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## Bat Mitzvah Project

### Granddaughter of P-O columnist Jean Herschaft, z"l, raises money for Yad Layeled

To celebrate her bat mitzvah, 12-year-old Miriam Herschaft chose a special project: raising money for Yad Layeled, a Holocaust museum for children in Israel's Western Galilee region. Miriam collected more than \$2,800. The director of Yad Layeled, Anat Carmel, recently announced that the funds would be used to organize a camp project called "People and Places in Western Galilee," bringing together 100 children from the town of Sderot to Yad Layeled. There, they will also construct kites and fly them in the spirit of Janusz Korczak.

Korczak, the pen name of a Polish-Jewish author born as Henryk Goldszmit, was only in his teens when he became his family's sole bread winner. He was also a pediatrician who created a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw – a kind of children's "republic" with its own small parliament, court, newspaper and radio station. When the Nazis deported hundreds of the Jewish children, he refused offers to be "saved" in order to accompany them and try to protect them. Korczak was never heard from again but is believed to have died with his orphans in a gas chamber at Treblinka.



Miriam Herschaft.

teacher is not to impose their ideas on children but to help them achieve their own goals.

Miriam chose this mitzvah project after she heard that Hamas wouldn't let the United Nations schools in Gaza teach their students about the Holocaust, which the terrorist group says was a lie spread by Zionists. That aggravated her and spurred her to choose a Holocaust-related mitzvah project. Miriam believes that when children learn about the Holocaust, the experience not only teaches them not only that more than one million children were killed in the Holocaust, but it also brings them closer to their grandparents' generation.

Miriam's grandmother, Jean Herschaft, passed away six years ago after devoting four decades to the Indiana-based *Jewish Post & Opinion*, where she was a columnist and reporter about Jewish-linked subjects.



Jean Herschaft.

Miriam also loves writing and still cherishes her memories of her grandmother – including an article Jean Herschaft had written for the paper rejoicing over the girl's birth.

Miriam was bat mitzvah at Temple Beth Sholom, a Conservative shul in Fair Lawn, N.J. She's the daughter of Tamar and Randy Herschaft, sister of Michael and granddaughter of Jacques Herschaft. Her grandmother, Sima Berkovits, flew in from Israel especially to be present at the bat mitzvah.

Miriam explains why she didn't just send the money to the museum, but rather asked that the children from Sderot be included in the project: "I think that taking the children from Sderot, where they are being attacked with rockets fired from Gaza pretty much every day, is even more meaningful than just sending money to Yad Layeled. That way, they see how much worse life can get, and that horrible historic reality gives them the opportunity to



Miriam's Yad Layeled fund-raising display.

reflect on the significance of their own identity and responsibility as Jews today."

The Herschaft family is planning a trip to Israel this summer, hoping that Miriam will be able to participate in this camp – making the trip even more meaningful, both as a spiritual and learning experience.

(see Bat Mitzvah Project, page NAT 6)



Miriam with her parents Tamar and Randy Herschaft, and brother Michael.

## Editorial

The following is a reprint of my editorial from 2-14-07. Children seem to have no problem giggling even when in difficult situations. See how contagious laughter is. I bet this photo of one of my brother's granddaughters will put a smile on your face. He writes the Chassidic Rabbi column.



In October, I attended an experiential "playshop" at the local Jewish Community Center called, "Laughlines... On Transforming Your Life Through Laughter." It was led by Diane Nelson Roberts, a therapist and dedicated laughter. Jews are commanded to be happy during the Hebrew month of Adar.

There are plenty of good reasons for being happy besides having been saved from Haman's hangman. One is a recent study showing that laughter helps our hearts. The Jan. 5-7 *USA Weekend* had a special report on longevity. It begins with the famous quote "laughter is the best medicine." It went on to say that researchers from the University of Maryland Medical Center found that people with heart disease were less likely to laugh off potentially stressful situations such as a waiter spilling water on them.

Continuing, it says recent research indicates that laughter is also linked to the healthy function of blood vessels. The more chuckles, the more the blood vessels dilate, increasing blood flow and potentially reducing risk of atherosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. Concluding, the article advised: "So this year, make a conscious decision not to take every moment of every day so seriously."

The most interesting part of the laughter playshop was how Roberts got her training for it. She was scheduled to be in Southern California for something else and she knew she would have some extra time with nothing to do. In one of her trade magazines, she found an advertisement for a 9-day playshop in Santa Barbara.

When she arrived, the room was set up with 20 chairs in a circle and on each chair was a teddy bear the size of a 2-

year-old. After all the participants arrived and were seated, they got their first assignment. Each member of the class had to take his teddy with him wherever he went for the entire duration of the workshop. Roberts got a string of pearls and a hat for her teddy bear and named it Amelia Bearheart.

The first evening out, Roberts made reservations at a nice restaurant. Walking on the beach on her way to the restaurant, a middle-aged homeless man approached her. She was a little nervous at first, but then he started talking to her about the teddy bear. It looked just like one that he had been given as a child. Talking about his childhood with Roberts brought tears to his eyes. Roberts said she ended up having a very meaningful conversation with the man.

