Barry and I were among those called up as a couple and he did the blessing.

When that was complete, then *B'rayshit* was read and the Shabbat services continued, lasting until around 2 p.m. When services were ended, the members pitched in, removed the upholstered chairs, rolled up the rug, brought in plastic chairs, tables, set tablecloths on the tables and the congregation lined up for a beautiful buffet luncheon.

Barry and I had a really good time, sitting with friends and as one said to me, "Doesn't it make a difference this year? You know the players!"

Leaving synagogue close to four, there was something bittersweet as we walked along and looked at the many apartment buildings with sukkot on balconies or in yards. We knew there were no more holidays for two months. And the kiosk owners realized it the next day. *Sufganiyot* (jelly doughnuts) that are served at Hanukkah were for sale! So we have jelly doughnuts to look at for the next two months and more news.

In January, the gas masks will be distributed.

Libi's books are written under a pen name, "Libi Astaire," which is close to her real name of Libi Esther...

Israeli-American mystery writer from Kansas to Jerusalem

The book publishing market worldwide is now going through tough straits with internet competition. So what are the chances a relatively unknown writer from Prairie Village, Kan., will be asked by a publisher to write books in a series? For Kansas City, Missouri-born Libi Feinberg, who was visiting her parents, Morris and Ruth Feinberg, the call last November was a surprise and a challenge, considering the paths she had taken in her life.

Libi grew up in Prairie Village. After high school graduation, she went on to the University of Michigan where she graduated with a major in theater, English literature and history. Not sure what she wanted to do, she then



Libi Feinberg. Photo by: Barry A. Kaplan

moved to New York in 1976 and became a poet. She took a course at the New School for Social Research, and "it opened a whole world for me, but I had to make a choice," she explains – to be a poet or not.

She decided instead to go to Israel in 1979 where she spent half a year on a kibbutz and half a year in a development town "and fell in love with the country."

"I didn't grow up as a Zionist," she says candidly.

After that year, she returned to New York, but in 1981, during the First Lebanon War, she came on aliyah to Kibbutz Yiron (in the Upper Galilee, near the Lebanese border, founded in 1949). That wasn't pioneering enough for her, so she moved to Kibbutz Ketura (which had its beginnings with Young Judaeans and Hadassah in the 1970s), became a member and lived there from 1982 to 1985, working with young children, in the enamel workshop and with horseback riding for the tourists.

"That reminded me of Barney Goodman (a local Jewish Community Center day camp) and horseback riding at Benjamin's Stables!" she recalls.

On two different occasions she directed the Purim shpiels, which were big musical productions.

"It reawakened the theater bug and ultimately, I knew kibbutz wasn't for me, so I left and went back to New York."

After receiving an MBA in marketing and international business, she got a job with the Manhattan Theater Club, an off-Broadway theater, where she started to direct, "fulfilling my dreams."

After about five years, she realized "the dream was kind of empty." She started to explore, became religious and joined a synagogue. This was the process that showed her she wanted to go back to Israel, and she returned in 1995.

She found an apartment, managed an art gallery in the Old City and finally got a job doing public relations for a firm specializing in nonprofit organizations. Libi also began to write a Tzadik story and then was asked to write for an Orthodox magazine, *Mishpacha*, in English and Hebrew.

While there in 2007 to 2008, she started to write a serialized novel, *Terra Incogita*, which, in turn, was picked up by Jerusalem publisher Targum and will be published in the fall.

"It's about descendants of *anusim* (marranos) living in a small village in Catalonia, in northeast Spain. This led me to a trip to Spain for research and to write a four-part series on the Jews of that area," she says.

Libi's books are written under a pen name, "Libi Astaire," which is close to her real name of Libi Esther, because she didn't want her name as Libi Feinberg so much out in the public.

While visiting in Prairie Village last November, the CEO of Targum Press called to tell her they were starting a new imprint in paperback, Zahav Press, and asked if she would like to write a book.

(see Kaplan (Israel), page NAT 15)



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

That Shin is thin

In Modern Hebrew, the letter *shin* represents two sounds, "sh" and "s." Thus, the words *sar* (prince) and *shar* (sings) are spelled identically but pronounced differently. Despite the words' identical spelling, their differing pronunciations reveal that they stem from two distinct roots. If, however, the secondary pronunciation of *shin* had been lost such that the Hebrew words for prince and sings were pronounced identically, one might erroneously conclude that both words stemmed from one root.

In early Hebrew, the letter *shin* represented a third sound in addition to "sh" and "s": "th" as in "thin." But with the massive Roman disruption of Jewish culture in 70 CE, knowledge of the third pronunciation of *shin* was lost along with the knowledge that several other letters represented multiple sounds. Samaritans, whose culture was disrupted first by Romans and then by Byzantines and Arabs, retained only a single pronunciation for *shin*: "sh," pronouncing even the name Yisra'el as "Yishra'el."

Because Arabs were not native to Israel, Arabic culture was not disrupted by the Roman occupation and Arabic letters corresponding to multipurpose Hebrew letters retained those multiple pronunciations. For this reason, Arabic cognates help us understand why Hebrew words with very different meanings seem to stem from a single root.

For example, the Biblical Hebrew words *'ashar* (walked) and *'ashrei* (happy), which are very different in meaning, appear to stem from one root, *aleph-shin-resh*. Yet in Arabic, *'athr* is a footstep (a mark made by walking) and *'ashira* is *cheerful*. Thus we conclude that in early Hebrew, (1) *'ashar* may have been pronounced *'athar*, (2) derives from the root *aleph-thin-resh*, and (3) does not stem from the same root as *'ashrei*, though both are spelled with a *shin*.

Other examples of words with similar spellings, but different roots include: *shenayim* (two) and *shinnayim* (teeth), from the roots *th-n* and *sh-n*, respectively; *shamma* (yonder) from *th-m*, and *shem* (name) from *sh-m*; *yashan* (old) from *y-th-n*, and *yashen* (asleep) from *y-sh-n*; *sha'ar* (gate) from *th-'r*, and *sha'ar* (rate, price) from *sh-'r*; and *shad* (breast) from *th-d*, and *shed* (evil spirit) from *sh-d*.

An attorney and Semitic linguist with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford and Univ. of Calif., Seth Watkins (pen name, Ben-Mordecai) merges linguistic analysis with legal sleuthing to uncover lost meanings of ancient

(see Ben-Mordecai, page NAT 15)





Guest Column

BY SHIRA POLLACK

The Torah that brought our family together

Just 11 days before Rosh Hashana 2007, my family and I had a truly uplifting and emotional experience. I've been living in Israel for the past 25 years and have remained in very close contact with both my parents who had stayed in Indiana. My two brothers live in London and my sister lives in Milwaukee. Baruch Hashem, we are all married and have wonderful children.

Eleven months before this exciting episode, my father, Dr. Edward Simon, may his soul rest in peace, passed away. Needless to say, the whole family and countless friends and students were devastated. My mother and siblings wanted to do something lasting and worthwhile in his blessed memory. I had been to a festival dedicating a new Torah to a synagogue, a year and a half ago, and told my children at that time that I would like to do this one day. So, the idea of writing a new Torah was born. I suggested this during the *shiva* (seven days of mourning for an immediate family member) a few days after the burial in Jerusalem, and it was unanimously decided to purchase or commission a new Sefer Torah as an *iluy neshama* (rising of the soul in heaven), for our beloved father. This was somewhat of a comfort for us amidst our deep sorrow and pain.

My brother Rashi, is the rabbi of a shul and founder of the outreach program called Keshet the Learning Connection in the religious section of London called Golders Green. They had only two Torahs, which were both borrowed, so we decided the new one would be given a loving home in Rashi's shul and read with honor and respect every week.

A new Torah costs at least \$20,000. We were fortunate that Mom agreed to pay the vast majority, while the remaining sum would be paid by the four of us, and hopefully completed by donations. Rashi was nominated to write letters to relatives and close friends whom he presumed would want to participate in this holy endeavor. Professor Simon was a distinguished scientist and medical researcher and a long-serving governor of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, who published and lectured widely on Torah and Science on four continents. Many of his fans were elated to be a part of this worthy undertaking.

Torahs are often sold by dealers who match the *Sofer* (scribe) with the buyer, and make sure he is truly a G-d fearing individual who is a professional in his field and goes to the *Mikvah* every day.

The price is also based on the beauty of the *Sofer's* writing. Handwriting a whole Torah correctly can take a year or more, and must be done with precision, because any deviation can deem it *Pasul*, or nonkosher.

When the writing is concluded, the parchments are checked by a computer program for errors, which is later put on a disc to stay with the Torah. (This can be used to identify it in case it is stolen.) After corrections, it's checked at least once more, and usually by someone who specializes in checking the holy writing. (Believe it or not, these people are known to find mistakes that the computer missed.) There are many more steps that go into making a kosher Torah. A point-by-point description of the *Sefer Torah and its ingredients* was distributed at the event.

While Mom figured out how to liquidate the large sum, I dealt with the dealer together with Rashi. After the approximate time of the completion of the Torah was determined, Rashi began to plan the big event. He set the date at Sept. 2, 2007, and started advertising: The first new Torah dedication in the History of the Keshet Kehila! It was advertised in several Jewish publications, and flyers were sent to their whole mailing list. My second brother, Rabbi Hillel, and his wife, Yael, who also live in London, advertised in their children's schools. Rashi commissioned a photographer and an organist. In addition, we needed the services of a *sofer*. Of course, a major part of any Jewish *simcha* is the FOOD! Ruti (my sister-in-law) was put in charge of this aspect, since she is definitely an expert *simcha* maker in her own right.

But even the act of writing one letter is sufficient to get "credit" for this mitzvah.

Since Rabbi Rashi Simon's shul is still rather new, they still hadn't purchased a *paroches* (the velvet covering for the arc). But surprisingly, just as the Torah was being commissioned, a donor showed up! Yocheved, Rashi and Ruti's eldest daughter (19), designed a beautiful pastel-colored appliqué for the *parochet* depicting in a circular form, a stunning Jerusalem view with the theme *keshet* (lit. knot or connection) intertwined in the picture. A unique shade of purple-violet was chosen. Therefore it made sense to choose a matching *mantel* (Torah cover). There were over 100 designs to choose from. Luckily, one was a perfect match, also using an appliqué showing a gate to enter Jerusalem via the surrounding mountains, which are in shades of tan. The same idea of a knot (*keshet*) surrounds the gate. They chose a beautiful shade of purple-maroon velvet.



