

The National Jewish

Happy Purim!

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Weddings
2010

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Editorial

About the Cover

For this Bridal/Purim issue, I have an interesting story. I will start at the end and work my way back.

Jenny Blain married Josh Pittleman in Jerusalem on Nov. 23, 2009 (see large photo in center of the page). Jenny is the daughter of David and Susan Blain of Cherry Hill, N.J. Her grandparents are and David and Rose Raduziner of Boston, and Mike and Sylvia Blain of Indianapolis. Josh is the son of Carin and Mark Pittleman of Milwaukee, the grandson of Shirley and Maryl Pittleman, the late Beverly Shapson, and Esther Shapiro and Milton Shapson.

Jenny's maternal uncle Rabbi Zvi Leshem officiated. Twenty-six years prior, Rabbi Leshem officiated at the wedding of Jenny's father also Leshem's brother, David Blain. David and the former Susan Raduziner were married in Framingham, Mass., on June 26, 1983 (see photo bottom right).

Jenny made aliyah from New Jersey, and Josh is from Milwaukee, Wis. Both are studying in Jerusalem.

Jenny's paternal grandparents, Mike Blain and the former Sylvia Kramer of Rochester, N.Y., celebrated their 53rd wedding anniversary in 2009. They were married in New York on Aug. 19, 1956 (photo bottom left).

Beside their wedding photo, we also have the wedding photos of Rabbi Zvi Leshem (who changed his name from Mark Blain) and his wife, the former Julie Kropf, which took place in Amherst, Mass., on Dec. 26, 1978 (photo top right) and their third son Daniel Blain who married Miriam Rosenberg on June, 20, 1993 (photo right center).

Mike Blain is a Holocaust survivor who saw most of his family wiped out. He was born in a village in Carpatho-Ruthenia, which was part of the former Czechoslovakia, later part of Hungary and now part of the Ukraine. He left home at age 14, living in Hungary, the former Soviet Union and England, before coming to the United States in 1949. He has many achievements, a major one is that Mr. Blain headed Israel Bonds, and during his 33 year tenure, his Indianapolis-based office generated some \$100 million in investment capital for Israel.

As a teen in the midst of so much pain and suffering, who would have predicted all of these weddings in his future? This is good lesson to all of us to remember not to give up even in dire circumstances. Keep faith because, it may take time, but challenging situations can and do change.

Also it is heartwarming that so much love and devotion has come from this one couple – their marriage of more than 50 years, the marriages of their children some of which are more than 30 years, and now the marriages of their grandchildren. Their family now includes 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

January 22, 2010, Bo
(Exodus 10:1–13:16), 7 Shevat 5770

This Shabbat Shalom is about Tu Bishvat. Literally it means the 15th day of the month Shevat, but we refer to it as the new year of the trees. It is odd that it comes in the middle of winter, but the holiday began in Israel not the United States so we have to consider the weather and time of year there. By February in Israel, the worst of winter has passed. Sometime in February the almond trees will bloom and wildflowers will begin to



This reminds me of a beautiful *midrash* on the Akeda. In the credits for "Shema Koleinu," the Jewish healing prayer service compiled by Rabbis Nancy Flam and Yoel Kahn, it says this story was heard at an Aquarian Minyan High Holiday service in Berkeley, Calif., in 1991.

"According to a *midrash*, the entire Akeda (the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah by his father Abraham) took place as a vision in the mind of Abraham. Abraham had a vision of the future of the Jewish people. He saw a long dark tunnel with Isaac standing at the front and Jacob behind Isaac and Dina and all the tribes behind Jacob, and all the generations until now. All Abraham saw in that tunnel were the pogroms, the oppression, the near genocide of the Jewish people – and he decided in that moment to raise his knife and slay Isaac, to prevent all that suffering from happening.

"But at that very moment, another tunnel appeared before him, and this was a tunnel of light; there he saw Isaac standing at the front and Jacob behind him and Dina and all the tribes behind him, and all the generations of the Jewish people until now. But in this tunnel, all he saw were the beautiful *Shabbatot*, the festive dancing on the holidays and the songs that reached to heaven – and he decided in that moment, as if hearing the voice of God, that he should not slay Isaac. He realized that the suffering and the joy would come together, and that to get rid of one would be to get rid of the other."

When I tried to call Mike and Sylvia this week to ask them about wedding photos, they were out of town. On their return I found out they had been to southern California to attend the funeral of Mike's sister. Mike said she had been ill, and after her 90th birthday celebration in October, she declined rapidly. But the joys continue because...

Sylvia and Michael Blain are pleased to announce the engagement of their Israeli grandson Ma'ayan Leshem, son of Rabbi Zvi and Julie Leshem, Efrat, Israel, to Shlomzion Clarfield, daughter of Drs. Mark Clarfield and Ora Paltiel of Jerusalem. A May or June wedding is planned.

Jennie Cohen 2-10-10. ✪

appear, signaling the beginning of spring. It is a great time of the year to take a sapling and plant it in a forest or on a hillside. Since the beginning of the 20th century, over 240 million trees have been planted. Many of the trees have been planted by you and me, and Tu Bishvat is the traditional time for Jews to send money to the Jewish National Fund for the tree or trees to be planted.

Israel was once a forest, but over many centuries the trees were cut down for fuel, protection, homes or weapons, and no one thought about replanting the trees. At some point, Israel finally had no forests and the country's landscape was barren. As Jews began to move from Russia and Poland to Israel following their Zionist ideal and zeal, they set about reclaiming the land by planting trees. Though the Jewish National Fund (www.jnf.org) does many things to improve the infrastructure of this small piece of Earth, the organization is most widely known for its tree planting program.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, over 240 million trees have been planted [in Israel].

Many of us had the little blue and white JNF *pushke* (charity box) in our homes as we grew up. A quarter would be placed in the *pushke* on Shabbat or at moments of joy and celebration. When the box was full, the money went to JNF for trees, roads, and other infrastructure projects. When I was in religious school, each winter we would bring flyers home encouraging us to plant a tree or trees in Israel at \$2 or \$3 a tree. Today the price is \$18 (*chai* = life). Right now you can go to the JNF site and purchase three trees for the price of two. On the JNF website you can read the following:

"Today, JNF and its partners must grapple with the challenge of balancing the phenomenal growth and development Israel has experienced in the last decade with the maintenance of an ecologically sound environment. JNF has been increasingly responsive to the rapidly evolving needs of the country: new water resources, including finding alternative techniques for utilizing waste water as well as brackish and flood water sources, soil conservation issues and river restoration. JNF, historically committed to strengthening the ties between man and land, has led successful efforts to ensure the legislative protection of designated areas and forests. With today's technological advances, JNF's role as guardian of the land becomes ever more critical."

What Israel has done in reclaiming this land and making it productive once again is a testament to human resolve. Despite the wars and the many challenges Israel faces on a daily basis, Israel continues to progress in areas that can help us adapt to the realities of a changing world. Israel doesn't have the natural resources that so many other countries enjoy, so instead of moaning, it sets about finding ways to create more water, more fertile land, more energy, and more life for the people. Let us think that Israel is only about Israel, check out the web to discover that Israeli rescue teams were on the ground before anyone else in responding to the earthquake in Haiti. No doors were barred. Instead arms welcomed the relief this small nation could provide to a people continuing to suffer the effects of such a terrible natural disaster. I am so proud of my brothers and sisters in Israel and all that they do for others and how they set about solving their own problems.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for everyone who has helped plant a tree in Israel. Light the other to remind us that even the little things like planting a tree can make a huge difference.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ✪

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Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Tu B'Shevat on Shabbat

Tu B'Shevat, the New Year for the Trees is a day that is not so widely known or celebrated but is kabbalistically one of the highest days of the year. It signals a time of new beginnings. Interestingly enough, Tu B'Shevat is always around the time of the Torah portion Beshallah, the recording of the Jewish people's crossing of the Red Sea that was read Shabbat Jan. 30.

At this time, the Jews have left Egypt but now find that the Red Sea is in front of them, making it impossible for them to proceed, and Pharaoh's army is quickly approaching from behind. What shall they do? Should they return to Egypt, should they fight the Egyptians or should they drown themselves in the sea. There is much discussion among the people about the proper course of action. Not knowing what to do, the people pray for guidance. God then tells Moses in so many words. "Don't cry to Me. Go forward, raise your staff and I will split the Sea." The key is to pray, to move forward and trust in God. There are times when we are not to cry to God: that is, rather, not collapse around our fears but strengthen ourselves with our faith and move on.

Do you feel yourself in front of a Red Sea in your life? I know that I do. There may be challenges that you are also currently facing that seem almost insurmountable or at least difficult. We live in a world that is facing a Red Sea challenge. Like the Jews of the past, what we need to do is access faith. No matter how difficult it may be, like the Jews in the past, we must also move forward in our lives with faith.

We also learn from this Torah portion not to fight evil, and also not to retreat. If we fight the negativity, we often become mired in it. If we retreat, we lose and deny a part of ourselves and to some extent we deaden ourselves when we accept retreat.

The story goes that as the Jews cross the Sea, the Sea miraculously parts. Moses sings and Miriam sings. For a brief time God was not hidden in nature but revealed through it.

The Zohar says that "whoever sings the song of Moses daily with true devotion will be worthy to sing this song in the final redemption, for it contains the confirmations of faith and the mysteries relating to the days of Messiah." So let's be very conscious to sing these words with great kavannah (focus and intention). Make an effort to be in synagogue so you can be inspired by hearing the words chanted directly from the Torah.

The song of Moses is glorious and majestic and is incorporated into the daily prayer book so it is sung each day.

Miriam's song only appears in the Torah. Yet there are those who say that the song of Miriam and the circle dances of the women were even higher than that of Moses. Only in messianic times will the consciousness of Miriam and the circle dances be fully experienced.

When the Jewish people left Egypt, Miriam knew that a miracle was going to take place, and she persuaded the women to bring their tambourines, in place of taking other items that were more practical. Imagine for a moment, Miriam whose face is shining with light from "one corner of the world to the next" proclaiming with great joy, "We will soon have something to really sing and dance about, bring your tambourine." Let's draw faith and strength from the images of the women singing and dancing together crossing the Red Sea. It has been said that the merit of the women saved the Jewish people in the desert in ancient times and it will be the women who will lead the people toward the final redemption.

Do you feel yourself in front of a Red Sea in your life? I know that I do. There may be challenges that you are also currently facing that seem almost insurmountable or at least difficult.

Every woman knows that singing and dancing together offers faith, strength and joy to her. Dance offers a woman a deeper connection to the Holy One than analytic study. To dance ecstatically before God is to live life fully. The deepest secrets of God are transmitted to the dancer who knows how to dance and be danced by the Divine Herself.

When women sing and do circle dances together with the proper intention, we reveal the Shechinah in our midst. By our movements along with our hearts and our minds, we express our love of God and testify to the world that God is one, present and everywhere equally.

My upcoming book on Biblical Women titled *Conversations with Biblical Women, Reclaiming the Path of the Feminine* includes an interview with each woman. Here is a quote from the interview with Sister Miriam.

"Just as we were moved in the most radical way into a new reality at the time in which I physically lived, you are similarly on the edge of a new frontier of consciousness. Get your tambourines ready. I want you to know that there will be much to sing and dance about in your time!"

Bless me. Bless yourself, and bless others. May we each be blessed to cross our Red Seas. May we sing new songs to God.

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

My 60th birthday is rapidly approaching, the 14th of Nissan (this year Mar. 29). I hope that we will all celebrate together in the Third Temple, which will be built soon in Jerusalem.

How should we celebrate birthdays? The Lubavitcher Rebbe says to invite close friends and make a small party. Everyone should bless the one who is celebrating the birthday. The one having the birthday should bless them in return and make good resolutions for the coming year, to increase in learning Torah and doing Mitzvahs.

At this point you might ask, am I for real? I'm turning 60 and celebrating it? It all depends what your values are. Before I joined Lubavitch, physical beauty and strength were very important to me. I spent many hours lifting weights and drinking protein drinks to make my muscles bigger and stronger. In Lubavitch I learned that spiritual beauty and strength are much more important. I'm not as strong physically as I used to be. I have grey hair and wrinkles, but it doesn't matter. My soul continues to grow stronger with every passing day. Every day adds a little experience and wisdom.

Indeed, turning 60 can and should be a positive experience. Now that the physical aspects of my life are growing weaker, they interfere less with the spiritual life I try to lead. The wisdom and experience that I have gathered from living for 60 years and learning Torah for 40 years help me to constantly make my life better and better. I am also able to share this wisdom and experience with others to help them improve their lives.

Another important aspect of birthdays is birthday presents. I will greatly appreciate any birthday presents, especially spiritual ones. A wonderful birthday present to give me would be to start eating kosher. Then every time that you pass a McDonalds and don't go in I'll have a small part in that Mitzvah.

Why keep kosher? When you buy a car, you are careful to read the owner's manual. The people who made your car tell you which type of gas and oil is right for it. The Torah is our owner's manual. Hashem made us, both our body and our soul. He instructs us what to eat and



May the *Shechinah* soon be revealed in our midst. She has been waiting so patiently for so long. May we be dancing soon.

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

drink, and all of the other rules to follow in order to have a good and happy life, a healthy body and a healthy soul, and fulfill our purpose for coming down to this world.

I can personally testify about the benefits of keeping kosher. When I was 17, I started to eat kosher. Not because I was trying to observe Mitzvahs, but because I started to practice Yoga. Part of yoga is to avoid hurting any living creature. This, by the way, is one aspect of a very important Mitzvah, "Love your neighbor as yourself." I became a vegetarian, and was careful not to eat any meat, fish, or any other living creatures.