When Roberts arrived at the restaurant, the hostess asked her, "How many in your party?"

"Two," she responded.

"So everyone is your party is already here?" the hostess asked, pointing to the bear.

"Yes," Roberts affirmed.

"Then follow me," the hostess said.

The hostess seated Roberts at a table for two, first pulling out the chair for Amelia Bearheart and then for Roberts.

When the waitress came, she asked Roberts, "How many menus should I bring?"

"Why, two of course!" Roberts replied.

The waitress returned with two glasses of ice water. She placed the first one in front of Ms. Bearheart and the other in front of Roberts.

After she took Roberts order, she asked, "Will you be ordering for her (pointing to the bear)?"

"I will," Roberts replied. And so she fulfilled her class requirements for the first day.

Roberts told our class at the JCC that some of the patrons in the restaurant were looking at her out of the corners of their eyes. Some were chuckling and even made remarks as they passed her table on their way out. For example, "I bet the bigger one is going to try and stick the smaller one with the bill."

What impressed me about this story was how something so simple as a grown woman carrying a stuffed animal brought out not only humor, but also an expanded imagination to the people Roberts encountered. In a conversation after the class, Roberts told me that even though some adults were made uncomfortable when they saw her with the bear, children who were strangers to her had no problem coming up to her and asking her all kinds of questions about it.

Rereading my notes from the playshop, I notice that several of the ideas for bringing more humor into our lives come from emulating children. Perhaps going back to one's playful attitude from childhood is one good way for adults to "lighten up." Some of the following suggestions come from those notes.

Read cartoons and funny stories. Listen to a comedian perform. Play with pets (see Editorial, page NAT 5)

## Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

Feb. 19, 2010, Terumah  
(Exodus 25:1-27:19), 5 Adar 5770

"And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). We read this verse at the beginning of this week's *parasha*. The basic understanding of the verse is the command for us to build a sanctuary and that in this sanctuary we will find the presence of God.

I do find the presence of God when I am in the sanctuary. Whether it is rehearsing a bat mitzvah who will carry the Torah around the sanctuary for the first time or on Sunday morning with our religious school family or during worship on Shabbat or holy days, I do feel God's presence in the sanctuary. I believe that many of us feel that presence. We know the sanctuary is a place for prayer and meditation or study and community. Coming into the sanctuary, there is the expectation that God is there.

At the same time, we know that God is not just in the sanctuary or in the temple or any other religious institution. God is everywhere. God is in the world around us, in the first cry of a newborn, in the laughter of a child, in celebration of life, and in the comfort offered to someone in grief. God is in a sunny day and God is in a cold, snowy winter's night. God is present in the outstretched hand of support and in the words of comfort that are spoken. Thus, when God commands us to build a sanctuary, it doesn't just mean inside the temple. God is commanding us to build a sanctuary for God's presence in our lives, through our actions, in our deeds, and in our souls.

I truly believe that our lives can be viewed as sanctuaries and that when we do an act of *tzedakah* or we find ways to fulfill the ritual in our lives, we have created our own *mishkan* (sanctuary) and God is dwelling among us. I've written

this before, but it always bears repeating that doing a *mitzvah* makes real the spiritual. Though many of us define it as such, a *mitzvah* is not just a good deed but a commandment. According to the rabbis, there are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. We can't do them all today, but we can observe many of them. Whether it is the observance of a holiday, the fulfillment of ritual mitzvah, or acting in an ethical manner, making real the spiritual brings God directly into our lives.

We live in a world that appears to be torn apart by strife among nations and peoples. We live in a time when politicians are entrenched in their own political systems without regard for those who elected them. We live in a time when too many of us think first about ourselves and not enough about others. We need to find a way to make today about bringing God's sanctuary to every corner of the earth so that random acts of kindness and mercy are evident.

The earthquake in Haiti left this country destroyed. The number who died is overwhelming and those who survived are still suffering. Many people and nations around the world responded to the tragedy, but first among the responders was the tiny nation of Israel that arrived, set up field hospitals, treated the injured, and delivered babies (the first one the mother named Israel). In the midst of the suffering, a sanctuary for God was being built so that the survivors would realize that the earthquake was not an act of God but the comfort and compassion was.

My hope is that all of us will build sanctuaries so that God will dwell among us. It is up to each of us to make this effort and, through these efforts, we will feel the presence of God.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for each *mishkan* that is built through the acts and efforts of a person or community. Light the other to serve as a *Ner Tamid*, an eternal light, signifying that God is among us.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ★

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## Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

### The joy of Adar, Feb. 15 – Mar. 15

The sages have said that “joy is increased in the month of Adar.” According to my book *Kabbalah Month by Month*, this month is all about learning to grow and heal through joy and laughter. Joy is the greater healer. Reb Nachman of Breslov says sickness comes from a lack of joy that is sourced in anger, and healing comes from joy.