Seated: Ed and Cyrelle Simon. Back row: Rashi, Hillel, Shira, and Ronit.

Mom particularly wanted the theme of "Jerusalem" because it was always her dream to live in Jerusalem (where she actually is living today), and her husband is buried there. Our names and appropriate dates and scriptural verses were embroidered on both sides.

In addition, we were able to personalize the wooden rollers. Our names were inscribed in the decorated wood, and silver covered the tips. However, instead of attaching these to the parchment directly after the Torah script was completed, we asked that the wooden rollers remain detached for more convenient plane travel. Indeed, my husband, Shlomo, son Mordechai, and I, transferred it from Israel to England by plane with the rollers in the belly of the plane and the scroll with us in the passenger storage.

My brother Hillel picked us up from the airport, but before bringing us to his nice and spacious home, we dropped off the unattached pieces of our most precious possession to be professionally sewn together by the *sofer* Rashi had commissioned. He later came to oversee the writing of the last few lines of the script at Rashi and Ruti's house.

Shabbos was fantastic! My two sisters-in-law made delicious meals, which we enjoyed eating all together. Our Aunt Harriet Leibowitz, Dad's only sister, came to England for the event from White Plains, N.Y. It was very special for us to be around the same table on this momentous occasion. The *dovening* (praying) at the "Keshet Kehila" (synagogue) was complete with beautiful singing and explanations of the Parsha by their rabbi, Rashi Simon. Of course he also gave a wonderful and inspiring sermon. My husband, Shlomo chanted the *Haftorah* perfectly.

There was a "beautifully prepared Kiddush after the *dovening*, which included delicacies Ruti and others had made, and special kosher candies that Aunt Harriet brought. After the Kiddush, a noted guest speaker named Dr. David Latchman, a professor of genetics, spoke on *Genetics in Halacha* (Jewish Law) in a very similar way that Dad used to speak to many audiences around the U.S.A. and the world. Mom said, "I can just hear Ed saying the exact same thing!" The jokes and stories, as well as the animated manner of speech, especially reminded us of him.

Rabbi Hillel Simon spoke at the third meal of Shabbos known as *shala shudis*.

He mentioned several character traits we can all learn from Dad and discussed the names of his four children. I'm only sorry the talk wasn't better attended.

Sunday was the big day we were waiting for! At 2:00 p.m. people of all ages and backgrounds started to stream into the rabbi's and rebbitzin's tasteful dining room. There were some refreshments served at the back wall, but more important, the *sofer* sat at a table with the Sefer Torah opened to the last passage, and assisted those waiting in line to fill in one letter each. As Rabbi Rashi explained, the last mitzvah of the Torah is to write a Sefer Torah and it is quite a rare one to fulfill. But even the act of writing one letter is sufficient to get "credit" for this mitzvah. He spoke publicly several times to different crowds as people came and left. Of course he didn't forget the jokes! On the table near the Torah was a pretty vase in which to put donations after receiving the honor of writing a letter. These were used to cover expenses of the event.

The procession left a couple hours later from the driveway of a congregant's home a block away from the Keshet Kehila. Approximately 300 men, women and children escorted the masterpiece under a *chuppah* (wedding canopy) while singing and dancing. Family members took turns holding the Torah while approaching the synagogue. I had brought 150 "pekelach" (treat bags) from Israel, which the younger cousins gave out to the children who happily grabbed (and devoured) them. I regretted not bringing more. Police and volunteer guards stopped all traffic on the main road where the Keshet Kehila is situated, while the crowd walked leisurely in the street.

"Each step is a mitzvah!" I had tears in my eyes as we were greeted by a talented organist who played and sang beautifully outside the main entrance. Most of the songs were either modern-day popular "Chassidic tunes" or old time *Simchas Torah* songs. The lively tunes lifted our spirits and souls, making the dancers light-footed. Mendy Simon, Hillel's 10-year-old, also sang with the vocalist. He is quite professional for his young years! When the other Torahs were brought out to welcome their distinguished new arrival, we couldn't control our emotions. Mom cried and said, "I'm so happy I lived to see this day!" Now several men had Torah's to dance with. I called my sister Ronit in the States so she could be apart of the festivities by phone.

We then proceeded into the sanctuary and continued the *leibadik* dancing and singing, which resembled *Simchas Torah*. (This, in a way, made up for last year, which was the beginning of our *aveilus* (mourning), so we sort of missed out on the celebrations.) The celebration was exemplified by Dad's famous "Kazachka" (step), which my brothers did, but not nearly as well as Dad used to do it! Our new prized possession was passed from hand to hand while circling the *bima* together with its newfound "friends."

All this time the tables outside in the

garden were picturesquely loaded with food, including pastries, fruit, and sweet roll sandwiches. Much of the food was happily eaten (early) by the many children who came from all over to enjoy not only the repast, but also the *simcha shel mitzvah* (joy of a mitzvah – commandment).

Finally Rabbi Rashi took the microphone, all out of breath, and exuberantly explained that now the one who reads from the Torah, will *layn* the last passage before placing it into its new honored home, the *Aron Hakodesh* (holy arc) so as not to “embarrass” the Torah by refraining to read from it. Following this, Rashi gave a short sermon, not before reminding us that “food will follow”! He stressed that Dr. Simon, our father, taught us to be proud to be a Jew.

Even though we grew up in West Lafayette, Ind., amongst the Goyim and the corn fields, we were happy to be different from our classmates in public school. We couldn't participate in social programs that took place on Shabbos, instead, we walked to shul. We often brought for ourselves kosher food to various celebrations. Now, *baruch hashem*, we are all teaching our children Torah values. Dad was very proud of us and of his grandchildren.

I was glad to have this happy and spiritually uplifting weekend, filled with emotion, even amidst the adversities of the year of mourning. This act *chesed* (loving kindness) combined sorrow and joy in a unique way.

Unfortunately, Shlomo, Mordechai, and I had to leave that very evening. I remember calling Ronit from my cell phone at the airport to describe the days' events with great enthusiasm and excitement. The next time we'd all be together would be in Yerushalayim at the cemetery one month later for the *yartzeit*. May all Jews soon be together in Eretz Yisrael as we greet Moshiach speedily and in our days.

I dedicate this personal story as a tribute to my father, Dr. Edward Simon, z"l, whom I know would have wanted me to write it because he would have done it himself if only he could.

Editor's note: Dr. Simon was a frequent contributor to this newspaper. He composed the following to my father, founder and publisher, Gabriel Cohen, z"l, for his 75th anniversary tribute issue in June 2007.

“I am a scientist, but writing for newspapers has been an avocation ever since junior high school almost 60 years ago.

Gabriel encouraged both me and my wife, Cyrelle, to write for the *Post & Opinion*. She had a regular column called “Lafayette Chit-Chat” for nearly seven years, while I periodically wrote letters, articles, and book reviews.

My scientific papers paid the rent, but it was the Jewish ones that reached an audience and had an impact in the “real world.”

Thank you for the opportunity, and may your second generation follow in your footsteps!”

Edward Simon, West Lafayette, Ind. 6-8-05. ✨



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Beginning anew

This week (Oct. 17), we read the first Torah portion titled Bereshit (In the Beginning). Knowing that there is always a beginning is a basic and important teaching. Wherever we are in life, we can begin anew. No matter how spiritually connected or disconnected we may feel, we can always grow. When we connect to the Holy One, each moment is new, and we are given the strength to begin our lives anew.

To truly begin again, we have to be able to go beyond this world, to be out of the box of our more contracted fear-based/ego-mind way of thinking, to know that there is so much more, even if it is just for a few minutes of inspiration.

Here is a powerful meditation that was adapted from the most ancient and holy text known as Sefer Yetzirah that will take you out of the confines of the ego mind.

Imagine that you could go back in time, traveling further in your imagination as far as you can conceive. Imagine a time in your consciousness of 100 years ago, 1,000 years, 10,000 years, and travel back in your imagination as far back as your mind can conceive. When you can go no farther, when “farther” is beyond your powers of conception, know that you have touched a place in time known as infinity. Repeat this meditative exercise and travel forward in time in your imagination until you also reach a similar point in time where you once again touch infinity.

It is important to repeat this exercise in your imagination in space as well. This meditation is too long to guide you through it in this article, but know that it is a powerful meditation that will “blow your mind” in the most wonderful way. In my book *New Age Judaism*, the meditation is recorded in its entirety and the reader is guided in meditation to travel in space and time in the various directions until one touches infinite space, and infinite time.

During this meditation, you may become aware of a place known as infinity in time and space. Beyond Infinite Time and Space is the headquarters for the Light and Glory of God and God (Ain Sof). Before there was time, before there was space, there was Ain Sof alone. We learn in Kabbalistic teachings that there arose a desire within Ain Sof to bestow goodness and to be known. So Ain Sof contracted to allow creation to occur, so there would be something to love and be known by. If there was only Ain Sof, no one would be available for Ain Sof to bestow goodness upon.

The Light of Ain Sof, according to Kabbalah, withdrew and then reentered the

void in a lesser and more differentiated expression than before – enough light to sustain creation but not too much to obliterate it. Nothing can exist if not for the Godly light within it. The Zohar calls God “the most hidden of the hidden.” Unfortunately for many, this holy light is often so hidden that its very existence is questioned or ignored. Yet, for many who have tasted a glimpse of the joy of this light, the yearning to know God, to be connected to God is primary. It is for this connection we know we were created and live.

God gives us so many gifts; our very life is a gift. But the gift of Torah is one that many have not yet learned how to receive. If you feel alone and do not know how to live, how to love, or if you simply want to be a better person and love more deeply, if you have questions about why evil exists in the world, and what the future will be, you need to make a commitment to learn Torah this year. The Torah offers answers to our deep questions in life. But most importantly, the Torah offers a blueprint for how to live one's life more meaningfully and how to be connected to all that is good and true in this world.

Each of us needs to increase our Torah learning and significantly diminish the time spent in the astral world of the kind of relationships, movies, television that disconnect us from the True Reality, that is God. God is beyond infinite and the path to God is infinite. We never arrive at the final destination, for God is even beyond infinite, and yet paradoxically God is also so available and present wherever we are.

Admittedly it is not easy to find a true Torah teacher. If you have tried to learn Torah and did not find it the most beautiful interesting experience, then you probably did not learn Torah. You need to pray more, take on another mitzvah and search for a holy teacher.