That year became a major turning point in my life. I made some major discoveries. I discovered Hashem, I discovered my soul. I began to see the beauty of the Torah way of life.

Everyone should bless the one who is celebrating the birthday. The one having the birthday should bless them in return and make good resolutions for the coming year, to increase in learning Torah and doing Mitzvahs.

What does this have to do with keeping kosher? Just like junk food is bad for our body, so non-kosher food is bad for our soul.

Another nice present for my birthday would be for you to "love your neighbor as yourself." Be careful not to hurt anyone. Visit the sick, the needy, and the elderly. Make the effort to help people and make them happy. Tell your loved ones that you love them, and really mean it. Soon you will get this strange and beautiful feeling. You'll be happy.

I will greatly appreciate these or any other Mitzvahs that you take upon yourself as a birthday present for me. However, don't wait for my birthday. Start now. And please let me know about any presents. You can email me or the newspaper. I will publicize these birthday presents in the *National Jewish Post & Opinion*. That way the Mitzvahs that you take upon yourself will hopefully inspire others to do the same. Let me know if you want to remain anonymous.

In truth, any Mitzvah that you do as a birthday present for me is first a benefit for yourself, and also for all the world. Every Mitzvah brings the complete redemption that much closer. We want Moshiach now!

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

The State of the Union and the Super Bowl

BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO



This week we are poised between the State of the Union and the Super Bowl. At first glance, the two events seem to have nothing in common. One is a sports competition of athletic import and entertainment value. In Indiana, whether or not we are regular fans of football, we all feel engaged and vested in the outcome of the game. It is a matter of state pride and loyalty.

The other is a report on how far our country has come over the past year and a measure of our nation's health and vitality. In Indiana, regardless of what political party we align with, we also are vested in the outcome. It is a matter of our patriotic pride and our nation's future.

Unfortunately, too often and for too many, the State of the Union is like a Super Bowl with two teams vying for ultimate victory. When one side of the congressional chamber is applauding and cheering, the other side is often seated and quiet. When one side is elated, the other is dejected. The president speaks, and the other party's rebuttal follows. It often appears as if we are on different teams.

We are, in fact, on the same team – the United States of America. Our goals are not at opposite ends of the field, but ahead of us, a common horizon.

But nothing could be further from the truth. We are, in fact, on the same team – the United States of America. Our goals are not at opposite ends of the field, but ahead of us, a common horizon. We share a common goal – the welfare of our country. We may not always agree on the same game plan, but we will assuredly not achieve victory if we view each other as opponents, if we spend most of our time tackling one another, rejoicing over each other's fumble and preventing any advance. When there is too much punting, there is not enough scoring. If we are about nothing more than political partisanship, then not only will we fall short of our objective, but we will never cover the yardage required to make even a first down.

Healthy debate and constructive argument are essential to the democratic process. We do not always have to agree. But we do need to stop acting like adversaries bent on crushing our rivals
(see Sasso, page NAT 7)

Kaufman's Conclusions

BY ARI J. KAUFMAN

One year in, Israel still lacks a friend in the White House

Each morning I thank G-d that I live in 21st century America. Though I naturally wish I earned more money, I couldn't ask for a more blessed life. So when a friend recently claimed I "don't support President Obama," I calmly noted that every time Mr. Obama speaks, I pray for him to say the right things, because I fear for my country, my family, and especially our prime ally against terror: Israel.

This president has continuously chosen to ignore and criticize Israel, while offering serial apologies to their enemies. Using sophistry to revise Jewish history and capriciously dismissing the commitments of the prior administration with regard to legal settlements, he should generate outrage from the Jewish community. A recent *Washington Post* article confessed honestly that the only country in the world with which the U.S. has worse relations since Obama took office is Israel.

Israelis must realize that, while Obama is president, America is no longer an ally – at least in the same sense as the past. As a fervent Zionist, knowing the "special relationship" of the past 60 years with this capitalist, pro-American liberal democracy, surrounded by intolerant Islamic caliphates could cease to exist saddens me, to put mildly.

I want to live a long life and thrive, and I therefore don't want Iran or other rogue nations obtaining nuclear weapons. I also believe that Islamic totalitarianism is the greatest expression of contemporary evil. Discouragingly, this president, unlike his erstwhile promises, has coddled our enemies and allowed the possibility of catastrophe to occur – in the name of "diplomacy." History shows diplomacy and negotiating from a position of weakness fails, and that real peace is achieved through strength, military build-up and victory. A nation's people surrender peace, temporarily, for the prospects of freedom; they do not do the opposite. Apparently our president was never taught these rudimentary lessons, as he refused the simple "peaceful" action of supporting the democratic movement in Iran this past summer. Yes, Iran: the most dangerous country in the world, a brutal theocracy led by a Holocaust-denying zealot who wishes to wipe Israel off the map.

Do I inherently think Obama wants America, Israel, or the West to be demolished by terrorists? No. But he also doesn't listen well. Based upon his upbringing and education, he misunderstands world affairs, especially in the Middle East.



Teen Outlook

BY SIGAL TAVEL

A passing thought

The story of Purim is like a fairy tale; a peasant's child becomes a queen, her uncle overhears a plan to kill the king and so saves his life; a spiteful man tries to eradicate an entire nation for the sake of a grudge. The new queen and her uncle try their hardest and succeed to save them. It all seems thrown together, fantastical, just a story. Why is it so important – when it comes down to religion, not even once does the scroll from which we read the story every year say the name of G-d.

First, in all fairy tales, there is a hero. The hero in this story is a girl named Esther. After the Persian King kills his other wife (which seemed to have been a common habit of men in those days), he tells his servants to bring every woman they can find into his castle and allow the girls to choose whatever they'd like in cosmetics and clothes and whatnot. When Esther was brought before the King, she wore no makeup, and none of the fancy dresses or jewels offered by the



I will support President Obama when he gives speeches like he did recently at Ft Hood, or when he ironically defended war while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Though these words inexplicably took nearly a year, I was pleased that these were the first instances where he avoided platitudes and finally seemed to understand the priorities of this nation. But at some point action needs to follow the words.

A year since the hype ended, buyer's remorse has set in. Polls indicate millions of folks feel duped into voting for Obama, and now realize how simplistic they were to base a choice on "change." Even liberal *NY Times* columnists are talking about the president's "credibility gap," and "someone whose rhetoric cannot be trusted." The massive failure of Health Care Reform, a calamitous year for unemployment, an improbable GOP victory in Massachusetts, and a reenergized Republican party should serve as a "blessing in disguise" for the president to reclaim his party from radicals. Clinton learned this in 1993. Obama still has time for his triangulation. Israel would be a nice start.

Kaufman is a military historian with the Indiana War Memorials Commission in Indianapolis. Also an Associate Fellow at the Sagamore Institute, Kaufman is the author of the new book, Marble City. The book can be found through Amazon or Universe.com. ✨

King. The commentators say that this is because she wished that she would not be chosen to be queen, and that instead she would be sent home to her family.

Her name even hints at this humble aspect of Esther. "Esther" in Hebrew is related to a word meaning hidden, and "Megillah" to a word meaning revealed. That is to say, Esther is a diamond in the rough. Or maybe it is even that Esther is not really her true name, which is actually "Hadassah," meaning Myrtle tree. She changed her name in order to hide her Jewish identity and so save herself from being killed. In the end, though, it was the fact of her hidden Jewish identity that she was able to save herself, as well as her fellow Jews.

It's easy for modern teens to think of the story of Purim as just that: a story. A fairy tale from long ago, with no meaning, and no true significance. But in reality, things are the same then as they are now: both the nation then and the nation now are trying to be saved. We need an Esther, and we will always need an Esther. Maybe we're all an Esther inside: Maybe there is a kind of Esther hidden in all of us, and we just need to reveal it the same way we reveal it every year: with a Megillah.

In Those Days

A rush of sound,
A blur of color.
Children making their way
through the crowds
Holding candy
And laughing.

A day to remember to forget.

A simple man
A boastful king
An unusual queen
And a man who holds a grudge:
The most dangerous one of all.

A day to remember.
A day to forget.
In those days,
And in our days,
We strive to be saved.

In those days,
We were saved,
In our days
We try to save ourselves
And must try to save others.

A queen
Who should not have been a queen,
With a noble heart
And a duty.

A nation
Which should not be a nation
With a fearful heart
And a duty.

A day to remember to forget.

Tavel is an eighth grader at Hasten Hebrew Academy in Indianapolis. She can be reached at: sigalmt@gmail.com. ✨

65th anniversary of Auschwitz liberation

By Ari J. Kaufman

Eva Mozes Kor, Holocaust survivor and founder of CANDLES Holocaust Center in Terre Haute, Ind., took 55 people to Auschwitz the week of Jan. 23-30 for the 65th anniversary of the camp's liberation. Kor and the group members' aim was to take the lessons learned at Auschwitz and help make a positive impact in their communities after the trip. A majority of the teachers and students that joined this journey were not Jewish.

Of the 55 individuals, more than 30 came from Indiana (the vast majority from the Bloomington and Terre Haute areas), as well as four from upstate New York, three from Washington D.C., and one person each from the states of North Carolina, Ohio and Texas. In all, 12 middle and high school students made the journey, along with 20 educators and three local media members.



Eva and her twin sister, Miriam, avoided certain death at Auschwitz because they were chosen for horrific medical experiments by the notorious Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele. The sisters, not yet 11 years old, survived and walked out of the camp when it was liberated by the Soviet Army on Jan. 27, 1945. Standing on the spot where she last saw her family 65 years ago, Mrs. Kor offered an inspiring message about the power of the human spirit:

"I want you to remember that in spite of what you see here, the human spirit cannot be defeated," she said from a railroad platform at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. "I don't think that there is a strip of land like that anywhere on the face of this earth that has witnessed so many hundreds of families being torn apart."

On her 13th trip back to the camps, Kor called it "the most incredible and memorable trip that I made voluntarily to Auschwitz"

Teachers and students alike felt the power of the moment, too.

"There is a bareness and a bleakness that is inescapable when you are so close to the grounds where children and many more innocents died," Jamie Luna, language arts teacher at Chauncey Rose Middle School in Terre Haute, told me.



Left to right: Elyse Evans, Eva Kor, Mika Brown. All photos from Mika Brown's *Auschwitz: Revisited* Facebook page. More photos can be viewed at <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=2143983&id=32306929&ref=mf>.

"Now I feel even more compelled to stop the smallest act of discrimination and to celebrate the tiniest show of resistance toward such acts."

On this International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 150 European leaders and Auschwitz survivors, delegations from 42 countries, along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were on hand. Speaking in both English and Hebrew, Israel's leader reiterated that the Jewish people will be safe, and what happened at Auschwitz/Birkenau will not be repeated.

"From this damned ground of Auschwitz and Birkenau and the other death camps rises the voices of millions of our brothers and sisters of our people who were suffocated, burned and tortured in a thousand different and unusual deaths," Netanyahu told the crowd.

Kor, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Polish President Lech Kaczynski, and the republic's prime minister, lit a memorial candle at the ruins of a gas chamber and crematorium together during the closing of the evening ceremony.

"Now I feel even more compelled to stop the smallest act of discrimination and to celebrate the tiniest show of resistance toward such acts."

Though President Obama gave a video message, no high-ranking White House official physically attended. Along with the Ambassador to Poland, the Mayor of Terre Haute, Ind., Duke Bennett, also attended.

Bennett commented: "The trip to Poland provided me with a unique opportunity to learn much more about the Holocaust and to be able to actually see the place where this all occurred. I was very surprised at the sheer size of the camp complex and was shocked by the sickening details of the daily life and

death activities that took place there. In addition, I was able to visit the Krakow mayor's office and had the opportunity to discuss various issues that are common to both of our cities."

It was announced that a "Presidential Delegation" from the USA was at the service, led by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski. This included a White House Jewish Community liaison, the Vice President of the International Auschwitz Committee, and two survivors of the camp.

"Apparently, no one at Auschwitz was offended by the lack of high-ranking American presence, and the organizers admitted that the 65th anniversary didn't seem to be as big of a deal to the heads of state as the 60th," Kiel Majewski, Museum Coordinator for CANDLES, noted. "They also think the ceremonies, since the 60th, will continually decrease in importance until the 75th."



Majewski added his views upon his first visit to Auschwitz:

"In some ways, there is no answer to Auschwitz, and there is no understanding of all that went on there. And yet, on the flight home, I felt rejuvenated," he said. "It's funny that a trip to the site of the worst man-made tragedy in history would restore one's faith in humanity."

Elyse Evans, Terre Haute news anchor at WTWO-TV, was awed by the experience as well.

"Growing up, I've seen so many pictures but nothing quite prepared me for the vastness of it: 458 acres. I still can't wrap my mind around it," she recalled. "Another thing that caught me was thinking about what the Jewish population and situation would be had it not been for the Holocaust."

Her father, Mr. Hershenson of Indianapolis, believed that "Being on the site of this killing field, I was very engaged. It was very cold, and it's hard to imagine the poor souls at the concentration camps could survive this terrible climate." He also felt "a sense of hope and a feeling of celebration that the Nazis were not successful in killing us."

Majewski, as Kor's right-hand man, continued to look upon his experience as a "teachable moment."

"Humanity's hope lies in our ability to transform each of our little spheres of influence into worlds of compassion and understanding," Majewski believes. "And on this trip I saw that it is possible to transform the world in this way."

Eva Kor agrees.

Letter to the Editor

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

Dear Seth Ben-Mordechai:

Unfortunately, my copies of *The Post & Opinion* do not arrive until approximately four or five weeks after their publication date. We just received the issue dated Dec. 30, 2009. Your current column, "The meaning of Zion" was extremely interesting. Your explanation of the derivations of words we have used for so many years without appreciating their full meanings has enriched our understanding of our heritage. Both my wife and I thank you. We are looking forward to reading your next column.