We live in a world where there is hiddenness and concealment, but revelation and clarity also exist. Some people think that if I can see, touch, hear, taste, and smell something, it is real. Otherwise, it is not real. But much in life is concealed, hidden, cannot be processed through our five senses, and is beyond our realm of rational understanding. We cannot always find logical ways to understand the events that take place in life.

Thankfully, through faith and grace, we are gifted and lifted up with a glimpse of the underlying reality, the Godliness that is hidden in the physical reality. This revelation brings joy. This is what the joy of this month of Adar is all about. It is the revelation of the Divine Feminine, known as Shechinah, which refers to the immanence of God.

Though God is most commonly referred to in the masculine in Western religions, God is neither masculine nor feminine in Judaism, but has attributes of both. The transcendent revelation of the divine is masculine referred to as *Ha Kodesh Borechu* (the Holy One, Blessed be He) and revelation of the immanence of God is feminine, primarily referred to as the *Shechinah*.

Similarly, there is a masculine and feminine path of service in Judaism. The masculine path is about transcending, transforming, conquering, breaking through all the barriers within the darkness to bring down the transcendent light. The feminine path is that of nurturing, uncovering, revealing the light of God, within the darkness, that was always there. The feminine energy is about embodying Godliness; it is about making a home for God; it is about raising our awareness of God, in the here and now.

It is no accident that the heroine of the Purim story, of this month of Adar, is Esther, a woman whose name means “hiddenness.” Purim is a crazy story. Esther is an orphan; her father dies after her conception; her mother dies at her birth. She wins a beauty contest as a young adult, marries a non-Jewish King and becomes the savior of the Jewish people. And God’s deliverance comes through feasting, drinking, and sexual intrigue. Purim is a revelation of the

deepest teaching in Judaism. God is everywhere and in everything. There is no split between the material and spiritual. God occupies both realms. This is the essence of feminine spirituality. Since the miracle of Purim took place through parties and alcohol, we reenact these scenes. Purim is party time. Concerts, spoofs, and a tremendous spirit of joy and openheartedness are enhanced through the widespread use of alcohol.

In Chassidus, we are told that the joy of Purim is greater in holiness than Yom Kippur. When I was younger, I loved the holiday of Yom Kippur the most. I dressed up in white and even would wear a white hair covering on Yom Kippur. I generally do not fast well, but on Yom Kippur particularly, in the early days of my observance, I would feel angelic, so happy and grateful to be given this concentrated time to be immersed in prayer, meditation, singing and dancing. I loved the intensity of focus in the prayers, I felt enveloped with a powerful pervasive compassion of divine forgiveness, loved for who I was, no matter what I had done. How could Purim be higher and holier than Yom Kippur? What is Purim but drinking, dancing, attending a concert, dressing up in costumes, eating a meal?

It was only when I ventured into Studio 54 with my teacher Reb Shlomo Carlebach that I had a glimpse of the holiness of Purim. I had been a student of Reb Shlomo for about five years when he asked me to accompany him on a Purim concert gig there. Studio 54 at the time was the most popular trendy discotheque in Manhattan. People used to wait in lines for hours to get into Studio 54. It had quite a wild reputation, even by New York standards and eventually was closed by the police or FBI for a combination of drugs, sex orgies, and tax evasion.

At that time, I was in my most religious period in my life, wearing long skirts, praying three times a day, not participating in any mixed dancing or even listening to secular music. I had been to discotheques before I became religious but not one of this magnitude. I picked up on the energy immediately. It was powerful and intoxicating. One would say that I was in a rather impure kind of place. As the music blasted so loud, I could barely think, I wondered why Shlomo had brought me, when I had been trying so hard to get away from that kind of scene. How would he change the energy there to celebrate Purim? The people who were at Studio 54 that night were not aware that it was Purim. Shlomo was an unexpected treat for them.

Soon, the loud music stopped, Reb Shlomo took the microphone and miraculously all that was heard was the strumming of his guitar and his soft sweet voice singing and telling stories. There was total quiet on the part of the people there. In a short amount of time, these sophisticated New Yorkers were dancing in circles as if they were at a Jewish wedding, wishing each other Good Purim, and there was such a heavenly holy energy in the air. I felt like I was in the holiest place in Jerusalem. I

## Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

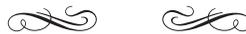
My 60th birthday is coming up very soon, the 14th of Nissan (Mar. 29). In my last email I wrote how much I would appreciate spiritual birthday presents. I’m happy to report some beautiful responses.

O.E. from Chicago wrote, “The first present is on the way. Last Sunday I put up *mezuzahs* in my apartment.”

Mezuzah is a very special Mitzvah. It’s one of the ten Mitzvah campaigns of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

What is the inner meaning of the mezuzah? Chassidus teaches that our soul came down here to make this world into a dwelling place for *Hashem*. By learning Torah and doing *Mitzvahs*, we first make our heart and mind into a home for Hashem. When we go to sleep at night and when we wake up in the morning we say, “*Shma Yisroel*, Hear, O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.” To fulfill this Mitzvah, we should spend a minute meditating on the greatness of Hashem, that he created the Earth, the sun, the planets, all of the stars, the entire universe. He is the source of our life and existence, and all life and existence, physical and spiritual.