There are many teachers, and each one has something unique to offer. We now have the Internet and telephone so we can reach beyond our geographic area. It is important to find a teacher who can help you open the gates to your soul. If you can't find such a teacher, learn with a friend or find books that are commentaries on the Torah written by holy people throughout history. Even though these people are not living in this physical world, they write like they are speaking directly to you today.

May the Torah we learn this year be deeper, more true and real. Love and blessings, Miriam Shulamit.

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

“Veshavu Banim Legvulam”

BY SAMMY HUDES



“Hello, this is Gilad, son of Noam and Aviva Shalit, brother of Hadas and Yoel who live in Mitzpe Hila. My ID number is 97027.” Israel has switched governments. It has celebrated more than 60 years of independence. Israel and Hamas have gone to war again. Ehud Goldwasser, z"l, and Eldad Regev, z"l, have been returned home and been buried. It has been 1,177 days. Three and a quarter years. Around 39 months. Gilad Shalit lives.

Gilad was kidnapped by Hamas on June 25, 2006. To this day, I still feel a strong connection to our Israeli brother, as this happened to be my 13th birthday. The kidnapping occurred just two weeks before my bar mitzvah. For over three years, I have prayed that Gilad Shalit be alive and healthy, and that he be returned home to Israel as soon as possible. On Oct. 2, 2009, I was elated to find out that G-d has answered two of my three prayers, thus far.



Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit.

On this day, a video of Gilad Shalit was attained by Israel from Hamas, in exchange for 20 female Palestinian prisoners whose dates of release were already looming. The video, which was filmed on Sept. 14, 2009, features an often-smiling Gilad holding a Palestinian newspaper from that day. Shalit sends his regards to his family and lets them know that he is also in good health. “I want to tell you that I feel well in medical terms.” In order to prove his physical capabilities, Gilad Shalit walks back and forth around the room. Gilad requests from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to “allow me to fulfill my dream and be released.”

It too is a dream of mine that Gilad Shalit finally be returned to Israel. Two years ago as a grade-nine student, I learned the Jewish law “Veshavu Banim Legvulam” (Jeremiah 31:16). The literal translation of this quote is “And thy children shall return to their own border.” This law dictates that we as Jews are responsible for any fellow Jew that is held captive. There is no “if,” “but,” or “unless” written in this law. No matter what the (see Hudes, page NAT 11)



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Fine addition to Klezmer tradition

The Canadian group known as Beyond the Pale has released a new CD titled *Postcards* (www.borealisrecords.com). Quoting from the flyer, "Now in their eleventh year, the band is at a creative peak with this sophisticated collection of North American inflected, East European roots fusion." While I did not notice too much "fusion," I will not dispute that a certain amount of this quality may indeed exist.

The performers include: Eric Stein, leader (mandolin, mandocello, cimbalom), Bret Higgins (bass), Bogdan Djukic (percussion, violin), Aleksandar Gajic (violin, viola), Milos Popovic (accordion, Martin van de Ven (clarinets), and joining them for this CD is Vira Lozinsky, vocalist.

I have two reservations about this CD, neither of which concerns its musical contents. There are three songs with Yiddish text, and no translations or transliterations of the texts are given. Then there is the use of two words, "funky" and "groove." Wikipedia defined funky as "an amalgam of soul music, soul jazz and rhythm and blues. Slang: earthy and uncomplicated, natural. (Or, having a moldy or musty smell!). I suspect that as with many words in Yiddish, the exact meaning may depend on context or even the tone of voice.

The term is used by itself and also with the other word groove ("funky groove"). I do not want to split hairs here but really, using a word with no precise meaning in conjunction with another word of inexact meaning adds nothing to the explanation or description, at least to me. Besides, I am old enough to recall that the word "groove" meant a state of mind of well-being (e.g., "feeling groovy") or being in some place (i.e., "he has found his groove") or (now archaic) the spaces between the lines in an LP.

Precisely what does a faux-Latin groove mean? I suspect that groove may mean or imply style, at least here. These observations aside, the group is a very talented one, individually and collectively. The arrangement of choice seems to be having a musical idea present in the lowest voice (in music this is known as a ground) and a series of variations and/or improvisations in each of the different instruments.

The music of each selection is published by BTP music. Those arrangers not credited are with BTP. What follows now is a brief reaction and/or description of each of the 16 tracks.

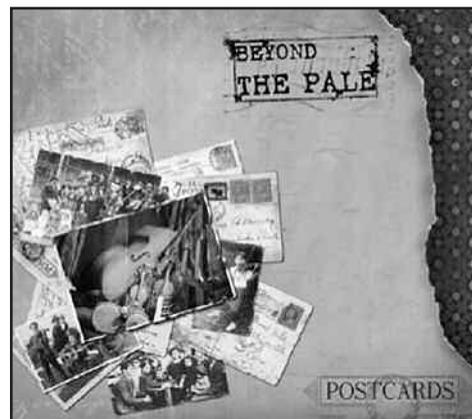
Track No. 1: Magura (traditional) is a lively selection. The idea is that what sounded good the first time will sound even better when it is repeated, is repeated, is repeated, etc.

Track No. 2: Solution (by A. Gajic) is an interesting and reflective work for violin, mandolin and bass. Track No. 3: Katerina (by A. Gajic) is a Serbian dance with an unusual time signature of 11/8 time. Track No. 4: Kamenetzer (traditional) is inventive and also charming (arranged with a funky groove).

Track No. 5: Anthem (traditional), where Mr. Van de Ven and his clarinet distinguish themselves here as well as throughout the other tracks. Track No. 6: Shtern (traditional. Lyrics by M. Felsenbaum) features S. Lozinsky with her husky and sultry voice. Track No. 7: Turkish Delight (I. Fields). While definitely sprightly, I can't discern the Turkish connection. Although the arrangement is very clever, it would have been even more effective to play the melody without any embellishment.

Track No. 8: Back to the Beginning (A. Gajic). Definitely inventive, but I found it to be too repetitive. Track No. 9: Meditation (A. Boltes, arranged by Eric Stein). Why was this described as pseudo-classical? I found the arrangement to be excellent and not pseudo anything. Track No. 10: Split Decision (E. Stein). This is a set of variations over a ground bass (i.e., "funky").

Track No. 11: Postscript (e. Stein). Same tune, new repetitive bass line and Latin style rhythm. Track No. 12: An Old Legend (traditional. Lyrics by Felsenbaum). The vocalist is overpowered by the group. Track No. 13: Are Two (by M. van de Ven). Listed as a duet for clarinet and accordion, it is essentially a clarinet solo, tastefully and sparingly accompanied by the accordion.



Track No. 14: Dutchmandu (by M. van de Ven). Same technique, different rhythm, different tune. Track No. 15: Doina (Z. Bardichever). Very pleasing to the ear and the result of a fine performance. Track No. 16: Extra Spicy (A. Gajic). This selection is written in the style of a Serbian Kolo dance. Whatever a Kolo dance, it is a very happy and lively dance.

To conclude: This is a pleasant CD that is the result of fine performances by a talented group of performers. How much is the result of "fusion" or simply clever arrangements of authentic European melodic material, I will leave to you. This is a fine addition to CDs in the Klezmer tradition.

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



Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Kosher, family-friendly game

Hello, again, Mr. Funsmith.

So, today I find myself thinking about games. Why am I thinking about games? I guess because Hanukkah is coming. But we like to play games all the time. Especially on Shabbos. And I'm remembering your article on Kosher Fun. And I was wondering maybe you have something to say about kosher games, if there is such a thing,

Your friend and mine,
Simcha Dick

My dear, dear Mr. or Mrs. Dick,

Can I tell you how glad I am you asked? Games just happen to be one of my favorite ways to have fun. In fact, I have a whole website – called MajorFun.com – devoted to games. And yes, most definitely, by me, some games are definitely more kosher, fun-wise, than others.

Let me give you an example, for example.

Consensus (see <http://consensusgame.com/> for more information) is a party. If your kids are old enough, it's just that kind of family game – the kosher kind. It's a game that makes people laugh, think, talk and listen to each other. Most of all, it's the kind of game that brings the family together and keeps them together. It's what you might call a "voting game," where the "right" answer is the answer that receives the majority of votes. This shifts the focus from being "correct" to learning about the people you are playing with. Since players end up focusing on each other more so than on the actual content of the game, it creates the kind of fun that unites people, regardless of who wins or loses.

You don't have to write anything down. There's a kind of race track to help keep score. So you can most definitely play it on Shabbos.

Consensus Junior, the third and newest addition to the *Consensus* collection, is the name implies, designed for the kids. But it's fun for the whole family. The game follows the same, Major Fun award-winning design as the other two versions.

There's a large, colorful board, a deck of 200 noun cards, a deck of 75 adjective cards, a deck of voting cards (8 sets of cards, each with a unique border color, numbering 1-10) and a collection of 8 colored pawns, one for each set of voting cards. The board has numbered spaces for 10 noun cards, a space for the adjective card, and a scoring track.

The noun cards are drawn and placed face-up, one in each of the numbered spaces on the board. An adjective card is turned over. Players select the one noun they think most closely fits the adjective, place their vote face down on the table,

and then take turns revealing their selection. The answer receiving the greatest number of votes is deemed the winning answer and the players who chose the winning answer move ahead one space. In a case where there is no clear majority, no one scores. Hence the name, *Consensus*.

The key to the difference between the Junior Edition and the other editions of *Consensus* is the content of the noun and adjective cards. Given, for example, the following randomly selected noun cards:

Bee Hive
Bed Bug
My Daddy
Nemo
World Peace

Which would you vote for if the adjective were (also a random sample)?:

Rare
Adorable
Unforgettable



If the adjective were "rare," which do you think is, um, rarest: your daddy, world peace, or Nemo? Which the most adorable? Which the most self-evidently unforgettable?

Even as the mature person you most obviously are, you'd still have a somewhat clear and more or less patently obvious choice, regardless of which adjective was chosen. And, with an "opponent" of the unabashed certainty of an eight-year-old, you know there will be strong opinions about everything.

This is what makes the Junior Edition so kosher: everyone counts, everyone in the family finds themselves personally invited, everyone has an opinion, everyone feels equally entitled, equally correct, and, with the Junior Edition, pretty much equally informed. How many family games can you say that about?

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

Travel

BY ROSE KLEINER

Fall in Toronto: Rich in color, full of vigor

Toronto's fall colors, this year, are rich in their intensity. As such, they aptly complement the impressive vigor of the city's arts scene. A fine new kosher restaurant, performances by Topol and Theodore Bikel, festivals, films, exhibits and concerts, all combine to make it a most stimulating fall season.