Salomon Stein, M.D. ✨

Purim

It is Purim again
Annually
Time for a new burst of beauties
upon the world

The evening star and the morning star
The violets and clovers and dandelions
on the lawns and the meadows
And Children growing up.

Parades and processions and pageants
Euclid's beauty and the inner beauty
and the beauty of character
along the king's highways.
and various feminine beauties
Vashti's beauty and the greater beauty
of Esther,
Esther, Hadassah, Ha-drash, The lesson,
The lesson that Beauty attracts
And what holds the world together has
been called Attraction.

Louise Rarick ✨

"We do have a lot of work to begin to help heal the world, but I know I can call on these people (our group) in the future to help us in our mission of *Tikkun Olam*."

WTWO Terre Haute's series "Auschwitz Revisited: Repairing the world starts here" will begin the week of Feb. 22. The series will be also posted online at: mywabashvalley.com. Stan Jastrzebski, news director of the public radio station at Indiana University (WFIU), created a number of stories that you can link and download at <http://indianapublicmedia.org/news>. Jeffrey Rudkin, from the media department at Batchelor Middle School in Bloomington, was on his second trip to Auschwitz with students and Mrs. Kor. His students will be producing documentaries with the 20 hours of footage

(see Kaufman, page NAT 6)



Guest Column

BY JEREMY BEN-AMI

Beyond statecraft Making the case for a two-state solution from the ground up

I've spent a lot of my life in Washington – watching first-hand as “inside the Beltway” *machers* seek to affect change from the top down. I've watched – and learned from – activists and advocates who seek to affect change by focusing exclusively on elected officials, Washington-based staff and national media.

And I've learned one clear lesson – in our democracy, no real change happens unless the people in power really believe that the grassroots support is behind them. We truly are a representative democracy, and our elected officials know that as fast as they are swept into office, they can be voted back out.

Therefore, I've come to see that the only way to achieve durable change is to mobilize grassroots support as an integral element of any advocacy campaign. For those of us looking to impact American policy in the Middle East and to hasten the achievement of a two-state solution, the time to mobilize support is now.

Over the last year or two, Washington has begun to feel a fresh wind blowing from the Jewish community and pro-Israel advocates. Organizations – new and old – have gotten more of a hearing than before, and political leaders and policy makers seem more open to our views.

They're hearing and appreciating our challenge to conventional thinking on what it means to be pro-Israel, and hearing our commitment to advancing a pro-peace agenda. They have seen the raw numbers proving that most American Jews do hold pro-Israel, pro-peace positions, with three-quarters believing that an independent Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel is the best possible resolution of the conflict, and two-thirds of us supporting active American engagement in achieving a solution, including pushing all parties to make necessary compromises.

The paradox is that while the winds of change are beginning to blow at the national level, many pro-peace Jews are feeling alone and isolated and, in their communities, they haven't yet been able to break through the conventional wisdom about American Jewish opinion shared by their local leaders.

Many Jewish leaders and politicians continue to act as though the Jewish community is content with status quo, with persistent conflict and a belief that military solutions exist to what are fundamentally political problems.

Demanding that there be no change in the status quo, they fail to see that there no longer is a “status quo” – there is only a steady deterioration. In so doing, they

place Israel itself at the mercy of demographic shifts that mean the state may soon need to make the grim choice between being a democratic nation or a Jewish one.

Frustration over the phenomenon of “leaders” who fail to represent the actual interests of the American Jewish public has led to a powerful sense of alienation and disenfranchisement, particularly among young people – with the result that they have removed themselves from a conversation in which they don't feel themselves to be welcome.

But if we're to achieve our goal, a true resolution of the conflict, this disconnect must be rectified, and soon. We have to broaden the conversations about Israel within our communities, and let people know that their contributions to the struggle for lasting peace are vital, empowering them to act.

Demanding that there be no change in the status quo, they fail to see that there no longer is a “status quo” – there is only a steady deterioration.

For many, this will be a process of homecoming. Having feared that they were in the political wilderness, they will learn that in fact their views do represent the Jewish mainstream. There is little that is more pro-Israel than working to achieve a two-state solution, particularly as this is the best and perhaps only way to ensure Israel's future as a democratic Jewish homeland.

But to be successful, we'll have to work hard and work fast. We'll have to hold meetings in living rooms and JCCs, even as we meet with members of Congress and the Senate.

And in mobilizing the grassroots, in networking and building bridges, we'll create a powerful mechanism for political change.

There's nothing easy about the task before us. The divisions between Israel and the Palestinians are real, and the American government is hesitant to push a return to talks. War isn't overturned in a day, and entrenched attitudes aren't shifted in a moment.

Those of us in the American Jewish community who understand that a two-state solution is vital to Israel's security must now join together to take decisive action, to remind ourselves and the world: Supporting Israeli-Palestinian peace is mainstream, it's pro-Israel – and it has never been more urgent.

Jeremy Ben-Ami is executive director of J Street. He comes to J Street from a 25-year career in government, politics and communications, here and in Israel. He has served in a number of senior government positions including as President Bill

Dowty on Arab-Israel history

BY CINDIE HARP

“You will hear some things you disagree with. I promise you.”

Professor Alan Dowty began with a disclaimer at the Laiken Auditorium at the Arthur M. Glick Jewish Community Center on Thursday night, Jan. 28. His topic, “Regional Conflict: The Arab-Israel Arena,” covered one of the most controversial issues of our time in a remarkably even-handed and magnanimously received manner.

Dr. Dowty identified some of the “most persistent myths” on this conflict, disputing them with a pithy historical rebuttal. For example, one frequently hears that this is an “age-old conflict. It is not. It started with Jewish Settlement in historical Palestine, beginning about 120 years ago. Before that, Jews generally dwelt peacefully, though not as equals, in Arab lands.”

Nor is this a conflict caused by age-old hatreds. These hatreds are more a result of the conflict, not the cause. “Again, Jews generally fared better historically among Arab or Muslim populations than in European states.”

...one frequently hears that this is an “age-old conflict. It is not.”

Third, this is not a conflict that is rooted in religious differences. Religious issues have emerged in the course of the conflict, but Judaism and Islam recognize each other as legitimate, monotheistic faiths.”

What is this conflict about? Dr. Dowty quoted David Ben Gurion, founding prime minister of Israel. “We and they want the same thing. We both want Palestine.” Dowty put it into his own words as well, “Two peoples. On piece of land.”

The conflict, according to Dr. Dowty, has been marked by four distinct stages: the first, with two communities coexisting in what was then called Palestine, from 1880–1948; the second, from 1948 to the 1980s, began with the 1948 war. Israel mainly fought against other Arab nations, marking the conflict as a state-to-state struggle. It was only from the 1980s to 2000 that the Palestinians truly

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Clinton's Deputy Domestic Policy adviser and as policy director on Howard Dean's Presidential Campaign. Jeremy was most recently senior vice president at Fenton Communications. He also has served as the communications director for the New Israel Fund and started the Israeli firm Ben-Or Communications while living in Israel in the late 1990s. Jeremy's father was born in Tel Aviv, and much of his family lives in Israel. ❧



Professor Alan Dowty (l) with Michael Wallack (r), President JCRC.

reemerged as a major player in this opposition with Israel. This stage has roots in the 1960s but only fully emerged in the 1980s with the first intifada. Finally, within the last decade, there has been the rise of religious radicalism and new “actors,” as Dr. Dowty calls them. This stage began with the second intifade, in 2000, and the collapse of the peace process. These new actors include Hezbollah, Hamas and the clerical regime in Iraq.

Still, Dr. Dowty does see positive elements in the current situation. In the beginning, neither the Jewish inhabitants nor the Arabs acknowledged the other existed. Despite the breakdown in the peace talks in Oslo, both sides recognize the other and are both officially open to a two-state solution. In April 2009, 74% of Palestinians and 78% of Israelis said that they would accept a two-state solution. “That doesn't mean they think it's possible,” noted Dowty, “but, in principal, they would accept it as the preferred solution...It's much easier to predict the likely content of a settlement than when it is likely to be achieved.”

Currently, Alan Dowty is professor emeritus of political science, and senior associate for Middle East studies of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, at the University of Notre Dame. In 2003–2006 he was the first holder of the Kahanoff Chair in Israeli Studies at the University of Calgary, and in 2004–2006 he was president of the Association for Israel Studies. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1963. He is the author of several books on the Arab-Israel conflict and U.S. foreign policy, as well as numerous articles and reviews. He lectures widely around the world, including aboard cruise ships.

Dr. Dowty's speaking engagement was sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council.

Cindie Harp lives in Indianapolis. She can be reached at cindieharp@gmail.com. ❧

KAUFMAN

(continued from page NAT 5)

they shot, and over 3,000 digital pictures. Reflections on the trip can be seen at: <http://btvpoland2010.ning.com/>.

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



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Hadassah, Netanyahu, Jerusalem snow, and Purim

After our trip to Sderot and Ashkelon, things just got better and better.

The National Board of Hadassah, of which I was a member for six years – three as region president and three after – had a quick three-day trip. My colleague from Springfield, Ill., Natalie Silverman, wrote to say she was coming and would like to see us.

Thanks to the mission leader, former National president, Marlene Post, we were invited to share Friday night dinner with them at the Inbal Hotel.

I bet you thought a Friday night dinner at a nice Jerusalem hotel was traditional. Think again! On the table was gefilte fish with horseradish and chicken liver pate and salmon with avocado and sushi.

After that we had our choice of pumpkin soup or chicken soup with noodles and julienne vegetables. This was followed by a visit to the salad bar. Then we could have leg of duckling with veal tongue and a blueberry sauce or Cornish hen in a puff pastry stuffed with fried fruit and apricot sauce or braised steak in a shallot sauce. Those came with mashed potatoes, stuffed squash and other vegetables. The dessert buffet ended the meal.

The speaker was Avraham Infield, a most articulate and inspiring educator who formerly headed world Hillel.

I asked Natalie to bring us a few things and that led me to ask friends, what can't you get in Israel that you buy on trips or ask people to bring.

Hearing Prime Minister Netanyahu

One of the privileges of having government press credentials is being invited to the annual foreign press reception with the prime minister. I arrived at the David's Citadel hotel at 5:30, as requested, went through three levels of security and entered the area outside the ballroom downstairs. Lovely hors d'oeuvres were passed around along with wine and soft drinks for the next two hours while we chatted with each other and waited. At 7:30 we were ushered into the ballroom; at the rear were more than 20 cameramen and others with lap top computers. Dozens of journalists with cameras were in the audience.

Danny Seaman, director of the Government Press Office welcomed everyone and explained that this was the ninth reception with the prime minister in ten years. He told the audience, "Israel remains one of the most inviting nations for the press because we have freedom of the press. He then showed a video on

Theodor Herzl, timely inasmuch as this year is the celebration of 150 years since his birth.

The next speaker was Yulie Edelstein, Disapora Affairs and Public Diplomacy minister, responsible for the Broadcast Authority and the Government Press Office, who was both speaker and "staller" for time until the prime minister arrived. He arrived with four bodyguards, two on the stage behind him and two in front, explaining he had come from the Knesset where they were changing the planning and building committees to streamline them.

He said Israel has the highest percent of homes with PCs, is number three in number of cell phones per capita, is number one in cell phone usage, but 120th in the time it takes to get a building permit, and he was changing this. "I love cutting bureaucracy," the prime minister exclaimed.

On Iran, he stated emphatically, "an enemy that just wants to cut us in pieces and wants us obliterated is not a partner for peace."

He then outlined the three security challenges Israel faces: the military threat of Iran, the missiles and rocket fire from Iran-supported enclaves, and the Goldstone effect.

"These are the three most important challenges we face and we need immediately to negotiate peace." Unfortunately, the Palestinians have raised preconditions that didn't exist in the past 16 years; they incite people in the media; and they promote the Goldstone agenda.

"The only way to finish negotiations is to finish them," he declared.

Prearranged questions were then asked by journalists – the president of the foreign journalists association, a journalist from Brazil, one from France and one from the U.S. Responses included the prime minister stating "Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, an open city, an undivided city." He discussed relations between Brazil and Israel. On Iran, he stated emphatically, "an enemy that just wants to cut us in pieces and wants us obliterated is not a partner for peace. Hamas and its parent regime, Iran, want to destroy us....Hamas is more concerned with maintaining its hard power than it is with the well-being of its own people."

Jerusalem Snow and Preparing for Purim

Wednesday, Feb. 3, we opened our *Jerusalem Post* to find a list of where to pick up your newspaper if you were a subscriber and your paper could not be delivered to you the next day – because of snow.

Then I found an email from the Jerusalem Municipality stating:

"As part of its preparations for tomorrow's expected inclement weather, the Jerusalem Municipality will today (Wednesday), at 16:30, at its maintenance center in the Givat Shaul neighborhood, exhibit its snow removal and road-salting equipment."

We happened to be in the Givat Shaul neighborhood on Wednesday doing research on places to find bargains for my Thursday radio show, but we missed seeing the equipment. The weather was bitter cold, rainy, and windy.

The temperatures went down Wednesday night, colder than they had been and people were advised to keep their heating on.

When we awoke Thursday morning in eager anticipation of snow, there was none, but it was very cold, rainy and windy. Mid-morning, Barry called to me, come look, it's snowing! Well, it was sleeting and that lasted five minutes.

The rest of the day was cold, rainy and windy. (This is beginning to sound like the refrain to a song!)

Meantime, we left to do our errands for the day.