We next put on *tefillin*. What is written inside of the tefillin? *Shma Yisroel*. We tie the tefillin next to our heart and our brain and on our hand. Hashem gave us our



handed out leaflets about Shlomo’s shul, telling people, “Everything is one. This disco is a synagogue and our synagogue is like a disco. We dance, sing, and get high there, too.” I was a bit of a missionary in those days.

Even before we left, the loud music resumed. As I exited, the discotheque appeared to revert back to what it was before the Reb’s concert. Everything in the physical world seems so transient to me. But still the event was carved into my soul. The Shechinah had been revealed to me in Studio 54. I carried the joy of Purim inside of me in a deeper way than ever, and I laughed.

It is said that Purim will be the only holiday that will remain in messianic times. Adar is the last month according to the Torah. It is all about the messianic redemption. It is all about the revelation of the Shechinah. May She be revealed in our days. When the Shechinah is revealed, there will be joy, love and peace because it will be clear how connected we are to each other.

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heart, our brain and our hands. We should use them for His service. He has a place in our heart and mind. With our mind we see how everything is part of Hashem’s plan. In our heart we are grateful to Hashem, we experience love and fear of Hashem.

Next we make our home into a dwelling place for Hashem. We fill our home with holy books, charity boxes, and kosher food. We light *Shabbos* candles and bring the holiness of Shabbos into our home. We put up a kosher mezuzah on each doorpost. What is written in the mezuzah? Again, *Shma Yisroel*. When we put up mezuzahs, we affirm that the entire universe belongs to Hashem, including of course our house, and all that is in it.

Here are some other birthday presents that I received. R.B. from Kfar Chabad is going to put tefillin on 60 Jews, and donate 300 shekels to my Chabad House, five shekels for each of my 60 years.

N.D. from Karnai Shomron is going to think about all the good that Hashem gives her, and thank Him, every morning for the next 60 days.

Menashe, Danny, Yehuda, Nissim and Naftali are going to put tefillin on every day.

D.N. from Netanya is going to grow his beard. This is an important Mitzvah. According to the Zohar, our beard is connected with the 13 Divine attributes of mercy. So by growing a beard, we draw Hashem’s mercy down on ourselves and on our family. Until our true and complete redemption, we all need a lot of mercy from Hashem. Letting your beard grow also saves a lot of time, money and hassle.

E.T. from Vancouver is going to get at least six women and girls to start lighting Shabbos candles. It is a Mitzvah to light Shabbos candles 18 minutes before sunset, to bring in the Shabbos and to light up the home with the holy light of Shabbos. Shabbos is a wonderful and holy day. For 24 hours each week, we take a break from all of our material concerns and difficulties and enjoy the holiness and spirituality of Shabbos.

Shabbos is a taste of the world to come. When Moshiach comes, it will be Shabbos every day, and not just a taste but the real thing. So by lighting Shabbos candles, we not only inaugurate Shabbos, we are inaugurating our redemption. According to our sages, Hashem says, “If you will observe the kindling of the Shabbos lights, I will show you the lights of the redemption of Zion.”

Now is the time. We have to do more Mitzvahs to bring *Moshiach*. And if you do them as a birthday present for me, you will have a double Mitzvah. You will also make me happy. If you are wondering which Mitzvahs to do, give me a call at 011-972-39606161. We will try to figure something out. A good start would be to fulfill the beautiful Mitzvahs of Purim. We want Moshiach now!

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



## An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

### Caleb's gift

When I was a teenager, a long, long time ago, I felt self-conscious about praying in public places like airports. On at least one occasion, I entered a phone booth (remember those?) while awaiting a flight, closed the door (yes, they had doors) and spoke to the Creator of the universe through the telephone mouthpiece. (In its own strange way, it enhanced the experience.)

But it didn't take long for me to realize that praying was nothing of which to be ashamed. And in subsequent years, when there was no other option, I performed my share of religious devotions, even with *tallit* and *tefillin*, in an assortment of public places. When on a plane, though – and this has been my practice since well before 2001 – I engage my seatmate in some conversation first, to try to establish my normalcy credentials, and then explain what I am about to do.

Caleb Leibowitz, the young man whose tefillin-donning inadvertently caused the diversion of a flight from New York to Louisville, Ky., a few weeks ago, acted in a similar responsible way. Seated nearby was his sister; presumably she knew what he was doing. And, according to the boy's father, quoted in the Jan. 25 daily *Hamodia*, when a flight attendant inquired about the leather straps and the small boxes on the boy's arm and head, he politely explained to her that it was a religious ritual.