Toronto's favorite out-of-town theater festivals, the Stratford Shakespeare Festival and the Shaw Festival, continue till Nov. 1. The Shakespeare Festival, North America's leading classical theater, has designated fall performances at 40% savings or more.

Among the plays running this fall are *Macbeth* and *Cyrano de Bergerac* (both starring Colm Feore), *West Side Story*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with Brian Bedford, and *Julius Caesar*, with Ben Carlson, as well as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

The Shakespeare Festival's popularity with U.S. visitors is such that there are special weekends for members from several different states, Michigan members, New York, Ohio, and Chicago members.

The Shaw Festival, just across the border from Niagara Falls, is also drawing large crowds from the U.S. Its fall agenda continues with Noel Coward's *Brief Encounters* and *Play, Orchestra, Play*, as well as with Garson Kanin's *Born Yesterday*, and Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*.

The Play by Play – Autumn Experience, offered by the Academy of the Shaw Festival, includes daily panels and presentations, four performances and an invaluable opportunity to go behind the scenes.

One of the most successful plays running this season is *The Sound of Music*, at the Princess of Wales Theatre, presented by David Mirvish. The play continues until Jan. 3, and has been received with standing ovations.

Other Mirvish productions this fall, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, are *The Boys in the Photograph*, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, until Nov. 1; *Stuff Happens*, *Freedom Is Untidy*, Nov. 14 – Dec. 23, and *Fiddler on the Roof*, with a last chance to see Topol, in his farewell tour, Dec. 8 into Jan.

Jersey Boys, the story of Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, at the Toronto Centre for the Arts, is now into its second year.

Rock 'N' Roll, a play written by Tom Stoppard, and starring Fiona Reid, is running at the Bluma Appel Theatre until Oct. 24. *7 Stories*, Morris Panych's existential comedy, will be at the Canadian Stage, Nov. 9 to Dec. 5.

Taibele and her Demon, a musical, spoken word, and visual interpretation, of a story by Nobel Prize winner, Isaac Bashevis Singer, will be performed by Toronto's top klezmer and jazz musicians, melding together the age-old art of storytelling with creative influences of klezmer, world and jazz music.

On the music scene, the Royal Conservatory of Music has just opened its new, 1,140-seat Koerner Hall, with a three-week festival of classical, jazz, world music, and pop this fall. The opening concert included a new commissioned piece by R. Murray Schafer.

On Oct. 24 the Koerner Hall will bring Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, with the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* will be presented by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, at Roy Thomson Hall, on Nov. 11 and 12.

The Faculty of Music, at the University of Toronto, presents *From (nearly) Schubert to Jazz and Klezmer*, on Nov. 5. Dec. 4 there will be a Musical Cocktail Hour with music by Leonard Bernstein, Andre Previn, and others, as well as a preconcert talk. Russian Fantasies, with music by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff and Borodin is scheduled for Dec. 5.

As such, [the fall colors] aptly complement the impressive vigor of the city's arts scene.

The Faculty of Music's Opera Series includes *Haydn: Il Mondo de la Luna*, Nov. 5–8, celebrating Haydn's bicentenary. An afternoon of opera and tea will be held at the Faculty's Macmillan Theatre on Dec. 6, with the performance of an abridged version of Bizet's *Carmen*.

A free concert series at the Four Seasons Centre of the Performing Arts continues until next June, on most Tuesdays and Thursdays, at noon, and on some Wednesdays at 5:30.

The Canadian Opera Company is staging *Madame Butterfly* through the end of October, and Stravinsky's *The Nightingale*, as well as *Other Short Fables*, Oct. 17 till Nov. 5, at the Four Seasons Centre. Massey Hall presents Gordon Lightfoot, In Concert, Nov. 18–21.

For dance, the National Ballet of Canada is performing *The Sleeping Beauty* from Nov. 13–22. The National Ballet's world premiere, by choreographer Azure Barton, will feature Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments* and *Glass Pieces* by Jerome Robbins.

At the museums this fall, the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit continues until Jan. 3, and is drawing huge crowds at the Royal Ontario Museum. The second rotation of scrolls on display, which started Oct. 10, contains two scrolls on public display for the first time ever.

Complementing the exhibit are a series of lectures which run Oct. 29, Nov. 5, 11, 15, and Dec. 3, 10, 15. Also at the ROM, Vanity

Fair Portraits: Photography, 1913–2008, continues to January, and focuses on such leading photographers as Cecil Beaton, Mario Testino and Annie Leibovitz.

The Art Gallery of Ontario is showing Alexander Calder: The Paris Years 1926 – 1933, until Jan. 30. Edward Steichen: In High Fashion, the Conde Nast Years, 1923 – 1937 continues at the AGO until January.

On Nov. 24 the AGO opens a new exhibit, King Tut: The Golden King and The Great Pharaohs. Organized by the National Geographic Society, this exhibit makes its only Canadian stop at the AGO.

Israeli artist, Shaul Smira's paintings, titled 'Migration', are on view at the Julie M. Gallery, whose sister gallery is in Tel Aviv, until Oct. 25, in the Distillery District, 15 Mill Street.

Art Toronto, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, runs Oct. 22–26. About 100 galleries from 12 countries are expected to participate at this 10th anniversary of Art Toronto.

Two special events in the fall are the 33rd annual Jewish Book Fair (Oct. 24 – Nov. 1), and the 29th annual Holocaust Education Week (Nov. 1–11). Both events offer stimulating, moving programs. They also are a great opportunity to meet new people, and get to know the community.

Among the myriad programs planned for Holocaust Education Week will be showings of three recent films – *Defiance*, *The Reader* and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*.

The Jewish Book Fair, among its programs, brings (Oct. 29) author Michael Wex, who will speak about how to be a mentsh, based on his new book, *How to Be a Mentsh (and Not a Shmuck): The Secrets of the Good Life from the Most Unpopular People on Earth*, a book about happiness.

Also at the Jewish Book Fair, on Oct. 31, there is a program, *From the Book to the Big Screen: an evening of film inspired by Amoz Oz*. The book is based on Oz's novel, *Panther in the Basement*, and has Theodore Bikel among its stars.

The International Festival of Authors, at Harbourfront Centre, is in its 30th year, and runs Oct. 21–31. Its mandate is "to bring together the best writers of contemporary world literature."

Israeli folk dancing for beginners and intermediates, and international folk dancing are offered at Darchei Noam Synagogue. For those interested, it is a fun way to exercise, and an especially good opportunity to meet people.

Toronto has many kosher dining facilities, from the elegant to the fast food establishment. Newly opened is Hamizrach, a glatt kosher Middle Eastern Grill House. Its menu also features national Bukharian cuisine, such as lagman soup and manti, which this writer tasted and highly recommends.

Other meat restaurants are Miami Grill, Marky's, King Solomon's Table and Chicken Nest, to name but a few. Among the dairy restaurants is Bistro Grande, Milk & Honey and Dairy Treats. Many places have take-out foods, and there are several cafeterias as well.

Toronto's Singles Hotline is 416-635-5600. ✨

EDITORIAL

(continued from page NAT 2)

I offer to you the words of Albert Einstein, which I believe speaks to you as a person and of the thoughtfulness in your ambition to bring peace and harmony to troubled souls:

"Strange is our situation here upon Earth.

Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we know:

That we are here for the sake of others....

Above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy.

Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received."

I knew of Rabbi Nancy Flam when I too lived in the Bay Area and I know that she is and will continue to be proud of all that you do in the name of the Jewish people. If you read the book *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, you will find a reference to the study of Psalms as a healing tool for those in need. In it there is one particular phrase taken from the Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 124:1, "The person who says 'Amen' sincerely is counted as if the entire prayer has been said."

I say "Amen" to all that you stand for, for all that you have achieved, for all the things yet to be counted as you endeavor to bring peace and harmony to a troubled world.

Rabbi Irwin Wiener, D.D.

Now that you, dear readers, have two examples, I hope that on Nov. 2, you will take out a few moments of your day to let at least one person know how much you appreciate him or her.

Jennie Cohen, 10-21-09. ✨

HUDES

(continued from page NAT 9)

cost, we must bring our sons back home, dead or alive. The cost for Ehud Goldwasser, z"l, and Eldad Regev, z"l, from Hezbollah was 200 dead terrorists, as well as five living ones. Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert constructed that prisoner swap.

We must pray that Benjamin Netanyahu reaches an agreement with Hamas in exchange for Shalit. The price for a living and healthy Gilad Shalit will without a doubt exceed that of two nonliving soldiers. However, it is worth it. I look forward to the day that Gilad's smile takes place in his home of Mitzpe Hila, instead of the Hamas jail.

Sammy Hudes, 16, is the son of Nelson and Myrna Hudes, and lives in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. ✨



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Family Guy and FlashForward

Has *Family Guy* gone stale in the second episode of the new season? Or has the seemingly cutting-edge series revealed a staleness that was always there?

In a meandering and interminable episode written by Mark Hentemann, Lois, the wife of the title cartoon character family-guy Peter, the simplest of simple Joes, needs to consult her medical history after a breast cancer scare and discovers that her grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. The problem is that Lois has always regarded herself as a good Christian. Hearing the news, hubby Peter comments, "Breast cancer is starting to look pretty good."

Lois questions her mother, whose upper-crust (White Anglo Saxon Protestant – or Catholic?) husband made his wife conceal her Jewishness ("It was the right thing to do") in order to be admitted to the right country clubs. Unlike his father-in-law, who still tests his wife's "Jewish" response to dollar bills (!), Peter embraces the idea of being Jewish. He purchases a Jewish star necklace (equipped with chest hair), and dons a tallit and kippah. He decides to change his name from Peter to "Chhhh" (Hebrew guttural sound).

Confused and disconcerted, Lois calls in Max the Jewish accountant for advice from an "actual Jewish person." Max's "Jewish" gut reaction is that "being Jewish does not have to change you or your family's life." (Does the writer intend this as a critique of American Jewish attitudes or as a "healthy" attitude?) Yet Max does change his rhetoric a bit when he informs Peter later that becoming Jewish is a process that "involves spiritual education and good works." Impatient with Lois's desire to keep things as they are and Max's rather contradictory insistence that one must work to become Jewish in order to be like everybody else, Peter complains, "Leave it to a Jew to take all the fun out of being Jewish."