Wednesday in Givat Shaul and the day before when I was in the industrial district of Talpiot, also looking for bargains, a large number of discount stores were unpacking Purim accessories – hats, masks, costumes, wings. I immediately thought, how I would love to buy pink wings and wear them for Purim when adults and children really get dressed up at our synagogue. All the small stores on King George in downtown Jerusalem are filled with hats, costumes and accessories.

And as if I didn't realize Purim is coming at the end of this month, there are already hamantashen in kiosks, bakeries, cafes and grocery stores.

People often ask besides writing and research and press conferences and events to report on, what else do I do? For the past month, I have had two spots on an English-language radio station, accessed through the Internet. Type in RustyMikeradio.com to find podcasts of my shows. On Monday at 11:15 or thereabouts, I have "shuk shopping," where I tell what to buy, what not to buy and what is unusual at the outdoor-produce-and-other-things Jewish market, Machaneh Yehudah. I do this in a conversation with Adam Mallerman, founder of the radio station. Then on Thursday at 12:15 or thereabouts, I chat with Nettie Feldman about bargains I have found. Both shows seem to be getting a lot of hits and are very popular.

Sunday evening, we were privileged to go to a typical Israeli "steakiya," restaurant where you are served lots of salads and pita bread and then have a choice of different foods cooked on a skewer. It was the 80th birthday of a classmate of Barry's from Ulpan (language course) and she invited their children and grandchildren as well as lots of friends to share with her. The evening closed when a huge birthday sheet cake with festive sparklers was brought in and we all sang Happy Birthday.

Another of Barry's classmates was the New Jersey-born minister of the Jerusalem Baptist church. He and his wife have become good friends of ours for day trips, home dinners, visits to our synagogue and visits to the church. Now her nephew and his wife are living with them for three months while being involved in sports and other activities as part of the wife's college degree in intercultural relations, learning about other cultures firsthand.

Friday evening, we are having all of them to our home for dinner so they can witness a Friday evening Shabbat dinner and blessings. This week we also had the experience of my applying to renew my government press credentials and for Barry to apply for his.

Here's what a foreign correspondent goes through to apply (or in my case, renew) an Israel government press card.

(1.) We filled out and duplicated forms with personal details, addresses, professional details, bureau address in Israel, bureau address abroad, questions about length of employment, circulation, previous experience, languages and more. (2.) We signed a censorship form. (3.) Attached two copies of our passport. (4.) Went out to have new passport photos taken (\$5.40) so we could submit two. (5.) Paid a nonrefundable application fee of \$13.51 each to the bank at the post office. (6.) Attached letters of accreditation on company letterheads signed by the editors. (7.) Attached seven proofs of work from the past year. (8.) Hand carried everything to the Israel Government Press Office and delivered the papers to the proper secretary.

Hurrah! Barry received on the spot a temporary card, good for three months, but by no means a guarantee that he would get a permanent one. I was told my expired one is good until the end of February at which time they should decide whether or not to renew it.

All in a week.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ✪

SASSO

(continued from page NAT 4)

and work together. Only one team can receive the coveted Super Bowl trophy. In our union, the trophy is won or lost for us all.

The Super Bowl is the ultimate football game. I, along with all my fellow Hoosiers, will be cheering on the Colts to victory. Solving the serious problems facing our union is not a game. It is our life and the life of our children and grandchildren. I, along with all my fellow American citizens, hope the leaders of our government will remember that they are on the same team, working for the same goal – a strong and vibrant union.

Sasso is senior rabbi at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis. She is the author of several best selling children's books. Reprinted with permission from the Indianapolis Star Feb. 2, 2010. ✪



Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Jewish Soul Mates: Is this marriage made in Heaven?

The night I met my husband was a warm evening in April and the smell of orange blossoms permeated the air. The date was "arranged" by mutual friends but I had lots of doubts about meeting their old college friend, a nice Jewish doctor from Los Angeles.

"If he's such a great guy, why is he 31 years old and not married?" I asked myself as I pulled into the parking lot, totally missing the irony of my own unmarried situation.

I knew, even before the chips and salsa arrived, that my children would have his eyes. Deep, calm, caring eyes that had me convinced in less than a minute that I had come home to the place I had been traveling 27 years to find.

I didn't know what it was called at the time, but according to Jewish tradition, I had found my *bashert*, my true soul mate.

What is a soul mate? Is it a New Age concept to define true love? Is it a catchy phrase used by Romance novelists and publishers to sell books? Or does it mean something deeper and more essential, a spiritual bond between two people that is essential to fulfilling our heart's destiny?

The Bible gives us a glimpse of the origins of a soul mate in Genesis when God said: "It is not *good* for man to be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him." Loneliness is God's first concern about us as human beings. There is a sense that we will not be happy alone; that we need to be connected to another human being to experience companionship, support and the struggles inherent in a relationship if we are to achieve personal fulfillment and reach our highest potential. Adam, the first man, may have been complete in his physical being but without someone to love, without a partner with whom to relate, he was spiritually and emotionally incomplete.

In the story of Isaac and Rebekkah, we watch as Divine guidance directs the meeting of two people destined for one another when Abraham's servant Eliazar prays to God for a sign. Eliazar barely finishes his entreaty when Rebekkah appears and provides the exact sign that Eliazar had prayed for: She offers him and his camels water to drink. This is seen as more than a lucky coincidence; it is viewed as an act of Divine providence guiding Isaac to his true love.

The idea that heaven plays a part in the destiny of our hearts also appears in the Talmud, which describes a soul mate as someone who is chosen for us even before we are born. "Forty days before a

child is born, a voice from heaven announces: 'The daughter of this person is destined for so-and-so'" (Sotah 2a).

How does one find their soul mate? Jewish history provides us with several answers. Abraham's servant Eliazar is our first example of a Jewish matchmaker, a man on a mission to find the right wife for Isaac. During the 12th century in Europe and Asia, it became customary to hire an intermediary (called a *Shadchan* in Hebrew) to find a suitable marriage partner. While this custom is no longer widely practiced, it is still followed in traditional Orthodox Jewish communities today.

Another answer has emerged from the world of technology. Just google Jewish matchmaking and you will find numerous websites offering successful matchmaking for Jewish singles of all denominations. Many people find this way of meeting others preferable to the bar scene or a blind date, because it permits you to learn about your potential match before you meet him or her.

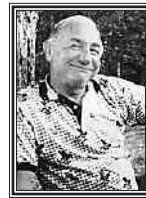
...in Genesis, God said:
"It is not good for man
to be alone; I will
make him a helper
corresponding to him."

Not finding one's soul mate does not mean that one will live a loveless life. There are many forms of love and many types of loving relationships that nourish the heart and elevate the soul. Although different from a soul mate, a soulful relationship is one born out of true knowledge, caring, respect and love for another person and imbues life with emotional and spiritual meaning and purpose. Soulful relationships can occur throughout our lives with friends, co-workers, respected teachers, and family members as well as in our efforts to know and love God. In all cases, it is through our search for love and the belief and faith that we will find it, that we open ourselves up to finding soulful relationships as well as our true *bashert*.

My husband and I will celebrate our 28th wedding anniversary in April. While some may view ours as a "marriage made in heaven," we both know how hard we have struggled, worked, negotiated and compromised to make it a strong and loving relationship here on Earth. When I look into his face and see the light reflected in the eyes that so closely resemble those of my children, I am reminded of a wonderful Jewish saying from the Hasidic Rabbi, the Ba'al Shem Tov:

"From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being."

Amy Hirshberg Lederman (www.amy



Spoonful of Humor

By TED ROBERTS

Who doesn't love a wedding?

Why is it that a Jewish wedding always does a number on our heartstrings? Even my cousin Myra's that featured a garage sale *chuppah* and a one-man band blowing a kazoo.

I say it's our pessimism. Pharaoh, Haman, Hitler, and Stalin did it to us. Somewhere deep down in the midnight of our soul, we're expecting the Cossacks to break down the door instead of the gentle knock of the caterer with 300 chicken breasts Florentine. And we're thinking that this union – these two young people brought together by who knows what motive – love, lust, economics – is our last hope at survival. How silly. On an evolutionary scale, we're tougher than the boulders of Sinai.

Me and my wife, we love a good wedding. She says it takes a *bris*, a family reunion, and a 25th wedding anniversary to equal the joy of a single marriage ceremony. That's why, last week, we drove 300 miles to a wedding on roads that didn't sport a single decent deli. We almost perished.

We lucked out. This wasn't simply a marriage ceremony. It was a seven-day extravaganza, rich with the rewards we out-of-town guests expect. I mean to say that we out-of-towners demand. And why not. Didn't I spend \$20 on gas? Did I not spend six excruciating hours in the vocal company of three Barry Manilow CDs – my wife's favorite tenor?

Find that in our pre-nup! I was promised NO Barry Manilow and lots of kugel when we stood under the *chuppah* 48 years ago. Real kugel with plenty of raisins – not Mama Manishevitz frozen noodles. I tried to insert it into the *ketubah*. My rabbi, a straight-arrow traditionalist, refused.

Anyhow at the wedding, I was all set for a suitable gustatorial payoff (maybe a kugel entree!) for my \$20 gas bill, six hours of Barry, and our wedding gift – which we picked up at a road-side yard sale. Really a bargain, because contributing to the gift were several family members who chose not to make the trip. ("Are you kidding – you guys and Barry Manilow for six hours! Here, take a fiver for a yard sale wedding gift.")

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

The wedding was not disappointing. The ceremony and symbolism were overpowering. They did it all, beginning with the signing of the ketubah. The ketubah, of course, is written in antique Aramaic so that the groom doesn't understand his commitment to his wife, his in-laws, and her Uncle Louis, who hasn't worked steady since he was fired as a flagman for the State Highway Department.

They did the *badeken*, too. The veiling of the bride. Necessary, says tradition, so that the groom is not overwhelmed by the beauty of the bride. He shouldn't miss the goodness of her soul. With this bride, the veil should have been of lead; such was her radiance. And for good measure they should have blindfolded the groom.

We lucked out.
This wasn't simply a
marriage ceremony.
It was a seven-day
extravaganza, rich with
the rewards we out-of-
town guests expect.

There was frenzied dancing by the hungry guests who were magically transported to Jerusalem, Minsk and the lower East side by an incredible band from New York.

After dinner the bride and groom were chaired around the room clinging to each other with a white handkerchief. Not touching – just clutching the end of the hanky. This is a source of much debate among scholars of Judaica. One school holds that it symbolizes the physical separation that must prevail before marriage. Others, notably the Alte Rebbe Chaleria in Hotlox, Alabama, says that it signifies the last clean handkerchief, sock, and shirt the young groom will see until he visits his mama on weekends. Who knows?

Me and Mrs. Manilow stayed two days after the wedding so as not to miss a single free meal. And why did she blush when I asked the hostess at the last feed if I could have a couple of corned beefs on rye for the road? What a *mitzvah* opportunity for the hostess! And can you name one decent deli on I-24 between St. Louis and Huntsville?

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

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www.jewishpostopinion.com



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Yes, it is Purim

The Jewish calendar is filled with holidays and observances that relate to our spiritual development and well-being. The year begins with Passover, the birth of freedom. The lesson of Passover is simple: We are free to choose a life of meaning and purpose or a life of emptiness, void of any significance. We move on to Shavuot, the birth of laws and commitments. The lesson of Shavuot is also simple: to live in a world of orderliness signified by respect for judicial conduct. This is followed by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the birth of completion through human relationships determined by contrition and self-evaluation. The lessons of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are not so simple because they require a look into our inner-selves. It is like looking into a mirror and seeing two people: One who we are and one who we would like to be.

You learn very fast that assimilation is not synonymous with abandonment, the abandonment of your past.

One more holiday before we enter the world of lost souls, Purim. The holiday immediately preceding Purim is a minor holiday, which has become a major event in modern times, Hanukkah. Hanukkah is now celebrated as a time for re-dedication, a time to revive our pride in sacrifice and fulfillment. The lesson of Hanukkah is a prelude to the commemoration of Purim because it leads us to understand that only with perseverance can we fully determine our destiny. We won the battle of wills, but in the process we forgot to remember that might alone is not the salvation for independence.

Purim! It doesn't fit anywhere in the cycle of spiritual enrichment. At least Hanukkah was given a sacred dimension when the rabbis of the Talmud instructed us about the cruise of oil that lasted eight days instead of one. They taught us the value of and respect for miracles. Purim, on the other hand, reflects self-determination and caution.

Here we have an assimilated Jewess. She intermarries, and for all we know, is

not too concerned about her Jewish heritage. She was a beauty queen who ascended to the highest court of royalty. Her life was one of luxury and self-indulgence. But then she is thrown into the spotlight of terror and horror as her uncle Mordecai relates something he overheard that threatened every Jew under Persian rule. Not a candidate for heroics, she finds that her future is intrinsically connected to her fellow Jews and she develops, over time, the courage to stand with them in their hour of need.

This is no small feat. Think about it. You are comfortable and feel connected to your environment and all of a sudden, that safety valve is ruptured by someone reminding you that you are different, no matter how you feel accepted. You learn very fast that assimilation is not synonymous with abandonment, the abandonment of your past. Esther learns the meaning of valor and she comes through in a meaningful way and becomes the savior of her people.

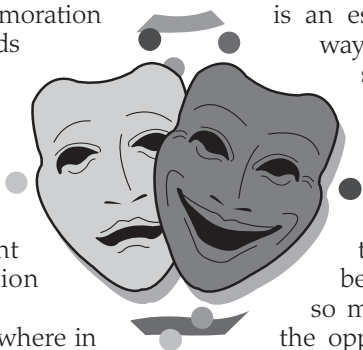
Haman, the arch villain, befits the embodiment of evil and symbolizes, to this day, the anti-Semitism expressed in so many ways time after time. The Book of Esther describes this: "There is a certain people...whose laws are different from any other people, and it is not in your majesty's interest to tolerate them" (Esther 3:8). How many times have we heard that before? In the Book of Exodus we read: "There arose a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph..." And that too begins a chapter of human enslavement of mind and body. In our day we learned the meaning of "the final solution."