Some have sought to blame the attendant for then reporting the still-suspicious-to-her goings-on to the captain. But while most experienced attendants have probably seen tefillin, there are surely neophytes who haven't, and she may well have been one of them. (Agudath Israel of America has tried to sensitize the Transportation Security Administration to the religious practices of Orthodox Jews, and has reached out to airlines as well, offering a brochure explaining Orthodox laws and customs.)

In any event, security protocol apparently required the pilot to land the plane at the next available airport, in this case, Philadelphia, and the rest was history – or, at least, a few days of grist for news organizations, which posted the story of the suspect tefillin before the plane had even landed.

(There was considerable amusement value in some news reports too. A Philadelphia law enforcement official soberly informed television viewers how the "devices" worn by Mr. Leibowitz were called "olfactories.")

Although the *halachic* parameters of what constitutes *Kiddush Hashem*, or "sanctification of G-d's name," are

complex, the term is colloquially used to mean a Jew's act that impresses others and generates positive feelings. That is not to say, though, that any act resulting in such feelings is a *Kiddush Hashem* – or, conversely, that an act resulting in negative feelings in others cannot be proper, and even a *Kiddush Hashem*.

For an example of the latter, we need look no further than a few weeks hence, when the Book of Esther will be publicly read on Purim. It describes how Mordechai refused to bow to Haman. The *Midrash* explains that the Purim villain wore an idol around his neck, the reason for Mordechai's refusal. Many Jews at the time were disapproving of Mordechai's decision – after all, they argued, it will only stoke Haman's hatred and render all Jews even more vulnerable! Nevertheless, it was the right decision, whether or not it was a popular one. Haman's hatred was indeed stoked, but in the end it led to his downfall.

Caleb Leibowitz did something right, too, on the plane that morning. He donned tefillin with pride and explained politely what he was doing. And most people recognized that Mr. Leibowitz was a shining example of an observant Jew, an example only reiterated when law enforcement personnel described him as "completely cooperative" throughout. And if his tefillin-donning frightened a flight attendant or bothered others, or if the image of a young Jewish man kneeling on a tarmac in handcuffs brought anyone to think of Mr. Leibowitz as some wrongdoer, that's unfortunate. But no amount of misguided disapproval can change the fact that G-d's name was sanctified by his performance of a mitzvah.

It was a *Kiddush Hashem* with ramifications, too, a gift that kept on giving. As the *New York Jewish Week* reported recently, an annual program among the Conservative movement's Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs that encouraged members to don tefillin experienced a huge surge of interest in the wake of the phylactery fiasco. A movement spokesperson noted that the international "World Wide Wrap" event "had 5,000 participants the first year and the number has been consistent ever since."

This year, though, he added, nearly 9,000 men had pledged their participation.

May Caleb's gift continue to give.

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

**On this date in Jewish history**

**On February 24, 1912**

Hadassah founded by Henrietta Szold.

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



## Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

### Take time each week to bless your children

Shabbat is a unique time of the week. For many Jewish families struggling to balance the demands of school, work and extracurricular activities, it may be the only time during the week everyone can sit down together for a meal. Friday night the table is set, perhaps with a white cloth, flowers, a challah and candlesticks, creating a sense of anticipation that the evening will hold something special.

Traditionally, the lighting of Shabbat candles was a woman's domain, and two candles, representing the commandments to remember (*zakor*) and keep (*shamor*) the Sabbath, were used. In many homes today, both men and women light candles together and additional candles for each family member or guests who adorn the table. When my family first began to observe Shabbat, I treasured more than anything that moment when I would light the candles in my grandmother's brass candlesticks, brought over in the lining of her coat from Russia. Covering my eyes, I would imagine the generations of Jewish women before me and place myself among them. Then, as I lit the wicks, I focused on my breathing: inhaling the peace of Shabbat and letting go of the stresses and tensions of the week.

But my favorite part of lighting the candles came a few seconds later – when my husband and I would bless our children. We began this tradition in a fairly untraditional way: not by saying the conventional Hebrew blessing but rather, by telling our children what they did that made us happy that week. As they got older, they offered their own happy thoughts ranging from pride in getting good grades to fun times with friends and family. One favorite memory is of 5-year-old Lauren as she twirled around the kitchen table shouting: "I'm happy because I got new party shoes!"

Jewish tradition provides us with two blessings; one for girls and one for boys. The blessing for daughters includes the hope that they will grow up to be like the matriarchs: "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah." The blessing for sons, however, does not reference the patriarchs but instead invokes the names of Joseph's two sons: "May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh." It's curious that Joseph's sons trump the patriarchs. Why were Ephraim and Manasseh chosen as the ideals, rather than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

The Book of Genesis reveals many stories about human nature and particularly about family dynamics. A recurrent theme

throughout is the destructive nature of sibling rivalry. Beginning with Cain and Abel, we see how jealousy between brothers can cause the worst of actions: murder. Generations later, siblings are alienated beyond repair when Ishmael is banished from Abraham's house shortly after Isaac's birth. The legacy of sibling rivalry continues when Isaac's son Jacob, as the younger twin, steals his older brother Esau's birthright. In the next generation, Joseph, as the favored son, is so hated by his brothers that they sell him into slavery. And so the story goes, until we meet Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, in the last chapter of Genesis.