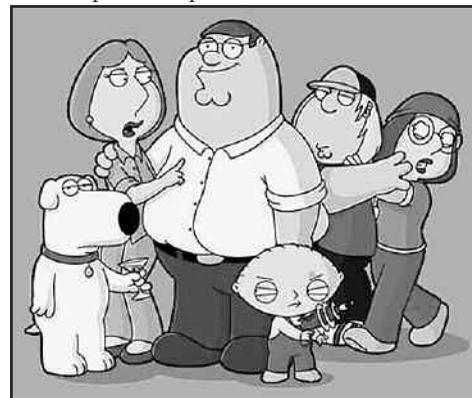
Peter drags the family to the synagogue, complete with Ben Stein as the rabbi. As Peter enters, he announces, "I'm one of you guys now. I'm Jewish." He then shouts, "Holocaust! We're Number one!" A boy who sits behind Peter's daughter greets her with a whisper that makes her recoil (the lewdness of Jewish boys?). Peter immediately enrolls his sons (but not his daughter?) in a Jewish school where the wise-guy baby learns about Hanukkah and then questions, "How long before we play pin the eviction notice on the black man's door?" He thinks up another question: "What are you going to do when Jesus comes back

and puts a boot up your...[derriere]?" Not unexpectedly, the Jewish school sequence mocks Jewish boys in gym class.

Peter is convinced that a change in religion can bring spice to his marriage. He cannot wait to be aroused by his wife seducing him with the line, "Tell me why you don't earn as much as my friend's husband." Yet in his dreams he is visited, *Fiddler on the Roof* style, by his sainted Irish father, who chides him, "Knock off all the Jewish stuff or you'll spend eternity in hell." Finding his old-time religion once more, Peter warns his wife at breakfast, "Jews are gross, Lois. It's the only religion with 'ew' in it." At night he ties his wife to a cross and in the morning he takes rifle shots at his wife and at a Jewish neighbor near the mail box.

Lois runs to her mother for moral support. Her mom confesses, "I let your father take my Jewish identity." Lois then announces that she will have a Passover seder and that there will no longer be Easter in their house. Peter dresses up in an Easter bunny costume and declares his intention to mess up the seder. He says, "I'm a Catholic and I want to live in a Catholic house." She responds, internalizing the beliefs about Jewish materialism of the men in her life, "Well, I'm a Jew and I want to live in a nicer house."

The moment Peter refers to the importance of believing in Jesus, the Christian savior appears, with beard and robe, to remind Peter that Jesus was a Jew and to tell him that Judaism and Catholicism are "two sides of the same coin" and that the essence of all religion is to treat others the same way you want to be treated. When, in the final moments of the episode, titled "Family Goy," Peter asks Jesus (who, by the way, is depicted as a believer in 9% tips) which is the best religion, Jesus replies, "Six of one. They're all complete crap."



Main characters of Family Guy.

What is the moral of this story? Peter interprets "Treat others as you want to be treated" to mean "an eye for an eye." Is the writer offering a critique of religion or is he setting up a contradiction in religion (when the two sayings are not necessarily contradictory)? Or is his depiction of all these stereotypes of Jews all about contradiction – to show that stereotypes are contradictory, or to use contradiction for easy laughs? Or is he piling up all the contradictions to make the point that religious differences breed more contradiction than conciliation and the

answer to anti-Semitism or anti-Catholicism is Lois's sigh: "I just want to be a good person on my own."

To get to this profound (?) conclusion, writer Hentemann recycles old jokes and inverts cliché Brotherhood Week sermons. Fair enough, I suppose, but not very creative or entertaining. It simply makes stale lines and stale themes (including the anti-religion tag lines) more stale: I want to be Jewish because Hanukkah has eight nights of presents while Christmas has only one. The half hour mocks mockery of Hebrew names, thus making a mockery of mockery, or perhaps making mockery unfunny. ("Grandma Hebrewburg is Jewish?" "It was originally Hebrewburgmoneygrabber.")

In the end, there are two messages here. The first is that all religion is the same and that it's all a matter of baggage from one's parents of which one needs to let go. After all, Lois admits that she wants to make up for her mother's mistakes and Peter attributes his aggressive behavior to his dead father's threats of eternal damnation.

But Peter may need no excuse, anyway, for his bad behavior with regard to religion. The second and overriding message of this episode, as of the show in general, is that the "common man" American father trips from one obsession to another; is disposed toward debasing his neighbor, morally speaking; and is capable of burying a cut-out of a pin-up in the back yard, if not an actual person. (Yes, this episode about "Judaism" begins with Peter's affair with a cut-out photo of a famous beauty.)

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

FlashForward

TV's newest science fiction series, *FlashForward*, rhapsodizes over the effects of an international blackout. Though killing millions when airplane pilots and automobile and bus drivers lost consciousness by the tens of thousands, the event made everyone who survived on Earth a bit of a prophet, able to foresee something of the future in one's temporary coma. The lead characters in the series are FBI agents charged with discovering exactly what or who caused the catastrophic, traumatic yet thrilling universal blackout.

In the third episode, writers David S. Goyer and Marc Guggenheim (who are also producers), with story suggestions by Robert Sawyer, introduced a Jewish theme of sorts. It seems that a notorious Nazi war criminal (Curt Lowens, who is all too good in this role), rotting in Quale Prison, Munich, dreamed something that he wants to sell to the FBI as a possible clue to the cause of the world's temporary coma. He will do so on condition that all charges against him (for killing Jews) are dropped, and that he can return to the

United States of America, where he had been hiding out for many years.

This Nazi war criminal believes that he benefited from his close association with Jews – as their tormentor and as murderer, of course: "In my time at Treblinka, I obviously came into contact with many Jews. I also came to learn about certain aspects of their beliefs, their culture." He fancies himself to be something of an expert in Kabbalah, which he describes as a "code." In Kabbalah, he says, "everything has a meaning." The 137 seconds that everyone on Earth was in dreamland correspond to the numerical value of the Hebrew letters that spell out "Kabbalah."

Is there significance to the Nazi war criminal's name? He is given the name Geyer, almost the same as one of the writers. Are our writers telling us that Geyer has been "chosen" to reveal that the solution to the world's problems rests in Kabbalah? Geyer envisions himself at a future time as a free man, passing through an American airport. And the airport agent in Geyer's vision saw Geyer in his "flash forward."



FBI team meets on FlashForward.

One of the FBI agents, Janis Hawk (Christine Woods), is adamant that Geyer's victims "deserve his punishment." She believes that a line against release from prison should be drawn in the case of a Nazi. But Geyer is released at the request of her partner (Joseph Fiennes) and it appears that Geyer might be a continuing character.

I dare say that the integrity of this series will be determined by how Kabbalah and Geyer are treated. If Kabbalah is reduced to another "code" in tepid New Age style, the series will be inaccurate. If the emphasis is put on Geyer's "vision" rather than on Janice's moral concerns, then the series will be immoral. After all, the Hebrew Prophet is not so much fortune teller as a truth and justice teller.

I remain hopeful about all new TV series reaching heights of artistry and insight and moral vision, but I am taken aback by the "novelty" in *FlashForward* of regarding a Nazi war criminal as a naming opportunity.

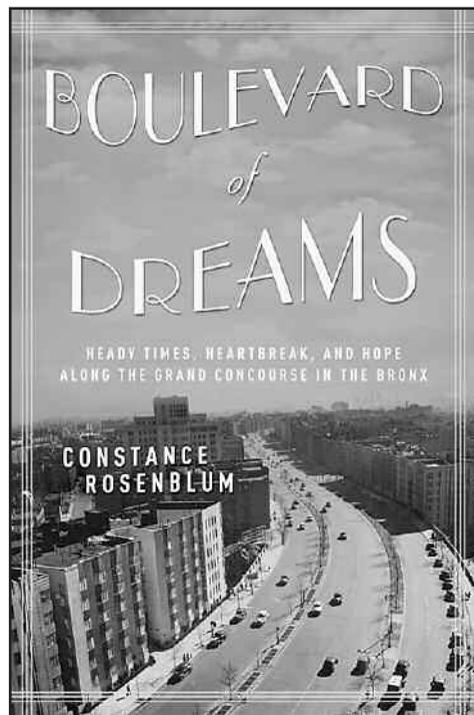
Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. A native of Springfield, Mass., he attended Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, *What Jews Know About Salvation* and *Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends 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

Bronx history includes large Jewish population

Boulevard of Dreams. By Constance Rosenblum. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 277 Pages. \$27.95



Those who come from the Bronx (doesn't everyone?) will be fascinated by this intriguing account of its rise, fall, and the beginning of its rise again. The "boulevard" in the book's title is actually the Grand Concourse, the wide thoroughfare that stretches north and south through the Bronx. This history by Constance Rosenblum, a *New York Times* reporter and editor, is being released just before Nov. 24, 2009 when the Grand Concourse will celebrate its 100th birthday.

In the years before the Grand Concourse was constructed, the Bronx consisted largely of farms and park land. It was annexed from Westchester County by New York City in 1874, becoming the only part of the city attached to the mainland. Louis Risse, a French engineer who settled in New York at the age of 17, designed the Grand Concourse as an 11-lane speedway where wealthy New Yorkers could race their horses while, at the same time, it served as a link to the parks of the Bronx. Conceived in 1892, the Grand Concourse was dedicated in 1909, by which time the horses had given way to automobiles. In short order, the Victorian houses lining the Grand Concourse were replaced by opulent five- and six-story Art Deco apartment houses. Upwardly mobile Jewish families from the Lower East Side moved into these apartments. By 1930, the Bronx had 585,000 Jews, many of them living on the Grand Concourse or its surrounding streets. The actual number was determined

by counting how many students were absent from school on Yom Kippur.

On the High Holy Days, the Grand Concourse bustled with well-dressed people heading home from the synagogues in the area. Their weddings and bar mitzvahs were held in the luxurious ballrooms of the Concourse Plaza at 161st Street and the Grand Concourse or in the many nearby catering halls. Close to the Concourse Plaza was the Yankee Stadium, which saw its first game on April 18, 1923 and which is now replaced by a new Yankee Stadium. Further to the north where Fordham Road crosses the Grand Concourse, a shopping area, featuring Alexander's and Loehmann's, attracted customers. In that same neighborhood, the Loew's Paradise began business in 1929 with its Italian Baroque architecture and a blue sky ceiling with twinkling stars. Close by were the ice cream parlors: Krum's, Jahn's, and Addie Vallins.