Whether the story is fabrication or an exaggerated version of a historical incident, the Book of Esther and Purim have become accepted as part of the festival cycle. The levity and joyfulness is because there is a light at the end of the tunnel of despair. But it also recounts the story of a people who have been dispersed all over this planet. And this story has a deep meaning for each generation in that there is a connection with each generation.

Purim is a time to masquerade as someone else. It is carnival time. It is an escape from reality. It is a way to hide from who we are so that we will not be afraid of hatred. This is true, especially living in the Diaspora because we sometimes feel as outsiders, not part of the mainstream. And has been said so many times in so many ways, Purim gives us the opportunity to rejoice in our salvation while generations before us have not been so lucky.

So we remember and are thankful. If for no other reason, Purim stands out as the one holiday that allows us to know that we are in control of our fate, ever mindful of the help we receive from God.

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



Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Learning by dying

Dear Funsmith: I bought a computer that I thought would be powerful enough for the whole family to use. Well, it's powerful enough. Only, I'm not getting to use it! The kids don't let me near it. Actually, that'd be okay. I'd let them use it all the time if only they would use the computer to do something intelligent. All they do, hour after hour, is play computer games. ~ Frank Lee Farmisht

Dear Mr. Farmisht: Since you're not getting to play with your computer, you might as well play with your kids. Even if you never win, you can be assured that the kids will eventually take pity on you and teach you everything you need to do to avoid dying.

We really don't like dying, even when it's only a game. Even in the abstract, we really don't think of dying as a learning opportunity.

It's not going to be so easy. It's hard for most adults to play kids' computer games. We really don't like dying, even when it's only a game. Even in the abstract, we really don't think of dying as a learning opportunity.

But in kids' computer games every little death brings a little more information. For kids on the virtual playground, death is temporary, and reincarnation is guaranteed. The trick is not to die the same way twice. To die, to be reborn to a longer life, to die again. In the most successful of the Nintendo games (like Sonic the Hedgehog, though Sonic was designed for a completely different game machine), death is a way of life. In fact, you usually start out with a guaranteed number of lives (and an unspecified number of implicitly guaranteed deaths).

To get a longer life, you have to remember exactly what you did that led to your death last time. You have to have

On this date in Jewish history

On February 10, 1934

British blockade of Palestine broken by ship carrying illegal immigrants.

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

actually LEARNED something. Maybe something not directly related to social or intellectual growth, but something, definitely something.

In fact, learning is what kids computer games are all about: learning by observation and recall, by controlled experimentation and conceptual mapping. Which, by the way, is probably the way we learn most things about using the computer. By trial and error. By intuition and observation. Fearlessly.

Other computer games have a different perspective on death and learning. The learning process is the same, but dying is no longer seen as having any entertainment value. Take, for example, *Myst* (Ubisoft). *Myst* has been an extremely popular computer game for people over 13 for more than 15 years. Like most games of this genre, it's a fantasy adventure into labyrinthine worlds. Unlike other adventure games, *Myst* takes you into a world in which you never die. There are puzzles to solve, mazes to learn, but there are no threats to virtual life or conceptual limb. Lots of game play, no dying.

Trying to restrict your kids from a learning opportunity is not going to make anybody happy. Instead of looking for a way to lock your kids out of the computer, look for a game that you can play together.

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

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Jewish Activist

BY RABBI ARTHUR WASKOW

Howard Zinn's last advice to America

Jan. 28, 2010

Tuesday morning – just two days ago – I wrote to half a dozen leaders of progressive thought and action in America, each separately, the letter that follows. One of the people I wrote was the historian/activist Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*, whom I have known for 45 years or so. He responded just 90 minutes later, and his response is also below.

All day yesterday I was meeting with doctors who cleared away the last of my medical barriers to travel and to risking arrest in nonviolent civil-disobedience actions. I intended this morning, Thursday morning, to write Howard back to ask how to follow up on his comments.

The best of the America he celebrated in his bottom-up history, in which the energies and currents of Blacks, of workers, of women, of religious minorities, of war resisters, were the center – not presidents and senators.

But I can't. Howard died yesterday, at 87. He was one of the wisest, gentlest, drily good-humored of progressive thinkers and activists. The best of the America he celebrated in his bottom-up history, in which the energies and currents of Blacks, of workers, of women, of religious minorities, of war resisters, were the center – not presidents and senators.

After I share with you this last exchange I'll be able to have with him – perhaps the last commentary he made on the American political scene – I'll share two stories – one long ago that has stayed lit up for me all these years, and one very recent.

This is what I wrote him Tuesday morning:

Dear Howard,
It seems to me that the confluence of massive unemployment, plus knee-jerk militarism, plus stalemate on the climate



crisis and on health care, plus the Supreme Court decision on corporate financing of elections, plus the use of the filibuster in the Senate – all in what many assumed or hoped would be a year of major progressive change – has shocked enough people that it should, and might, make possible a progressive coalition aimed at “independence from the military-corporate alliance,” with a platform that includes strong planks on climate, jobs, health, ending the present wars, major reductions in the military, transforming campaign finance, and ending the filibuster.

Perhaps with rallies, vigils, sit-downs, etc., in state capitals and other centers all around the country on July 4, and support for specific progressive candidates in the 2010 Congressional elections.

Do you think this would make sense? How would it be possible to begin shaping such a coalition?
Shalom, salaam, shantih – peace,
Arthur

And this letter back from Howard:

Arthur, you are absolutely right, this is the time for the resurgence of a national movement that begins with a coordinated countrywide action.

The theme you describe, “independence from the military-corporation,” is one that all sorts of people and groups can unite around. I believe millions, probably tens of millions of people are ready for this because there is little left of the early euphoria that greeted Obama's election.

A huge job to organize it, but it was done for Mobilization Day, Oct. 15, 1969, and without the advantage of the Internet.

Someone or some group that is respected throughout the progressive movement would need to take the initiative and summon supporters. With blacks, Latinos, women prominent, and not disdaining celebrities. I think of Julian Bond, Danny Glover, Rosie Perez, Cindy Sheehan, Harry Belafonte, Matt Damon, Oprah, Alice Walker, Marian Wright Edelman – some well-known clergy, you and others, some labor leaders. Maybe not that exact group, but just to suggest a direction. And a few super-organizers.

I'm not up for organizing these days, maybe for consultation, and whatever help I can give.

Howard



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

Adam Lambert, gay poster boy or another trial balloon

Although I welcome critiques and letters of views from readers, most of my columns, although I write them believing they are strong and edgy, do not prompt emails. The exception is when they deal with “gaydom,” and even then, they are not from gays themselves but from protective and caring parents.

It may have to do with the demographics of those who read the *National Jewish Post & Opinion*, or more likely, that the paper has never sought to be in the fulcrum of national Jewish fervor. Publisher Jennie Cohen wrote lately, that she was surprised and unprepared for her paper to be picketed by a “Right Wing Church Group” who had come to Indianapolis. It is okay not to work in the center of storms.

I was going to write Howard today to ask whether he'd invite some of those people and a few others to meet to talk about the possibilities.

Now – is it possible to see those few words as a kind of legacy that we can turn into a new chapter of the “people's history”?

Two stories: In the mid-1960s, Howard spoke at some gathering in Washington about the Vietnam War. He said that most of the time, the American people – any people – walk around in the dark, bumping blindly into extremely dangerous and hurtful objects – wars, depressions, racism, drug epidemics, police violence. Literally blind-sided, again and again.

But occasionally, some event would become a lightning flash, illuminating the structures of power behind these disasters. He said Vietnam had become a lightning flash. We were for the first time seeing the connections between the universities and the military, we were seeing the way children were channeled from their earliest years (without regard to their intelligence or creativity) into becoming factory workers, or unemployed, or lawyers, or...

And our job, he said, was to try to turn these lightning flashes into steady light, to help a whole society keep seeing the truth about itself.

And just last month, late December: I had sent out an essay in a satirical vein, pointing up the absurdity of the way Washington is carrying on the Afghanistan war in order to defeat “terrorism.” (You can click to it here: <http://www.theshalomcenter.org/node/1676>) Several folks wrote or called to tell

(see Waskow, page NAT 15)

Having said that, I know that people at that “center of gay awareness” have an agenda concerning the first gay Jewish Supreme Court justice and the first gay president of the United States. It is my personal opinion, that it will happen, but that it would happen sooner if the most avid of the gay movement would stop defining themselves by their sexual preference and would allow their personage to emerge.

Adam Lambert, the runner-up on the last American Idol, was careful to walk along a “slippery slope” during the last contest year, realizing that his “coming out” could cost him the title. But he slipped along that path, and in the end, it seems that it did cost him the title.

In his recent appearance on the American Music Awards show, he was out in full-gay, kissing his male drummer, simulating male-to-male sex, and proclaiming himself the new “poster boy” of the movement to be the fullest of what you are, whether it offends anyone or not, simply because you can.

There is no question that he is free to do whatever he wants, as is the movement, but you wonder if in doing so, he gave himself up to being another gay “trial balloon.” These continued “are we there yet?” tactics have marginalized most of the other “balloonists” to appearing mostly at gay parades and gay festivals. Adam Lambert is a very talented young man, and most of us believed he could have made it more easily and gone farther on his talent and not on his cause.

We have been told by many homosexual men and women that they did not choose to be who they are. But neither did the rest of us. What they did choose is how they choose to live with what they are, and further, why they need to have those choices ratified by all the people who do not accept their choices.

Even with all their actions in spectacularly bad taste, the public generally still tries to differentiate between the talent and the lifestyle, while the din of their need for acceptance rants on.

There will be gays in every level of our lives. But this question is how it will come about. I believe that it would happen quicker and with more acceptance if gays allowed people not to focus on their sexuality. They are more than that. Limiting themselves to the way they make love, demeans them as total human beings.

And the effect of their behavior is to challenge people who want to accept all people as the creations of the Almighty, each with their own warts, not to exclude them from the definition. They are people, not mutations. They are people who choose, just as we choose, and like us, they will live and die by those choices. I would like to spend my time on earth concentrating on my choices and how I will stand at judgment. It would be easier without the fireworks.

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



Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

Arthur Miller again on Broadway

Arthur Miller, arguably America's best-known Jewish-American playwright, once more makes his mark on Broadway. This time, a stunning revival of his *A View from the Bridge* has opened at the Cort Theatre. The characters, not surprisingly, are not Jewish, but Italian-American – and “Bridge” deals with an American tragedy on the Brooklyn waterfront. This piece, written in 1955, midway through Miller's career, fell into the period when Miller strove to be seen as a mainstream playwright. Only later in life (in a more receptive atmosphere) would he tackle specifically Jewish themes.

The current revival of *Bridge* is now raising a storm on Broadway – and no wonder, blessed as it is with a flawless cast, headed by Liev Schreiber and Scarlett Johansson, and directed by the visionary Gregory Mosher. The play itself offers a strong challenge to the gifted performers, giving them plenty with which to work. The story of longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his downfall is a riveting study in twisted human behavior. Audiences and performers alike are emotionally drained, as the last sad moments of *Bridge* die away.

“Tragedy” is not a word to be used lightly, and one can question whether modern man can indeed be a tragic figure. In Greek drama, where the concept originated, a hero was one brought down from the heights, destroyed by a singular flaw. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, it was pride that finished the King of Thebes.

But Miller's tragic figure is no Greek king. Eddie is a hard-working second-generation Sicilian, very much part of the Brooklyn dockside community. He lives with his wife Beatrice and niece Catherine (whom the childless couple has raised). He sweats to “put food on the table,” as he reminds them frequently. Though limited in vocabulary and lacking in self-knowledge, he lords it over his women. (Not surprisingly, they submit, as this is the 1950s pre-feminist era.)

As Catherine has grown and blossomed, Eddie's paternal affection for his niece turns into something else – a lust, which he refuses to acknowledge (or perhaps even sense). He ignores his wife, focuses his concerns on Catherine. And when his wife's two Sicilian cousins (illegal immigrants) arrive on his doorstep, the stakes are raised. Rodolfo and Catherine fall in love, a reality Eddie cannot tolerate. As the circumstances move relentlessly toward disaster, it may not be grand Greek tragedy, but it is modern tragedy all the same. Eddie will end by betraying



Pictured (l-r): Scarlett Johansson as Catherine and Liev Schreiber as Eddie Carbone in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. © Joan Marcus, 2010.

his family, his community and, most of all, himself.

Liev Schreiber, certainly one of our best modern actors, holds us in his grip. Yet one cannot help but remember the New York production some years ago, which featured Anthony LaPaglia. LaPaglia was Carbone, while this time around Schreiber, clearly, is not Carbone, but an actor playing Carbone, superb performance though it is.

Others in the cast who contribute to the show's success are Johansson as Catherine, Jessica Hecht as Beatrice, and Michael Cristofer as the Narrator, the lawyer Alfieri. Mosher sees the story playing out in a tenement world, brilliantly depicted by set designer John Lee Beatty and lighting designer Peter Kaczorowski. In all, a memorable evening on Broadway.

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



Pictured (l-r): Scarlett Johansson as Catherine, Jessica Hecht as Beatrice, and Liev Schreiber as Eddie Carbone in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. © Joan Marcus, 2010.