Jacob, blind and close to death, asks Joseph to bring his two children to him for a blessing. Joseph places his older son, Manasseh, on Jacob's right side, to receive the blessing reserved for the firstborn son. But Jacob stretches his right hand across his body and places it on Ephraim's head instead. When Joseph attempts to correct his father by reversing his hands, Jacob reassures him by saying: "I know, my son, I know; he too will become a people, and become great; yet his younger brother shall become greater than he, and his offspring will fill the nations" (Genesis 48:19–20).

Manasseh remains silent during this scene and does not appear to hold a grudge against Ephraim. In contrast to the other brothers in Genesis, he trusts the wisdom of his grandfather Jacob and does not lash out against his brother. When we bless our sons to be like Ephraim and Manasseh, we are hoping that they too will have faith in our tradition and remain supportive of each other.

In our family as our children grew older, our happy thoughts turned into traditional Shabbat blessings. But we saw this moment as a rare opportunity to connect with our kids and whispered a personal blessing, telling each of them why they were special and why we loved them. Sometimes, especially during the more difficult teen years, Shabbat was the only time during the week that guaranteed an intimate moment. I craved it, and I think they did, too.

Blessing our children on Shabbat can be more than a beautiful tradition. It offers parents an opportunity to connect to their children from the heart, particularly when lack of time, family tensions and the stresses of the week make that kind of communication challenging.

Amy Hirshberg Lederman ([www.amyhirshberglederman.com](http://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. ✪

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## Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

### Purim Play

Helen Tomsky of Sun Valley, Calif. writes:

Dear Bernie DeKoven,

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

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

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

My dear Ms. Tomsky,

First, your P.S., upon which I now elaborate. A most insightful P.S. it is. In fact, I have come to believe that a game, for it to be truly and longlastingly playworthy, needs to be both major and minor fun. The better the game, the more it is of each. The minor fun components – the design of the pieces, the art, the feel, the heft, the sounds it makes, the box it comes in, the ease of storage, the experience of the playing (what happens when you wait your turn, the surprise, the sounds, the cleverness) – all impact the overall quality of the game. That said, however, if the game itself is fun enough, even if it's made out of cardboard and Styrofoam, and especially if it was made by someone you love, then it's a treasure of inestimable value.

Both of the games you sent me show genuine play value. Though your Dreidel board game is innovative and inviting (you race against other players, spinning your Dreidel, hoping that it lands on the letter on the space you want to reach), for the purpose of this column, I'd like to explore your LATKE Bingo game. It's a 5x4 matrix with the letters LATKE in the first row and numbers in each of the other three rows (with the compulsory "free space" in the center). Since it's based on a well-established game, comes with all the proven play value of BINGO. If you want, you can easily add more Chanukah-like elements.

In fact, considering it's about to be Purim, just for the fun of it, let's make up a game of Purim bingo. Actually, we could also make a Purim Lotto, which is very much like Bingo except with pictures. You need pictures for the boards, and pictures to put on cards – pictures of all the main Purim characters, of different kinds of hamentashen, of megillahs, and so forth. Turn over the cards one at a time and mark the board if you have a match. And

Bingo, there's your Purim game. There are lots of Purim-dikke things to make pictures of, many of which we can easily find online.

Speaking of lots (and Lotto), Lots is the very game that they purportedly played (for not such playful purposes). Unlike the other games we've been talking about, Lots can be played with just about anything. There are many different games that are lots-like. One I know is a bit like Rock-Paper-Scissors. Players start off with an equal amount of small objects (the lots) – these can be coins or nuts or raisins or maybe candy corn (which one could interpret as being hamentashen-shaped). Let's say each has three. They each select a certain amount (in this case 1, 2, or all 3) to put in their playing hand (oh so secretly), and the rest go in the other hand. Both hands go behind their backs, and, simultaneously, players put their playing hand out in front. Players, with their hands still closed, now guess the total number of coins (candies, and such) in each other's hands. After everyone guesses, they all open their hands and count the pieces. If any player guesses correctly, that player either wins or loses, gets a penalty or prize, depending on how you want to play.

Since one of the main Purim pleasures involves getting dressed up as somebody in the Megillah, you might as well play it in costume.

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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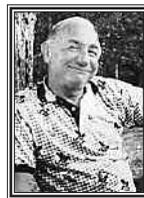
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## Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

### The bonds of Jewish matrimony

Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Moslems – they're all the same when it is time to link up matrimonially. They just mumble some words. Nobody signs anything. And words are like the swallows of spring. They come and they go, contributing to conversational debate like: "I didn't say Aunt Lena could live with us." "Yes, you did."

But Jews sign a marriage contract. Listen to the groom's declaration: "I faithfully promise to honor and cherish thee, protect and support thee and provide all that is necessary for thy due sustenance...and further obligations to thy maintenance...as are prescribed by our religious statute." Wow, that's a commitment that would have shook up Moses and his promise to lead our ancestors through Sinai.