In addition to its large Jewish population, the Bronx had many Irish Catholics who were especially proud of their parochial high schools and Fordham University. Since New York University had a branch in the West Bronx, James J. Lyons, the Irish borough president called the Bronx, "the borough of universities."

Until the end of World War II, the only blacks in the area were women maids hired by the mostly Jewish matrons at the "Bronx Slave Market" where the women waited to be selected for a low-paid day's work. In the 1960s, blacks and Puerto Ricans descended on the Grand Concourse neighborhood and the Jews moved out. The newcomers had many problems – poverty, alcoholism, mental illness, crime, and drug addiction. Landlords abandoned the buildings as they sank into chaos and disrepair. Inner cities across the country deteriorated, and the Bronx became a noted disaster area. Novelists depicted what happened, especially Tom Wolfe in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*.

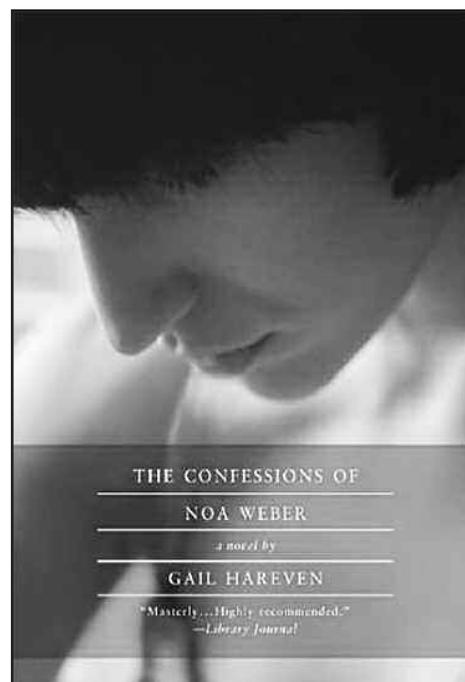
More recently, there are some signs of renewed health and development. The neighborhood appears to be struggling to move beyond its "nightmare past." Some restoration has taken place including the reclamation of the destroyed Loew's Paradise. There is hope that the Bronx could become a successful interracial community.

Rosenbaum has told a harrowing story of construction and destruction, ending with the realistic requirement for changes in attitudes to restore the happy days that once made the Bronx a desirable place to live.

Intriguing novel on relationships by Israeli author

The Confessions of Noa Weber. By Gail Hareven. New York: Melville House, 2009. 331 Pages. \$16.95

The author of this intriguing novel, Gail Hareven, is an Israeli writer who is well known in Israel for her magazine columns, six novels, three short story collections,



two nonfiction books, two children's books, and four plays. In 2002, she won the Sapir Prize for *The Confessions of Noa Weber*, her first book to be translated into English. This introduction of Hareven to English readers tells the story of the first-person narrator, Noa Weber, a Jerusalem resident who struggles mightily between her feminist ideology and her deep love for Alek, an enigmatic character who is out of Israel most of the time.

Noa was born on a kibbutz and raised in the children's house until her family moved to Tel Aviv when she was seven. Alek was one of the large numbers of Russians who came to Israel when emigration restrictions were eased. They went through a pro forma marriage so that Noa could avoid military service, and they have a daughter, Hagar, born when Noa was 18. Alek did not see Noa or his daughter in the hospital, having left for Europe the day they came home. Five months later, he returned briefly to serve in the Israeli army during the Yom Kippur War and spent a short time with Noa and Hagar. Alek had relationships with many other women and at least two of them gave birth to his children. Despite this and despite her own casual affairs, Noa was irrevocably and fervently committed to Alek.

The book is an in-depth examination of Noa's conflict between her longing for Alek over a 30-year period and her public personality as the successful author of a series of novels featuring Nira Woolf, a tough private investigator who is a "fighting lawyer" and a militant feminist. These books have given Noa financial security, enabling her to support herself and her daughter who is in America studying to become a rabbi.

Alek flits in and out of the story either during fleeting visits to Israel or when Noa eagerly responds to his calls that she comes to see him in Moscow where he lives and works as a free-lance newspaper correspondent. When they are together, her love for him pours forth and presumably sustains her during the much lengthier

periods when they are apart. While her honesty and her diligence in continuing to dissect this odd relationship provide the material for most of the book, there are also references to her family, her friends, and to events in Israel. This backdrop gives some realistic credence to Noa's self-analysis and to her "confessions."

Readers are inevitably caught up in trying to understand the complexities of the peculiar relationship between Noa and Alek. The commonplace notion that "love is blind" offers a partial but unsatisfactory explanation of Noa's persistent love for Alek despite his unyielding avoidance of a conventional relationship. Perhaps Hareven is implying that love cannot be deciphered and that it is beyond rationalization. That would suggest that Noa's search for intellectual justification has to yield to the power of her emotional attachment to Alek. This gives the story a modicum of authenticity and elevates appreciation for Hareven's skill in posing a problem that does not yield readily to a conventional solution.

This thoughtful and provocative novel clearly promises that a receptive audience awaits the translation of Hareven's other books.

From health to mental illness and back again

Rage Against the Meshugenah. By Danny Evans. New York: New American Library, 2009. 337 Pages. \$15.

Melancholia, depression, manic-depressive illness, cyclothymia, and bipolar disorder are all names for a special form of mental illness. The usual pattern consists of mood swings from excessively happy states to conditions of dark despair. Sometimes, the patient remains in a depressed state. Originally treated by electro-shock therapy, the condition currently responds to medication and psychotherapy.

The author of this autobiographical memoir, Danny Evans, lived in southern California where he worked in an advertising agency. He and Sharon, the wife to whom he was happily married, had one son. On Sept. 7, 2001, without warning, he learns that his agency has been sold and that the new owners are closing the office where he has been working. Danny and Sharon had been living up to his total income. Without any savings, they will be broke once they use up the two weeks severance pay he received.

Devastated and somewhat disoriented, Danny decides to fight back and find a new job. However, a few days later, on Sept. 11, 2001, the United States is attacked and Danny begins to fall into a depressed state. He starts to wonder whether life is worth living and he feels that he has hit "rock bottom." He vividly describes his sexual fantasies and his purchases of pornographic magazines and DVDs. He drinks heavily and stays in bed until Sharon, whose part-time work (see Teicher, page NAT 15)



Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Exciting new kosher cookbook

Panache – Montreal's Flair for Kosher Cooking, edited by Shawna Goodman-Sone, published by the Auxiliary of the Sir Mortimer B. Davis General Hospital, \$42 paperback, * 2009.

I always love receiving a kosher cookbook, but when a good friend of mine told me a friend of her daughter's was in Jerusalem, she wanted to meet me and she had done a cookbook, that was especially exciting.

Shawna Goodman-Sone is a culinary training graduate of the Natural Gourmet Cooking School and a pastry arts graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education, both in New York City. She has also trained at the Cordon Bleu in Paris. She teaches, caters and cooks in Montreal where she lives.

A huge number of people contributed recipes to make this fundraiser cookbook a success; others tested recipes; and chef, teacher and cateress, Goodman-Sone put it all together, with all proceeds going to support the hospital emergency department.

Chapters include roasted vegetables 101, suggested menus, starters, soups, salads, breakfast and brunch, poultry, meat, fish, vegetarian, on the side, desserts, bars and cookies, a glossary and an index. Each chapter title page is on a full-color photograph. Scattered through the book, on every other page, are color photographs of food or implements.

There are 167 recipes with metric and regular measurements in shaded boxes; instructions are paragraphed (not numbered), on the rest of the page.

The 17 starters include Egyptian, Italian, Sicilian, Chinese and French dishes as well as classics such as tzatziki, guacamole and pita chips. French, Italian, Spanish and Indian soups are part of the 13 as well as chicken soup and cream of asparagus. There are 17 salads and 3 dressings, including Italian, Greek, Latin American, French, Moroccan and Japanese; and Lebanese fattoush, Caesar salad, and St. Tropez salad (using hearts of palm).

Sixteen breakfast and brunch recipes offer overnight French toast, several sweet breads and fish dishes. Poultry has 14 recipes from the Mediterranean, Morocco, the Caribbean and France with familiar entrees like chicken piccata and glazed honey mustard turkey breast. Ten meat dishes offer steak, London broil, lamb, veal, brisket and meatballs.

Among the 12 fish dishes are halibut, tuna, salmon, and sea bass. Twelve vegetarian dishes include Mexican, Greek and Italian. On the side are 17 choices

with vegetables, potatoes, and grains. The range of 22 desserts goes from lemon soufflé to cheesecake, from tiramisu to cakes, and sauces and more. Bars and cookies have 14 varieties such as cranberry pistachio, chocolate mint, and a few for Passover.

In addition to the really beautiful presentation, the chef's tips are particularly useful, and the general elegance of recipes will be a wonderful addition to any kosher cook's library.

*Available from the Auxiliary, 3755 Chemin de la Cote Ste. Catherine, #A 018, Montreal, Quebec H3T 1E2. \$7 postage and handling within Canada; \$12 postage and handling to the U.S.