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Effective treatment of Holocaust story

Rabbi Alan Podet was kind enough to send a DVD of David Eddleman's oratorio, Kolot min HaShoah (Voices from the Holocaust) to me. I am grateful to him for the opportunity to watch and listen to this work and to review it in this column.

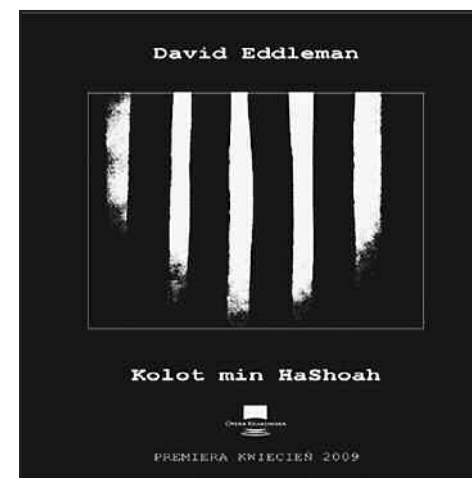
Note: An oratorio is the treatment of a sacred work presented by soloist(s), chorus and orchestra, frequently but not always with the aid of a narrator.

“May there be peace, life for us and for all Israel” may be the most poignant musical phrase in the work.

Background to the oratorio: David Eddleman relates that in 1995 he wanted to write a large work on the subject of the Holocaust. He approached Cantor Lee Coopersmith who celebrated her 25th year of service to Temple B'nai Abraham in Livingston, N.J. “On the spot,” the cantor commissioned Eddleman to do that. The rabbi of the temple, Barry Friedman, had used not only the texts that Eddleman had planned to use but also connecting material. Nine months later the work was completed and had its premiere at Temple B'nai Abraham in April of 1995. A year later a complete performance took place in the Temple Synagogue in Krakow, Poland, and a staged version on April 19, 2009. It is this

performance that is on the DVD (and a marvelously moving performance it is).

The texts used are by: David Eddleman, (Rabbi) Barry Friedman, Pavel Friedman, Mordechai Gebirtig, Hirsh Glick and Marie Syrkin. The conductor was Polsar Tokarczak; the soloists were Michael Poiscer, tenor; Adam Kruszewski, baritone; and Kamila Kulakowski, soprano. The chorus of the Krakow opera was prepared by Marek Kluza; the children's chorus by Beata Kluza; and the stage production was under the direction of Beata R. Dobber. The oratorio is “dedicated to the survivors of the Holocaust and in memory of those who were lost.”

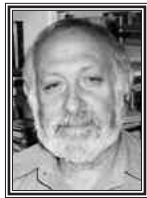


There is a screen mounted in the rear of the stage that has still as well as motion pictures of scenes from the Holocaust that relate to the texts being sung. There are two very different musical styles used in the oratorio. The men soloists, who are excellent by the way, sing in an atonal style, while the soprano sings in a mostly tonal harmonic style. The chorus (as well as the children's chorus) is superb and I was moved by their singing of the Kaddish prayer *a cappella* as well as the section in *chorale* style that follows it. “May there be peace, life for us and for all Israel” may be the most poignant musical phrase in the work. Another superb composition for the chorus occurs in “I Still Believe.” These two pieces should have a place in choral programs all over the world.

As I have lamented in many a column, as a people we are accustomed to listen to soloists and do not pay that much heed to choral writing. This is doubly unfortunate because Eddleman's writing for chorus is as moving as it is appropriate for chorus. The most moving vocal solo in this work is given to the soprano in “From tomorrow on,” which receives tender loving care from Ms. Kulakowski. The contribution of the male singers is mostly declamatory in relating the horror of the texts used. The use of atonal style is quite appropriate, I think.

The oratorio begins with the singing of the familiar Yiddish song, “Eli, Eli” unaccompanied by the tenor soloist (who wears a *kippah*). This phrase is repeated near the end of the work with a violin obligato. Eddleman's use of the orchestra is striking and original throughout. The

(see Gold, page NAT 15)



Notes from the Antipodes

BY RODNEY GOULTMAN

A case study

Routinely, in Australia during December and January, it is a time when TV stations end their public-rated shows and submit the viewers, with few exceptions, to puerile and repeat programs. Ratings, however, are paramount in the serious topic of a student's entry to university. This rite of passage depends on a student's final years of secondary schooling, with state-run examinations prominent. On this basis the various state education authorities rate schools and students alike. Their assessment provides bragging rights for the most successful schools, while for individual students, it often assures entry to the university and academic study of choice.

In this emotionally and cognitive sapping exercise, Jewish schools have again this year performed extremely well. One of these actually rated highest in Victoria, with the five others following in and around the top ten percent of schools in the state. Those in Sydney and Perth have also done equally well.

However, in recent weeks a possible problem has arisen. It concerns the British High Court's finding that London's Jewish Free School's (JFS) admission policy breached English human-rights law by denying entrance to a student whose mother's conversion was questioned by the chief rabbi of the British Commonwealth. His interpretation had long been a basis for admission.

It is a very long time since British laws have had direct legal authority in Australia. Nonetheless, a comparable body of human-rights law exists in Australia, both at commonwealth and state levels. Thus, should a similar case occur in London, it would not be beyond the plaintiff to claim this judgement as a valid precedent.

What is historic in the London case is its casting of Jews as an ethnic group. Much has been written in the post-Enlightenment era to the present about whether Jews constitute a religious, racial, or cultural entity. Now we have a secular court, sitting in judgment on an essentially religious matter, saying that Jews are ethnic beings for the purpose of the Act under which the case was tried.

The case has raised few eyebrows in Australia, despite its possible future influence for faith-based schools in general, and certainly for some Jewish schools in particular. It should have done so if only because at the moment there is a nationwide discussion initiated by Australia's Human Rights Commission on the subject of religious freedom here. The conclusions will be presented to

the Commonwealth government in Canberra. Ominously, the Commission opened the enquiry with the question of whether religious freedom is compatible with individual human rights.

As matters now stand, Section 116 of the Australian Constitution promulgated in 1901 ensures that there can be no imposition of a national religion, no impediment to the free exercise of religion, and no religious test for public office. This section was said to have been influenced by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

However, in contrast to its American counterpart, the peak appellant legal body in Australia, the High Court, found in the case of the *Defence of Government Schools* in 1981 that Section 116 did not entrenched the division between church and state in Australia. Moreover, the freedoms it affords with respect to religion are only valid where Commonwealth law applies. Each one of the Australia's six states has its own constitution dating from the 19th century, when they were colonial possessions of Great Britain. None of these speak on the subject of religion.

What is historic in the London case is its casting of Jews as an ethnic group.

According to the Australian Constitution, education is essentially a state government affair. However since the 1960s, the commonwealth has funnelled funds directly to nongovernment schools, which include Jewish schools. Initially only a trickle, cash flowing to the non-state sector has grown into a torrent. Like drug addiction, many schools in this category have become hooked on this injection for their future viability. Jewish schools are equally dependent.

Though never accurately measured, the value of real estate of the Jewish schools is enormous, especially when compared to the small size of Australian Jewry. They are, however, cash poor and rely on government funds to reduce the scale of the rise in annual tuition fees, which are increasingly growing beyond many parents ability to pay. With the growth in the Jewish day school movement in the past few decades has come the withering of the Synagogue or Temple-based Jewish education. Now, with many being driven out of the Jewish day schools, these traditional pedagogic institutions might need to be resurrected and modernized if quality Judaic learning is to reach into the distant future. For the moment, there is a reluctance to confront this prospect.

Perhaps one reason for Australian Jewry's general disregard of the London judgement, apart from apathy and ignorance, is that successive commonwealth governments,



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

Honor

Because the Book of Exodus is a record of our departure from Egypt, it was meant to be understood. Therefore, we can assume that it gave words their common meanings and observed the rules of contemporary Hebrew grammar. If one of its passages defies common sense, the fault may rest with our imperfect understanding of words or grammar of the day, and with the loss of historical context. Further, all Jews had been expelled from England centuries before King James ordered a translation of the Bible. Thus, in addition to lacking Hebrew dictionaries and grammar books, the translators lacked context that Jews could have provided – and they made interesting errors. Modern translations, including Etz Hayim, often retain or polish those errors, rather than correct them.

One such error, discussed in the *Exodus Haggadah*, illustrates Hebrew's *niph'al* conjugation, cohortative mood, and the root k-b-d. First, the grammar: In early Hebrew, *niph'al* denoted reflexive action (something one does to oneself), but in Modern Hebrew it denotes passive voice. Thus, early Hebrew *nishmarti* meant "I watched myself," but now means "I was watched." And in early Hebrew, the cohortative mood (which looks like the future tense with the suffix "-ah") expressed determination: *Nagilah* meant "we intend to be joyous," while *nagil* meant "we will be joyous."

no matter their political outlook, have not linked their taxpayer-funded largesse with any demands. Canberra has mainly focussed on issues that deal with the curriculum, education standards, teacher education, and access to resources designed to aid learning. Even in the state sphere, as in Victoria, all faith-based schools have been exempted from the strictures of human-rights law with respect to teacher employment.

As yet no admission criteria have been applied. That said it is not too difficult to envision a government that might emerge that, for ideological, political, or financial reasons, may be driven to reconsider this aspect, camouflaged under the rubric of human rights.

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

Now to the root k-b-d: Its basic meaning is "heavy." But heavy objects are also hard to move, so k-b-d also came to mean "burdensome" or "severe." And since weighty objects are more durable and prized, k-b-d came to mean "honor," too. Examples include *kaved* (heavy), *kibbed* (make heavy, honor) and *hikhbid* (burden). Early texts display the root's more basic meanings: *ra'av kaved* (heavy famine, Gen. 12:10, 43:1); *tikhbad ha'avodah* (Let the labor be more severe, Ex. 5:9); *dever kaved* (severe cattle disease, Ex. 9:4); and *arbeh...kaved me'od* (very heavy locust infestation, Ex. 10:14). Yet, ignoring the common usage of k-b-d as heavy or severe, translators usually render it to mean "honor" in Ex. 14:4: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after [the Israelites]; and *I will be honored* upon Pharaoh and all his host...."

The word at issue is *o'ikkavdah* [וִאֲכַבְדָּה], a *niph'al* verb in the cohortative mood. Applying early grammar and the basic meaning of k-b-d yields a starkly different translation: "I intend to make myself heavy on Pharaoh," or, colloquially, "I'll come down on Pharaoh like a ton of bricks." That, of course, is precisely what happened. The Egyptians were drowned in the sea.

This example and others like it in the *Exodus Haggadah* demonstrate that applying ancient meanings, usages, and context to the Book of Exodus lets the plain meaning of the original text to surface, offering a window into how our ancestors saw the momentous events of their world.

An attorney and Semitic linguist with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford and Univ. of Calif., Seth Watkins (pen name, Ben-Mordecai) merges linguistic analysis with legal sleuthing to uncover lost meanings of ancient texts. His Exodus Haggadah uniquely includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. When not lawyering or writing, he tends his 20-year-old oiccat. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com. ✪

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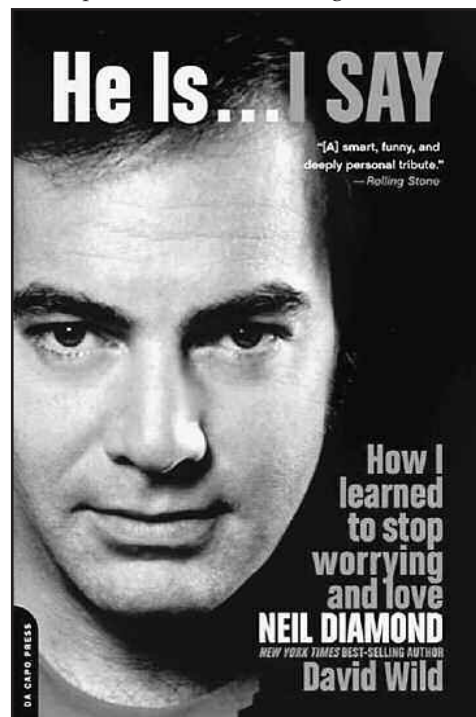
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Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Biography of Neil Diamond

He Is...I Say. By David Wild. New York: Da Capo Press, 2009. 206 Pages. \$14.95.



David Wild, a hero-worshipping devotee of Neil Diamond, has written a biography filled with praise and adulation. It has many Yiddish expressions, reflecting the fact that both the author and his subject are Jews. Diamond, who celebrated his 68th birthday on Jan. 24, 2009 was born in Brooklyn and lived there for about a year before moving to Cheyenne, Wyo., where his father was stationed during World War II. In 1945, after the war, the family returned to Brooklyn, and Diamond's father opened first a haberdashery, then a dry goods store where Diamond helped out.

He attended Erasmus High School and Lincoln High School where his fencing skills earned him a scholarship to New York University. Although he started as a pre-med student to fulfill his parents' ambition that he become a doctor, his passion to make music took over. He took his guitar on the fencing team's road trips, and writing songs began to pre-occupy him. After making a few records, he decided to concentrate on music and dropped out of NYU just 13 credits shy of graduation. He worked as an apprentice song writer with a small music publishing company and married Jaye Posner, a young lady from Long Island who he had met one summer while working as a waiter in the Catskills. They had two daughters together.

For seven years, Diamond struggled to survive on Tin Pan Alley as a singer and song writer. Finally, in 1965, his songs began to achieve commercial success, and by the end of 1967, a music industry trade

publication said he was tied with Frank Sinatra for being America's number one singer. As he achieved eminence, his marriage failed and ended in divorce. In 1969, he married Marcia Murphey with whom he remained for 25 years. Their divorce reportedly entailed Diamond giving his second wife a settlement of \$150 million. In 2001, Diamond became involved with Rae Fawley, an Australian; they are still together. These relationships had an influence on some of the songs that Diamond composed.