The bride, on the other hand, makes no formal declaration. Zero, zip. The contract that she signs says something frilly and feminine (and legally undefinable) about "plighting her troth." What does that mean? Making up the grocery list, which her husband must fetch and cook?

She does sign up to "all the duties incumbent upon a Jewish wife". No details. The Supreme Court would rule that short, shilly-shally, weak-willed statement totally unenforceable. Furthermore, in a Jewish marriage, the ketubah, duly signed and witnessed, is handed to the bride for safekeeping. So guess who's gonna win every argument.

Now, note the gazebo where the ceremony takes place. The *chuppah* – symbolic of the canopy of the sky – under which a Jewish wedding is sanctified. The *chuppah* is our earthly representation of the Lord's heaven. It reminds us that we live – at his pleasure – in his world. Remember it says that marriage is not only a legal but a SACRED contract. Remember that due to its openness, the meditation of our hearts and the work of our hands are visible to His judgment as well as his mercy.

Then the seven blessings which are recited under the *chuppah*. These are easier to explain than the *ketubah*. The seven blessings are – SURPRISE! SEVEN BLESSINGS: Our thanks to our Creator for wine, creation, fertility, joy, love, plus life itself and other gifts like liberty and opportunity that our American system provides to us. Gifts that we often take for granted until we lose them – like our bodily well-being.

May the bride and groom, as well as we guests, profit from these benedictions. And while we're on the topic of blessings, remember that nine Jews out of ten,

well before the current health craze, used to go 'round saying, "thank God I've still got my health." What's poverty, or even ungrateful children who never call, compared to a fine-functioning circulatory system.

("Hey, did you see poor Sammy – he's got on a cheap sport coat with two buttons missing." "Yeah, but look how good his color is.")

One of the oldest blessings in Judaism says it all: "May the Lord cause His countenance to shine upon you and give you peace." This blessing, word for word, has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls – so it's antiquity and literal accuracy are well documented. And implicit in the wedding ceremony.

In all the repertoire of Jewish behavior known to the larger world, such as bar mitzvahs, Passover, and pickles on corned beef, the breaking of the glass at a Jewish wedding is way up there. And as most people now know, it symbolizes the destruction of our Temple first by pagan Babylonians, then Romans; and our fervent hope for its revival. Our bible instructs us that "If I forget Jerusalem, may my left hand forget its cunning." We are always to cherish it just as we cherish our marriage partner and our wedding vows. The heart of Judaism, a city in the headlines two millennia ago and still today, is not to be forgotten. So, we crush a glass to remember the sack of Jerusalem and its temple.

The bride usually has a more novel interpretation of the glass stomping. According to her, it's the last time "the

(see Roberts, page NAT 15)

### EDITORIAL

(continued from page NAT 2)

and/or little children. Play childhood games such as cards and board games and/or go to the park and swing on a swing, slide on a slide, or play in the sand box. Sing and dance. Give yourself permission to laugh. Play with balls and props. Be around others who like to joke and are funny. Write your own "humor mantra" – a word or phrase that reminds you of something funny.

A few months ago, there was a news article on Laughter Yoga, a sidesplitting new fitness fad that's part traditional yoga, part improv and all silliness. The following quote is by Jeffrey Briar who founded the Laughter Yoga Institute in Laguna Beach, Calif.

"Most people think they have to feel good first in order to laugh. But you can start from nothing, even start feeling unhappy and just laugh as a form of exercise, and happy feelings follow...If you are laughing with a group of other people, fake laughter very quickly becomes real." This forced laughter that ends up real was also a daily exercise in the playshop Roberts attended.

Wishing you, dear readers, lots of laughter in Adar and the rest of the year!

Jennie Cohen 2-24-10. ✨



## Jews by Choice

BY MARY HOFMANN

### Who's a Jew? Who's a rabbi?

Being a tiny congregation in an area geographically isolated from other Jews has always had its challenges. Throughout the years we've employed many a student rabbi to visit us once a month and always found that to be a surprisingly educational and spiritually uplifting experience for everyone.

What with the advent of "air miles," acquiring students has become more difficult, as hopping on a flight in Los Angeles to almost anywhere in the United States is faster and easier than the five-plus hour drive to Merced...which has no benefits whatsoever. So mostly we're on our own...which is mostly okay because our little group happens to be very well equipped to do everything we need Jewishly except for the occasional marriage or conversion.

Actually, the marriages aren't an overwhelming problem. We have a judge in the congregation who can do marriages that don't require the formal rabbinical touch and, when the couple wants a "real" rabbi, they can usually find one who will travel here for a day or weekend.

It's the conversion that's the real issue, and the research I've been doing of late trying to resolve our local conversion issues lately makes me wonder more and more whether or not the *Who's a Jew* debate regarding conversion isn't just as much, or more, a *Who's a rabbi* debate.