Some delectable recipes to try for Fall

Challah Crisps

- 1 loaf unsliced square challah, crust removed
- 6 Tbsp. melted unsalted butter
- 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- 1 Tbsp. poppy seeds
- 2 Tbsp. dry onion flakes
- 3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 Tbsp. powdered garlic
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Cut the bread lengthwise into 1/2-inch thick slices. Lay the slices flat, cut them into 1/2-inch-wide strips, and then cut the strips in half crosswise. Place the bread sticks on the baking sheet and brush with butter. Combine sesame seeds, poppy seeds, onion flakes, Parmesan, garlic, salt and pepper in a bowl. Sprinkle over the bread pressing slightly into the bread so it sticks. Bake 7-8 minutes. Turn over and bake 4-5 minutes more until golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Apricot Orange Bread

(4 miniatures or 1 regular loaf)

- 1 cup dried apricots
- Juice and zest of 1 orange
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter or margarine
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1/2 cup toasted, chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9x5 loaf pan or four miniature loaf pans. Place apricots in a bowl and cover with 1 cup boiling water. Let stand for 20 minutes. Drain and reserve soaking water. Add to orange juice to make 1 cup. Chop apricots and combine with orange zest. Cream butter and sugar in a large bowl. Add egg and vanilla and beat well. Add juice mixture then gently stir in flour, baking powder and salt. Mix until flour disappears. Batter will be lumpy. Stir in apricot and nuts, if using. Pour batter into pan, bake for 25 minutes for small loaves or 1 hour for large or until a toothpick

(see Kaplan (Recipes), page NAT 15)



Book Review

REVIEWED BY EDWARD HOFFMAN

A doorway into a timeless and enchanting realm

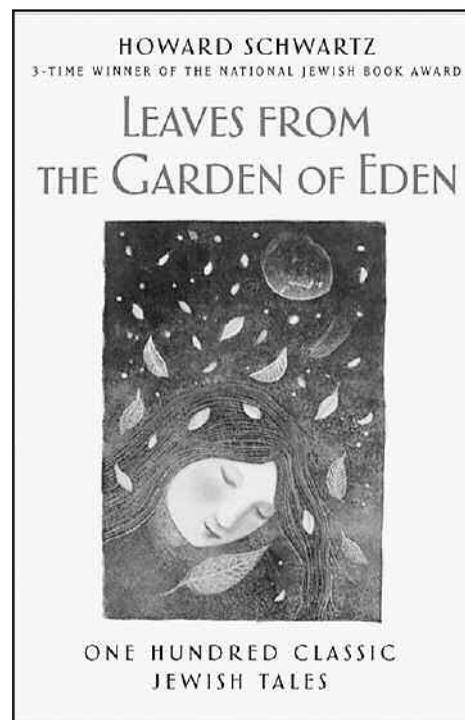
Leaves from the Garden of Eden: One Hundred Classic Jewish Tales by Howard Schwartz. Oxford University Press, 2008, 544 pp., \$34.95.

"According to Jewish folk tradition, Abraham and Sarah never died. Ever since they took leave of this world, the patriarch and his wife are said to make their home in the Garden of Eden. During the week, Abraham wanders through the Garden and gathers leaves that have fallen there. And on the eve of the Sabbath, Sarah crushes those leaves and takes the powder made from them and casts it into the wind...Then angels carry it to the four corners of the earth, so that all who breathe in even the smallest speck have a taste of Paradise," relates Howard Schwarz in the opening paragraph of *Leaves from the Garden of Eden*. For more than a quarter-century, as a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, he has enriched the Jewish world with his inspiring body of writing – now numbering 30 Judaic books of short stories, children's fiction, poetry, essays, and anthologies of historical folklore.

Leaves from the Garden of Eden is the author's tenth work in the latter literary category and follows closely his monumental *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*. Less ambitious and sweeping in scope, *Leaves from the Garden of Eden* is nevertheless a valuable addition to Professor Schwartz's oeuvre – presenting 100 tales encompassing biblical figures such as Miriam and King Solomon, ancient sages such as Simeon bar Yohai, early-modern rabbis such as Judah Loew of Prague, and Hasidic masters including Reb Nachman of Bratslav.

The book is divided into four broad sections, reflecting its author's categorization of classic Jewish stories: fairy tales, folktales, supernatural tales, and mystical tales. "Each of the four primary types," Professor Schwartz cogently writes, "seems to have its own purpose. Fairy tales are fantasies of enchantment. Folktales portray the lives of the folk as they imagined them, with a rich helping of magical and divine intervention. Supernatural tales portray fears about the power of evil, such as demons and *dybbuks* and other kinds of supernatural beings, especially the ubiquitous demoness Lilith.

And mystical tales serve as teaching stories of some of the greatest rabbis, such as Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Isaac Luria, or the Ba'al Shem Tov." In the Kabbalistic view, too, imagination is a powerful spiri-



tual trait, and awakening it can certainly aid our inner growth.

Consistent with his earlier anthologies of Jewish folklore, the author provides extensive and lucid bibliographic information concerning all 100 tales. In addition, he offers a fascinating, well-rounded introduction to "the Jewish mythical imagination" and a brief focus on "What makes a Jewish folktale Jewish?" In the latter, intriguing essay, Professor Schwartz relies upon Israeli scholar Dov Noy's viewpoint that four key criteria are involved: time, place, characters, and message.

From that perspective, a story without specifically Jewish sacred time like the Sabbath, or an identifiably Jewish locale like Jerusalem, or indeed any discernable Jewish characters, could still be considered "Jewish" if its moral or lesson harmonizes with traditional Jewish values, such as the pursuit of justice.

For this reviewer, such a viewpoint seems a bit too elastic and syncretic, especially as some biblical values have certainly transcended their original Hebraic origins. Fortunately, though, virtually all the stories in *Leaves from the Garden of Eden* offer indisputable Jewish content, rich with the ethos of our 4,000-year tradition. Professor Schwartz is to be commended once more for offering a doorway into a timeless and enchanting realm.

Edward Hoffman, Ph.D. is an adjunct associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University and author of numerous books including *The Wisdom of Maimonides* (Trumpeter, 2008). ✨

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HOFFMAN (MAIMONIDES)

(continued from page NAT 6)

have therefore advised that one keep far from anger until being accustomed not to take notice even of things that provoke irritation. This is a good way."

5. Cultivate mindfulness. The fields of positive psychology and behavioral medicine today are increasingly recommending mindfulness training (that is, learning to stay focused in the present moment) for its therapeutic value. The scientific evidence is clear that such training is effective not only in reducing destructive emotions like anger and fear, but also in strengthening the body, such as by lowering blood pressure and heart rate. In this regard, it's fascinating to learn that Maimonides addressed this topic in his influential *Guide for the Perplexed* (volume 1, chapter 60): "If we pray with the motion of our lips and our face toward the wall, but simultaneously think of business; if we read the Torah with our tongue while our heart is occupied with the building of our house, and we do not think of what we are reading; if we perform the commandments only with our limbs; then we are like those who are engaged in digging the ground or hewing wood in the forest without reflecting on the nature of those acts, or by whom they are commanded, or what is their purpose."

Indeed, Maimonides attributed so much importance to mindfulness for establishing a healthful lifestyle that he even provided specific advice on how his fellow Jews could cultivate this trait: "The first thing you must do is turn your thoughts away from everything while you say the *Shema* or other daily prayers. Do not content yourself with being devout when you read merely the first verse of *Shema* or the first paragraph of the prayers. When you have successfully practiced this for many years, try when reading or listening to the Torah to have all your heart and thoughts occupied with understanding what you read or hear... After some time, when you have mastered this, accustom yourself to have your mind free from all other thoughts when you read any portion of the other books of the prophets, or when you say any blessing... have your mind exclusively directed to what you are doing."

Maimonides' career as a rabbinic scholar, communal leader, and physician spanned several decades. His legacy is profound and enduring. As I've sought to demonstrate in this brief article, his psychological insights can clearly enrich the new scientific specialty known as positive psychology with its important emphasis on fostering individual character strengths and virtues.

This article is an adaptation of an invited lecture at the University of Tokyo, Department of Religious Studies, in October 2009.

Edward Hoffman, Ph.D. is an adjunct associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University and author of numerous books including The Wisdom of Maimonides (Trumpeter/Random House). ✪

KAPLAN (ISRAEL)

(continued from page NAT 7)

"I decided to do something I can have fun with, a mystery series, taking place in the 1800s England in the Jewish community. The detective is a *parnass* (wealthy benefactor of the synagogue)," Libi says.

The book, *The Disappearing Dowry*, was published in April for adults, but it also has appeal to young adults. It is already being considered for the prestigious Sidney Taylor Book Award for 2010. (This is an annual award for a book for children or teens that authentically portrays the Jewish experience and is awarded by the Association of Jewish Libraries.)

Now Libi is writing the second book in the mystery series. What else is in Libi's future? "My next step is to sell my book for a movie. It would be perfect for Hallmark Hall of Fame!" she exclaims.

Reflecting philosophically on all the paths she has taken in her life, Libi says, "I really feel when you come to Israel, that's when you discover who you really are and what your purpose is in this life. HaShem is going to help guide you so you can fulfill that purpose."

The Disappearing Dowry by Libi Astaire, Zahav Press (Targum), \$9.99 paperback, May 2009.

This book is the first in a new series of historical mysteries by the Israel publisher, Targum. Set in London in the 1800s, the author, Libi Astaire calls her series a kind of "Jane Austen meets Sherlock Holmes."

Astaire has lived in London and loves things which are English and felt comfortable using that as her setting.

Narrator of this book, who sets the tone for this book and the series, is a young Jewish woman named Rebecca Lyon.

In this work, the plot revolves around the Lyon family – father, Samuel who owns a clock making shop; his wife, Rose; their marriageable daughter, Hannah; and three younger siblings plus Rebecca, the narrator.

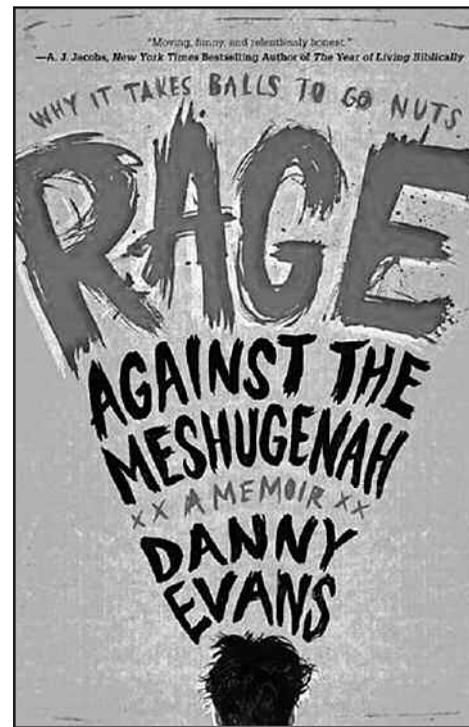
Just as the family has arranged the marriage of Hannah, Mr. Lyon's bank goes bankrupt and someone steals a large sum of money he kept hidden in his shop.

Along the way, we are introduced to Mr. Ezra Melamed, a wealthy benefactor of the Jewish community, a widower with time on his hands and a very keen sense of curiosity who enjoys playing detective. Mr. Melamed undertakes to look for clues on the robbery, both to restore the money to its rightful owner and to prevent the loss of the dowry money and breaking of the engagement.

All of the details of Jewish life in London are woven into the plot as narrated Jane Austen-like by Rebecca.

Preteens and teens (and their parents, too) will enjoy a very quick paced, absorbing read.

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



TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 13)

is supporting them, insists that he go to a therapist. He does so and he also gets a prescription for Zoloft from his doctor. He vividly describes his reaction to this anti-depressive drug and to the various therapists he tried before settling on Susan.