Born in 1961, author Wild grew up in Tenafly, N.J., in a home where Diamond's music "was always near the very top of our pops." They were all "Diamondheads." Wild became a music critic for *Rolling Stone* and, in that capacity, he interviewed Diamond in 1988, writing "a long and loving piece." A friendship between Wild and Diamond began, eventually resulting in this biography. Wild acknowledges that he sees Diamond as "very much a musical god...a very American idol." Wild stresses their identification as Jews, pointing out that Diamond recorded Kol Nidre and put a "Semitic spin" on his Christmas albums.

Diamond aficionados will undoubtedly be intrigued by the book's detailed emphasis on most of his recordings, his songs, and his concerts. Others will be entertained by the introduction to arcane elements in the music world. One such detail is the book's title. When Wild interviewed Diamond in 1988, Diamond posed the question, "Am I a rock person, or what the hell am I?" "Definitely rock," said Wild.

To conclude his story of Diamond's life, Wild expresses the hope that Diamond will write an autobiography. "In the meantime," he says, "here is mine." Wild has fully succeeded in setting forth the life and experiences of Neil Diamond, simultaneously describing aspects of the times in which Diamond lives as well as bits and pieces of his own biography. The result is a warm-hearted portrait of Diamond that will appeal to lovers of music and to a broader audience as well.

Imaginative story with Jewish folklore

The Frozen Rabbi. By Steve Stern. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2010. 368 Pages. \$24.95.

If you have a taste for fantasy, folklore, and freakish Yiddish expressions, then this novel is for you. Steve Stern has put together an imaginative story that breaks free from reality as it roams across the years from 1889 to 2002. Moving back and forth skillfully between actuality and illusion, Stern makes an elusive comment on reality that sometimes gets lost in his host of characters and in slippery details.

The story opens in Memphis in 1999 with the remarkable discovery by 15-year-old Bernie Karp that the bottom of his parents' food freezer contains a block of ice with a well-preserved 19th-century



rabbi. His father explains that the rabbi is a "keepsake," that has been "handed down from generation to generation." He then gives Bernie a ledger written in Yiddish, which supposedly explains the mystery. The trouble is that no one can decipher the Yiddish.

Turning back to 1899, the venue shifts to Poland where "Rabbi Eliezer ben Zephyr, the Boibiczer Prodigy," fell into a pond where he froze. Discovered by his followers, the solidified mass containing the rabbi is brought to the surface and taken to the local ice house for safekeeping. The Chasidim venerate the place as a "sacred sepulcher" and they become known as the "Frozen Chasidim," as they wait for their rabbi to burst out of the ice. Before that can happen, the threat of a pogrom causes the villagers to abandon their shtetl, taking the refrigerated rabbi along with them.

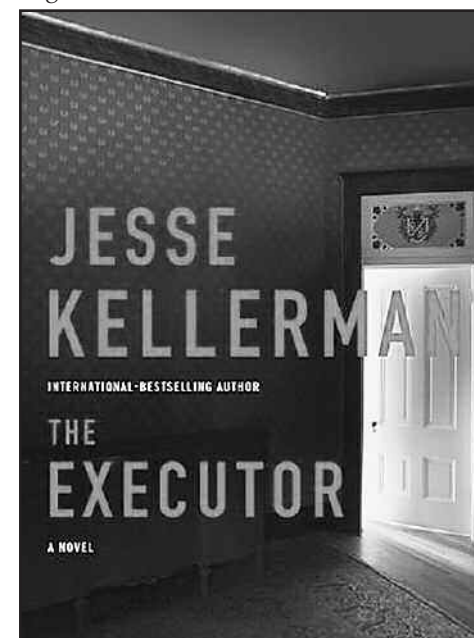
Eventually, through a series of unlikely incidents that are thoroughly spelled out, the block of ice with the rabbi is taken to America, arriving on the lower East Side in 1907. Further complicated events land the frozen rabbi in an ice factory and his escorts then experience many convoluted adventures. Finally, the still frozen rabbi is shipped to the only surviving family member, Marvin Karp, who has a "retail emporium" in Memphis, Tenn. He is the father of Bernie Karp who we met at the beginning of the story.

The reader's credulity is tested as Bernie brings the rabbi to life, reminding us that fantasy still has a strong appeal. Thoroughly thawed out, the rabbi soon becomes sufficiently acclimated to America as to realize that he can do far better as an evangelist than as a traditional rabbi. He becomes a successful guru, running the "New House of Enlightenment" where he attracts many followers, seeking to save their souls. The story then limps to a somewhat puzzling conclusion but by this time, persistent readers have been sufficiently entertained so that it really doesn't matter.

Author Steve Stern, who was born in Memphis, lives in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., where he teaches creative writing at Skidmore College. He knew little about Judaism until, at the age of 35, he was employed in an oral history project that focused on "the Pinch," an old Jewish neighborhood of Memphis. As he interviewed informants, he became more and more interested in Jewish folklore and Jewish mysticism. He eventually became the chronicler of the lost Jewish ghetto in Memphis, leading him to write about *dybbuks* and *golems* in the Jewish dream world. He has published several novels and collections of short stories, mostly based in "the Pinch." Stern's work is filled with "Yiddishkeit," myths, angels, dreams, and folk traditions. Although his last novel, *The Angel of Forgetfulness* was well received, most of his earlier writings earned a scattered reception. This new novel deserves more critical commentary and more readers. It clearly demonstrates the continuing attractiveness of creative ingenuity. This book is scheduled for publication in May 2010.

Riveting mystery tale

The Executor. By Jesse Kellerman. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, April, 2010. 352 Pages. \$25.95.



Author Jesse Kellerman is the 31-year-old son of Faye and Jonathan Kellerman, both successful mystery writers. Jonathan Kellerman, a former clinical psychologist, has written many thrillers featuring Alex Delaware, a forensic psychologist and special consultant to the Los Angeles Police Department. Faye Kellerman, trained as a dentist, is a highly successful detective story writer. Her chief characters are "Rabbi" Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus. She has recently published a novel for teens, written with her daughter, Aliza. The family members are observant Jews and Jesse Kellerman spent a year in Israel studying at a religious seminary. However, only Faye Kellerman features Jewish characters in her books.

(see Teicher, page NAT 15)



Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

From my favorite cookbooks for Purim

When one writes a food column for many years, there comes a point when one realizes that one has used all one's favorite Purim recipes. That's when I look at my favorite cookbooks to see what they have to offer. *Kosher by Design* by Susie Fishbein was published in 2003 and was the first in what was to become a series, which now has six different books. Here is her hamantasch recipe.

Hamantasch (4 dozen)

- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tsp. baking powder
- 6 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 large beaten egg
- apricot butter or prune butter
- cinnamon sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cover 2 baking sheets with parchment or foil. Combine oil, eggs, vanilla, water, sugar, baking powder and flour either by hand or in a mixer. Knead until it forms a soft dough. Roll the dough out in a very thin layer. Dip the rim of a 3- or 4-inch glass in flour. Use the glass like a cookie cutter and cut out circles, Reroll and reuse scraps of dough.

In the center of each circle, drop a teaspoon of apricot or prune butter. Fold two sides of the circle to the center to form a triangle. Pinch together at the corners. Fold remaining side up to the center and pinch together at the corners. Place hamantasch one inch apart on the baking sheet. Brush with beaten egg. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Bake 20 minutes. Can be made ahead and frozen.

Olive Trees and Honey by Gil Marks is one of my favorite Jewish cookbooks because it is a collection, subtitled "treasury" of vegetarian recipes from Jewish communities around the world. In the legume section is this Purim recipe from Romania called Tzimmes Nahit, dating from Medieval times. The origin of eating chickpeas on Purim is because in order to keep kashrut, Esther ate beans and peas.

Romanian Sweetened Chickpeas (8–10 servings as a side dish)

- 1 pound (2 1/2 cups) dried chickpeas
- 6 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup honey or packed brown sugar
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. salt or
- 1 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper

Day before: Soak chickpeas in cold water to cover for 12 hours. Drain and rinse.

Day of serving: Put chickpeas in a large pot with water to cover plus 2 inches. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat and simmer 1 1/2 hours or until tender. Drain and reserve 2 1/2 cups of cooking liquid. Heat oil in a large pan. Stir in flour and cook until bubbly, about 3 minutes. Add honey and stir until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Gradually stir in reserved liquid. Increase heat to medium, bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Add chickpeas, salt and pepper and cook until thick, stirring frequently, about 10 minutes. Serve warm.

Kosher Delicious by Diane Kastbaum and Penn Brenner is one of those cookbooks whose profits benefit a particular cause, in this case Maimonides Academy in Los Angeles. The poppy seeds are part of the *minhag* (custom) attributed to honoring Esther who was a vegetarian and ate only beans and other legumes.

Poppy Seed Cookies (2–3 dozen)

- 1 cup vegetable shortening
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 3 1/4 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 cup poppy seeds

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cream shortening and sugar in mixer. Beat in eggs and vanilla. Add flour, baking powder and salt and combine well. Stir in poppy seeds. Form dough into a long roll. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Slice dough 1/8-inch thick and place on baking sheet. Bake 15–20 minutes.

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



Book Review

REVIEWED BY EDWARD HOFFMAN

Daily cultivation of awe provides true happiness

Awakening to Awe: Personal Stories of Profound Transformation. By Kirk J. Schneider. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009, 208 pp., \$26.95.

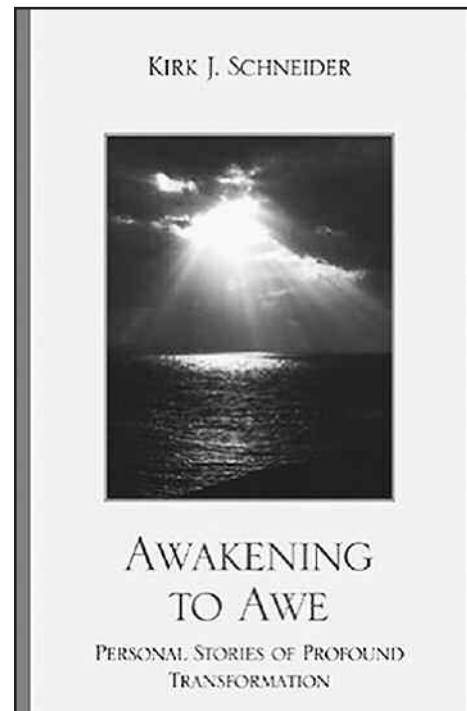
"The beginning of awe is wonder, and the beginning of wonder is awe," declared Rabbi Abraham Heschel in *God in Search of Man*. In this profound volume of theology for modern Jews, Rabbi Heschel focused specifically on the experience of awe as "a way of being in rapport with the mystery of all reality" for "awe enables us to see in the world intimations of the divine...and to sense the ultimate in the common and the simple."

Unfortunately, though a half-century has elapsed since the publication of *God in Search of Man*, its emphasis on awe as a vital energizing force of Judaism has been almost completely ignored. Except for the possible exception of the Jewish Renewal movement, the institutional branches of Judaism have shown minimal interest in cultivating – or even affirming – personal experiences of awe among their congregants and adherents. Indeed, the entire experiential realm that Rabbi Heschel regarded as so important for true religiosity is rarely acknowledged in synagogue life. As a result, it's hardly surprising that so many American Jews find their religion to be dull and lifeless.

Hence, the importance for American Jewry of Dr. Kirk Schneider's new book, *Awakening to Awe*. Written by a leading American humanistic-existentialist psychologist based in San Francisco, it amplifies and brings up to date Rabbi Heschel's important view regarding the spiritual significance of awe. Though not explicitly aimed at Jews, this book in its own way is a wake-up call for everyone interested in revitalizing Jewish belief and practice.

Well organized conceptually, *Awakening to Awe* is divided into three parts. The first, "Our Awe-Depleted Age," presents an overview of how Americans suffer today from an absence of awe in our daily lives – the price we pay for banishing this energizing force from our souls and close relationships. With the constant impact of videogames and the Internet, even young children are often cut off from the types of awe-inducing experiences – such as involving aesthetic play or intense encounters with nature – that earlier generations took for granted.

Part II presents Dr. Schneider's in-depth interviews with men and women who are, in his view, enjoying lives filled with



frequent moments of awe. Not surprisingly, all are engaged in something that passionately inspires them – such as work in a helping profession, creative artistry, or safeguarding the natural environment. Most are in midlife or their elder years, and eventually learned – sometimes only after undergoing pain and adversity – that the cultivation of awe on a daily basis not only provides true happiness but also a dialogue with the divine.

Dr. Schneider's chapter entitled "Awe-Wakening in the Everyday" is perhaps most relevant for reinvigorating contemporary Jewish belief and practice, as he highlights seven different "lenses" for fostering our sense of daily awe. These encompass the lens of transience; the lens of unknowing; the lens of surprise; the lens of vastness; the lens of intricacy; the lens of sentiment; and, the lens of solitude. While all of these indeed appear to be important catalysts for awakening awe in the midst of everyday life, I would also add an eighth: the lens of travel.

How so? From my own experience, distant travel is definitely a way to experience life as a wonderful adventure filled with marvels and synchronicities. In Hasidism, travel has long been extolled as a powerful spiritual force. For example, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov declared that a person should always travel when opportunity presents, for it enables one to see the world through fresh eyes. More than a century later, philosopher Martin Buber wrote that, "Every journey has a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware."