Danny sprinkles his descriptions with Yiddish words and then devotes a chapter to his "unchecked disdain for almost everything about Judaism." He tells about his disenchantment with Hebrew school and Sabbath services. He concludes this discussion by saying that what he took away from his Hebrew education is "Take what is safe and certain. Settle. Don't make waves." This attitude led to "humiliating victimization," which might have been avoided had he "learned to rebel and rage against the *meshugenah* as a child." His use of the Yiddish word here and in the title of the book is supported by some definitions he offers that might be questioned by some Yiddish linguists.

A year after 9/11, Danny went back to work and Sharon had their second child. After a while, he began to work as a senior copywriter in the behavioral health division, but he was unhappy with the work until his therapist urged him to write magazine articles during his free time. Gradually, the depression eased. Danny began to enjoy his children and learned "how to live again."

Danny's remarkable journey from health to illness and back again is presented with good humor and with great honesty. For the millions of sufferers from depression, the book is almost a manual for how to cope. For everyone else, it is an inspiring lesson about the severe impact of depression and a welcome opportunity to be grateful for one's mental health.

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

BEN-MORDECAI

(continued from page NAT 7)

texts. His Exodus Haggadah uniquely includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. When not lawyering or writing, he tends his 20-year-old oicat. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com. ✪

KAPLAN (RECIPES)

(continued from page NAT 14)

inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool on a rack.

Whipped Cauliflower Puree with Fresh Chives (4 servings)

This is a replacement for mashed potatoes for those on low-carb diets.

- 1/2 pound cauliflower florets
- 3 cups water
- Kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1/3 cup vegetable stock
- 1-2 Tbsp. heavy cream or milk, optional
- White pepper
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh chives

In a large saucepan, combine cauliflower, water and salt. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium and cook until cauliflower is very soft, about 30 minutes. Remove from heat and drain. Put cauliflower, olive oil, vegetable stock and cream or milk in food processor and puree until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with fresh chives.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ✪

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Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

Love, Loss, and What I Wore, All Through the Night, and Wishful Drinking

There is no better example of Jewish talent and high visibility in today's entertainment world than the remarkable Ephron family. Screenwriters Henry and Phoebe Ephron produced four gifted daughters – Nora, Delia, Hallie, and Amy, all of whom grew up to be writers. Delia and Amy followed in their parents' footsteps as screenwriters, and Hallie is a novelist who writes crime fiction. Undoubtedly best known is Nora, listed in her bio as a "film director, producer, screenwriter, novelist, journalist and blogger." Her long list of films include such hits as *Sleepless in Seattle*, *When Harry Met Sally*, *Heartburn* and, most recently, *Julie and Julia*.

It is the Jewish touch once more making its mark on Hollywood. But Nora Ephron's Jewishness emerges more as creative effort than as religious practice. As to her religion, she says dismissively, "Because you can never have too much butter, that is my belief. If I have a religion, that's it."

Currently the Ephron sisters (Nora and Delia) have joined forces to create a new off-Broadway show called *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*. Even the title (which has its own shock effect) reveals the inimical witty Ephron touch! The show is a collection of vignettes and monologues based on Ilene Beckerman's book of the same name. But the Ephrons go beyond that, adding, by way of interviews, the recollections of friends and colleagues. All the material is woven into one piece, offered as a staged reading.

Now, under direction of Karen Carpenter, the show runs at the Westside Theatre. Five actresses, dressed in tasteful black outfits, sit on stools, reading from the script. It is all about clothes, clothes, clothes, but clothes as they relate to life's critical moments. A rack of drawings depicting different outfits (rather like a file of museum posters) stands to the left,



(L-R) Rosie O'Donnell, Tyne Daly, Samantha Bee, Natasha Lyonne, and Katie Finneran. Photo credit: Carol Rosegg.

and are revealed page by page, as the reading progresses. Not surprising, the first sketched outfit is a Brownie uniform. But the monologues continue, with the fashion parade, through pre-pubesence, adolescence, dating, marriages, divorces, and other high and low moments. In typical Ephron style, it is also a sharp spoof of current mores. In an exchange between a Jewish mother and her daughter, the mother delivers words of wisdom: "Nice Jewish girls don't get their ears pierced. Never wear white after Labor Day. Never wear velvet before Rosh Hashanah."

Since no one is obligated to learn lines, the show permits a rotating cast, with notable actresses among them delivering their material effectively. On the afternoon this reviewer attended, Rosie O'Donnell and Tyne Daly lent their skills to the show, as did Samantha Bee, Katie Finneran, and Natasha Lyonne. Initially, the piece appears to be frivolous, but the darker side is gradually revealed, creating a rich, varied, poignant view of today's women. It is indeed a revealing statement by women, for women, and about women.

All Through the Night

Over the years, the history of the Holocaust (in terms of personal experiences) has been thoroughly researched and publicized – thanks to the efforts of Eli Wiesel, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and other enlightened activists. But those efforts, quite naturally, have focused on the Jewish victims, who indeed bore the brunt of Nazi atrocities.

But another segment of the German population was also victimized by the Nazis – some Gentile German women. It is understandable that most of us – particularly we Jews – have given little, if any, thought to these women.

But now playwright Shirley Lauro takes a hard look at such women in *All Through the Night*. It proves to be a formidable and very worthy topic. Culled from actual interviews, Lauro has created an Expressionistic piece that digs into the hearts and minds of such women.

Moving back and forth in time, Lauro takes on four women – from their childhood years to adulthood, as the Nazi regime takes over. Ludmilla (played by Leslie McBurney), who is a down-to-earth peasant type, serves as narrator, commenting on her own and the other experiences. Gretchen (Theo Allyn) is a poor girl, eager to get on in life, who grows steadily tougher as she rises in the Nazi hierarchy. Angelika (Hana Kalinski) is a naïve adolescent, hoping to become a nurse, who grows stronger as she manages to oppose the regime. Friederike (Michelle Lookadoo) is a high-spirited adolescent of privileged background, who ultimately survives as a dissenter. Hovering menacingly over all four women is a series of high-ranking women Nazis (all played by Andrea Sooch).

All their stories carry a degree of horror, as one realizes that they are locked into the Fascist system. Although the play's Expressionist format tends to be confusing,

Lauro has etched a series of deeply moving incidents. In the hands of these competent actors, the characters come alive. Highlights are the deaths, captures, betrayals – all focusing on the women and their children.



(L-R) Hana Kalinski, Michelle Lookadoo, Lesley McBurney, Theo Allyn, and Andrea Sooch. Photo credit: Nathan Johnson.

However, a more effective production would give greater credence to the piece. The Red Fern Theatre Company, with apparently limited resources, does not create a stage set with a strong, convincing sense of place. Moreover, the carefully learned German accents are so thick that much dialogue is lost. This, unfortunately, is particularly true of Leslie McBurney's narrator.

All told, one would like to see this unusual play given a stronger, more effective production. Since *All Through the Night* won a Jefferson Award nomination in Chicago for Best New Play, one would hope that there is a future for Shirley Lauro's worthy drama.

Carrie Fisher Tells All

Carrie Fisher is not a Jewish-American princess. That is true. But she is indeed a Hollywood baby, the product of two film celebrities – the daughter of a Jewish-American crooner (Eddie Fisher) and a Texan WASP film star (Debbie Reynolds). She is, in fact, a hybrid (to use the current expression). And she is only too happy to share with audiences and readers the disastrous results of that union and that setting.

Fisher has, in fact, conveyed this tale of woe on the printed page and on stage. She succeeds best as a clever, satiric writer in several tell-all books, among them her award-winning *Postcards from the Edge* and *Wishful Drinking*. But she succeeds far less effectively on stage, in a solo show now playing on Broadway.

The show, cleverly titled *Wishful Drinking*, and based on the book, goes all the way back to Carrie's birth. That event, she insisted, set her off on the wrong road. With her two celebrity parents in the birthing room, no one paid attention to her, she insists. She was unattended by the nurses, doctors, the entire staff.

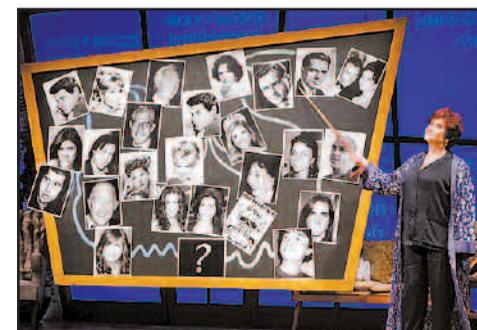
Such an opening gambit leads one to think that the whole Carrie Fisher story may be fiction. Of course she was attended at birth. But she is after the amusing quip, not reality. Yet certain verifiable facts are presented, such mileposts as drug abuse, alcoholism, mental hospitals, promiscuity, bad companions, worse marriages, numerous divorces (of her parents as well

as herself). All of this material is offered without comment, as a kind of reportage. What is missing in this Fisher show is any depth, introspection or commentary on her part.

Standing on stage in black satin pajamas and a sparkling robe, she conveys a sense of intimacy, informality. This is not easy to do in the large packed Studio 54 theater. But Fisher manages it, while working hard to involve the audience. She encourages questions from the audience. And she is not above the grossest of tactics, as she pulls a young man up on stage and asks him to reveal his intimate body parts.

Fisher is at times very crude – in looks as in delivery. Now in her 50s, she has grown heavy – all too obvious despite her concealing costume. Some of us who had expected a pert, slim, charming creature were doomed to disappointment. She can scream like a fishwife, while throwing out the bawdiest of comments. It is all grist for the mill.

The highlight, for this reviewer, was what Fisher called Hollywood 101 – a class in session. Pointing to a large bulletin board pasted with photos, she presents the numerous complex relationships that resulted from marriages and divorces in her family. Beginning with her own parents and their several marriages, she adds the various marriages and divorces of their sometime spouses. Added to that is her own marriages – first to songwriter Paul Simon. "He was a short Jewish singer," she says, pointing to her father, also a "short Jewish singer." Was she seeking a replacement for a missing Daddy? Her second marriage, she says flatly, was to a man who ran off with another man.



Carrie Fisher in *Wishful Drinking*.

All told, Carrie's solo show never quite creates an identity. Is she a stand-up comic? There are indeed amusing quips, but ones that are not quite funny enough. Is it a revealing picture of a personal journey? Hardly, since one never knows what she herself thinks or feels. In short, the show wavers between two poles, sending one back to the printed page. *Wishful Drinking* is a better read than a stage offering.

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