Finally, Part III, "Toward an Awe-Based World Awakening," offers suggestions and recommendations for creating a world civilization grounded in the experience of awe. It's not an easy task, but without at least the semblance of a practical vision for doing so, little can be accomplished to change our present reality. In the author's view, our societal capacity to experience awe is deeply

(see Hoffman, page NAT 16)



An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

The myth of mundanity

An abrupt shift takes place in all the world's synagogues around this time of year.

Over the previous 17 weeks, since the public reading of the Torah was begun anew after the holiday of Sukkot, the readings were narrative in nature, beginning with the world's creation, continuing with elements of the lives of the patriarchs and matriarchs, then the account of Joseph's life, the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai.

Beginning with the portion called *Mishpatim*, though, the Torah's focus is largely on technicalities of civil and ritual laws. Then, in subsequent weeks, laws pertaining to the minutiae of the Tabernacle's construction, its many vessels and the special garments worn by *Cohanim* during sacrificial services will be read. The sudden transition from miraculous to mundane is striking.

Every word of the Torah, though, is as important as every other; a missing letter, whether in the account of the revelation at Sinai or in the rules governing property damage, renders a Torah scroll invalid.

Likewise, every seemingly pedestrian law or occurrence in the Torah is ultimately as imbued with holiness as the most astounding miracle recounted. The dimensions of the Tabernacle's outer perimeter and the description of the manna that fell from heaven are, in the end, of equal import.

A similar false dichotomy inhabits our individual lives. We tend to readily perceive the divine in certain places, circumstances and events – in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, after an escape from danger, at the birth of a child. The challenge lies in recognizing that every place in which we find ourselves is special; every situation we face, divinely ordained; every moment, in its own way, a miracle.

I'm no fan of the contemporary "wonder-stories" so many find inspiring. Even the modern-day miracle-accounts that don't turn out to have been embellished (or fabricated entirely) leave me unmoved. In fact my favorite story, told to me by one of my daughters (who heard it from a friend) concerns a woman who had to catch a plane to make it to an interview for a job in another city. She left plenty of time to get to the airport and had her boarding pass, but found herself stuck in traffic as the departure time approached. Arriving in barely enough time to park her car, she ran to the terminal, found the gate and then watched in dismay as the plane pushed away from its dock just as she arrived.

After discovering that there were no other flights that would get her to her interview

on time, she headed home. Several hours later, the plane on which she was to have flown began its descent to its destination, the woman's reserved seat empty...

The plane touched down, safely and on time. The passengers disembarked.

End of story.

Moral: The woman never came to know why she lost her chance at the job. Nobody did. But, all the same, there was a reason.

The Torah's segue from miraculous narratives to quotidian concerns takes public place during the weeks leading to the holiday of Purim. The Talmud says that the Jews' acceptance and embrace of the Torah at Sinai included an element of coercion and thus lacked something that was only supplied centuries later, at the time of the events recounted in the Book of Esther. The "coercion" may well include the overwhelming nature of the encounter itself. How could anyone present at Sinai possibly have resisted accepting the Torah? G-d revealed Himself then like at no other time in history. In the time of Esther, by contrast, there was no overt manifestation at all of divine intervention (nor is there any mention of G-d in the Book of Esther).

The challenge lies in recognizing that every place in which we find ourselves is special; every situation we face, divinely ordained; every moment, in its own way, a miracle.

To see G-d where He is most patently evident is one thing. To discern His presence in what seems mundane is entirely another. And the latter, more meaningful, perception is what the Jews managed to attain in the time of Esther. They turned in supplication to Him in their time of crisis and, after their salvation, they recognized that the turn of events, so easily dismissible as "mere chance," had been divinely guided throughout. And they established the holiday of Purim to eternalize that recognition.

"Purim" the word, of course, means "lots," referring to the agents of chance Haman employed to choose a date for the destruction of the Jewish community. Purim the holiday celebrates the fact that chance, as it is usually understood, is in fact an illusion, that what seems to be randomness is but a subtle manifestation of divine purpose – that everything in our history and in our lives is, in the end, guided by an unseen but all-encompassing hand.

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

WASKOW

(continued from page NAT 10)

me they didn't think humor, even or especially bitter humor, was appropriate in talking about a war. I felt dismayed, unsettled, dispirited.

Then I got this note from Howard: "Dear Art, A friend of mine just sent me this piece you wrote – satiric, powerful – about Detroit, Islam, Kabul, terrorism. It is a brilliant commentary and I have passed it on to a number of people. Thank you for it. I wish you a peaceful and joyful New Year. Howard"

So – dear Howard, I'm not so sure about "brilliant," but I'm glad you felt the humor had some bite where our rulers need to be bitten. You revived my spirits.

And – dear, dear Howard, I wish you a joyful New Year making trouble for the Authorities in Heaven. If ever the memories, the teachings, of a *tzaddik* – a practitioner of *tzedek* (justice) – could bring blessing to those who are still scrabbling for justice on this stricken Earth, it's the memories and teachings you left us.

Shalom, salaam, shantih – peace!

Arthur

Arthur Waskow, director, *The Shalom Center* www.shalomctr.org; co-author, *The Tent of Abraham*; author of *Godwrestling – Round 2, Down-to-Earth Judaism, and a dozen other books on Jewish thought and practice, as well as books on U.S. public policy. The Shalom Center voices a new prophetic agenda in Jewish, multireligious, and American life. To receive the weekly online Shalom Report, visit www.shalomctr.org/subscribe.* ✪

GOLD

(continued from page NAT 11)

ending of the work features the text "Am Yisroel Chai" in a triumphant march-like manner with chorus and orchestra. On the screen one notices the rising (or perhaps the setting) sun over a body of water. I could go on, but I think my readers have gotten the idea that I believe that this is a welcome, appropriate, and effective treatment of the Holocaust story. I do not know if this is the penultimate treatment, but it certainly rates at or near the top of what has been done to date. The fact that it was produced and given such an incredibly good performance and reception in Krakow speaks volumes all by itself. *Yasher Koach*.

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor and music columnist for the Post & Opinion. He may be reached at: drmortongold@yahoo.com. ✪

TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 13)

That isn't altogether accurate since Jesse Kellerman's new book includes an Iranian Jew named Yasmina, but her role in the story is somewhat secondary.

The Executor is Jesse Kellerman's fourth novel. Although he has a graduate degree in playwriting, he prefers to write fiction since he doesn't have to share responsibility with a play's director. His three previous novels, *The Genius*, *Trouble*, and *Sunstroke* were all well-received mysteries. This latest book will undoubtedly add luster to his already fine reputation and will reinforce the high esteem fully earned by the Kellerman family.

The protagonist in *The Executor* is Joseph Geist, a 30-year-old "lapsed Catholic" who, when we first meet him, is being evicted by his girl friend from her apartment, Yasmina, after their two-year romance reaches its end. She comes from a wealthy family in California and is finishing her law education at Harvard. Geist is in his eighth year as a graduate student in philosophy, also at Harvard, but is unable to complete his dissertation and his student status is being suspended.

Geist comes from a troubled Midwestern household that is dominated by his cruel father who "brutalized his family," His mother "was a child when she married" and she is completely cowed by her husband. They were wed after she became pregnant with Christopher, Geist's older brother. The father physically abused Christopher, finally beating him so severely that Christopher ran away in his father's truck and went off the road, dying in an accident. It was never clear as to whether or not Christopher had actually committed suicide.

Befriended by the local Catholic priest, Geist studied philosophy with him and was encouraged to seek admission to Harvard where he gradually did well and was urged to pursue a doctorate. Now, as his relationship with Yasmina is ending and his dissertation progress is at a standstill, he answers an ad for a "conversationalist" and begins a relationship with Alma Spielmann, an elderly, wealthy lady, originally from Vienna. She is interested in philosophy, and they have lengthy discussions, leading eventually to her inviting him to live in her large house. Things begin to deteriorate as her poor health gets worse and a scheming nephew appears on the scene. The ensuing developments are hellish with dire and disastrous consequences.

This intriguing story grips the reader's attention as it proceeds inexorably to its calamitous conclusion. Kellerman makes full use of his own experience as a Harvard undergraduate in providing a backdrop for his riveting tale. He holds the reader's interest to the very end of the book. When Jesse Kellerman's parents get ready to pass the baton, they can do so with full confidence that the next generation will live up to the high standard they have set.

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. ✪



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

“Seize the Day.” Shoot!

A couple of weeks ago I was in a *trempe* (hitched ride) to Jerusalem, sitting in the back seat, when suddenly the guys in the front said:

“Where’s your camera? Why aren’t you taking pictures?”

“What?”

“You can see the Dead Sea behind the mountains. That doesn’t happen every day.”

“Here it is. You shoot.”

Then nothing. He just sat there.

“Why aren’t you taking pictures?”

“Maybe they’ll be better over the next hill.”



Of course they weren’t. You’ve heard the saying: “Shoot first and ask questions later.” Well, the same goes for photography, especially today in the digital age. Just shoot as soon as something looks interesting. The next opportunity, over the next hill, may be worse. And if it’s better, you’ll shoot more. The guys in the front seat were tour guides. They can always “spin with words.” I’m a photographer, so I need the right image.

Risk taker, not me

I took this picture on our way to Tel Aviv a couple of weeks ago. It was fine to observe it from the bus window.



I can’t relate to my younger son’s tackle football. Even when younger I couldn’t see the attraction in those things. I don’t like being injured. I don’t feel confident that one heals and is fine afterward. My elder son was seriously injured when hit by a

small truck when he was riding his bike almost 20 years ago. Once he recovered, I warned him to be careful, so he won’t get hurt. He thought I was crazy.

“I healed and I can be healed again.”

Is it a female thing?

Nothing like my Shiloh neighbors

My father can’t go out in the cold, so I barely got out yesterday. I needed to borrow some “light reading” books from a neighbor. He came over to visit with my father while I ran over to choose some. His “library” is just my taste, and without even trying I grabbed four books.

I did my fitness walk late at night after my husband got home.

I didn’t manage to buy more milk. Before my father came to live with us, one 2-liter container generally lasted a week, unless we had guests. Now, every couple of weeks I have to buy an additional 2 liters, and this week is one of those. But I couldn’t get out to the store yesterday. And my husband didn’t have a chance to buy some in Jerusalem.

I figured that I could always call the store and ask the manager to ask a neighbor to bring some up. First I asked my husband to ask around on his way out to work. Before I managed to call the store, my cell phone rang:

“Your milk’s on the way. Can you come out and get it from my car?”

“I’m not dressed for that.”

“So, I’ll deliver to the door.”

And that’s what a neighbor did. Thank G-d for good neighbors.

G-d’s canvas

Winter, sunset, Shiloh...



Nothing can ever be more beautiful. Art on G-d’s canvas. We’re so *small* in comparison. Capturing these images on my camera makes me think that photography may really be the greatest art medium for humans. It’s recognizing that we’re secondary to G-d. It’s a form of worship.

I’ve lost all control of my life since I began caring for my elderly father. I didn’t even feel this way when my children were born.

Hard to label

I’ve always loved taking pictures.

On my father’s side, there are lots of artists and art talent. It was always a great disappointment that my attempts at drawing and painting were disastrous. The finished product was always far from what my mind had pictured.

When I was a kid I wasn’t praised or complimented on my photos, I was



threatened for wasting money. But today when I look at those old black and whites, I see excellent composition, and of course in those days you just took one shot of something. Every print and developing process was a lot of money. Even now, when digital photography is so cheap you can delete the bad ones and print nothing, it’s rare for me to take more than two or three of the same scene, and frequently the first is the best.

This photo (above), taken in Jerusalem, is just one. The photos before and after are totally different. It was photographed most probably on Jaffa Street, either while walking or on a bus. Because of the time factor between pressing the button and the actual shot, I’m never quite sure how a picture will look.

Contrary to my former attempts at art, drawing and painting, I’m more than satisfied with the results of my photography. I think that the picture is perfect, but I don’t know what title it should get. This is a real Jerusalem street scene. If you have any suggestions, yes, please caption this. Send in your idea for a title as a letter to the editor. Thanks.

Casting a shadow

“Casting a Shadow,” influencing, changing the dynamics of our family...



My bringing my father to live with us wasn’t planned or thought of, at least by me. I didn’t grow up with grandparents to care for. My father’s mother lived with my aunt and her family.

For a very short period of time, when I was three years old, my mother’s father stayed with us, for days or weeks, I doubt if anyone remembers how long. At that time my grandmother was already dead. My brother was a tiny infant and I remember that my grandfather stayed in my room. I remember his talking to me, but I have no idea of the topics. Sometimes I wonder if he, the most religiously observant of all of my grandparents, had spoken to me of Judaism. Maybe he planted the seeds that contributed to my becoming religious. My mother, fearing for his health, insisted that the walk to the local shul (synagogue) would be too far. Forbidden attending shul and being with other religious Jews, he wouldn’t stay with us.

My grandchildren are now growing up knowing their “grandpa,” which is what they call their great-grandfather. I no longer am able to help care for them

once or twice a week as I did ever since the eldest was born. That’s a loss for all of us. But at least they’re being raised knowing that taking care of an elderly parent or grandparent is part of the cycle of life.

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

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connected to such values as liberty and democracy.

The appendix of most books is largely superfluous; not so with *Awakening to Awe*. Drawing effectively on his background as a practicing clinical psychologist, Dr. Schneider identifies a variety of specific conditions that either foster or discourage our experience of humility, wonder, and amazement in everyday life. Interestingly, it’s a list quite consistent with the psycho-spiritual advice of influential Kabbalists like Abraham Abulafia and Moses Chaim Luzzatto – and one that would surely resonate with Rabbi Abraham Heschel as well.

Edward Hoffman, Ph.D., is an adjunct associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University, and the author of numerous Judaica books including The Way of Splendor and The Wisdom of Maimonides. ✨