My husband and I went through a Reform conversion long ago, and it was a rigorous one. We studied biweekly with a rabbi at some distance for over a year and then continued living Jewishly and working with him periodically for some years after that before the actual ceremonies took place. We knew at the time our conversion would not be deemed kosher by the Orthodox...because our rabbi wasn't Orthodox. We chalked it up to a basic liberal/conservative rabbinical power (and/or philosophy) struggle and decided that, to be true to our own philosophies, we would just have to be who we are....dedicated liberal Jews.

Lately, though, I've met a couple of fairly nearby people who received their *smicha* through the Rabbinical Seminary International. While these people had certainly done years of volunteer work in their synagogues and had studied independently extensively, their actual course of study seemed, well, pretty light-weight. They were able to demonstrate their proficiency mostly through the mail and by phone and/or internet, and the only apparent class time face to face with the rabbis who run the program was a few days together right before being

ordained. The ordination was legal and the rabbis are able to perform Jewish weddings and conversions.

So why am I bothered? I like both of them and respect them and their learning tremendously, but somehow I can't bring myself to think of them on the same level as the Reform and Conservative rabbis I know who spent five or more years of their lives in an intensive graduate program of rabbinics...a program, of course, not recognized by the Orthodox.

Which leaves me in a real state of confusion. One of these two rabbis is a man who is apparently quite acceptable as a rabbi, at least to a group of extremely conservative Chabadniks with whom he spends much of his time – though he's not *their* rabbi. The other is a woman. Need I say more in terms of the likelihood of her acceptance in Orthodox circles?

One could check with the various ordination programs one respects... from the yeshivot at one end to HUC at the other. And I suppose there are listings of "acceptable" rabbis at professional organizations like the CCAR or its counterparts.

Clearly, though, there is no universal Jewish agreement, the lack of which leaves huge loopholes that leave potential converts and those who work with them in quite a dilemma.

Case in point: We have a young man in our congregation who has studied about Judaism for years, has participated in our congregation for some time, and has now joined the congregation with the intention of becoming formally Jewish.

I know him well enough and have discussed issues intensively enough with him that I'm convinced he will be a good Jew. He's been preparing for a lifelong journey, is in no big rush for "completion," as he realizes there is no such thing, but is ready to proceed to a formalized course of study. And we don't have a rabbi he can work with. This isn't an issue that can be addressed by hiring a rabbi for the weekend or asking our resident judge to do perform a ceremony. This is a long-term commitment we can't fulfill for him on our own, and it's really frustrating.

Yes, he can find a rabbi from way out of town and work with that rabbi in some way. But it's out of context for him. We're his congregation. We're his Jewish family.

We can ask one of those two recently ordained folk to do it, and they'd be happy to. I can't bring myself to recommend that option, however. How ironic! I am a Reform Jewish convert of over 30 years who can't bring herself to recommend that he work with a rabbi I have trouble accepting as a "real" rabbi.

We're working toward a resolution that will work for him, but it's a sad situation that this is even an issue. And what IS the issue, really?

On one level, it's a problem of deciding who is authentically Jewish.

On another level, it's a problem of deciding who is *qualified* to "create" a new Jew.

### BAT MITZVAH PROJECT

(continued from National Cover)

#### Thank you from Yad Layeled

Jan. 9, 2010

Dear Herschaft family,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to Miriam Herschaft's bat mitzvah project. Thanks to your generosity, 100 children from Sderot will be participating in a camp project called "People and Places in Western Galilee," which will include a visit to Yad Layeled Children's Memorial Museum where they will also prepare and fly kites in the spirit of Janusz Korczak. Miriam wrote in her letter to me: "I think that taking the children from Sderot, where they are being attacked with rockets fired from Gaza pretty much everyday, is even more meaningful than just sending money to Yad Layeled." It was clear that organizing a camp was the best way to make these children's visit a meaningful, as well as a learning, experience.

Since a central component of this camp is the visit to Yad Layeled, I thought that you might want to know a little about our museum. Yad LaYeled, which is part of the Ghetto Fighters' Museum, is actually located in Kibbutz Lohamei Haghettaot ("Ghetto Fighters" in English) in the Western Galilee between Acre and Nahariya. The museum is the first educational commemoration site in remembrance of the 1.5 million children that perished during the Holocaust and was established in 1995. The exhibitions at Yad Layeled are adapted both to young and adult visitors and invite experiential and moral-oriented learning. The permanent exhibitions present the story of the Jewish child during the Holocaust and the life of the Polish-Jewish educator Dr. Janusz Korczak. The temporary exhibit "Following the Path of a Picture" takes a closer look at 20 Holocaust child survivors through personal artifacts, documents and photographs. Visitors to the museum are invited to a guided tour, which includes exploring the museum exhibits and a creative workshop activity.

On behalf of my staff and myself, I would like to invite you and your family to visit Yad Layeled. In the meantime, I invite you to visit our new website at [gfh.org.il](http://gfh.org.il) to learn more about our activities and projects. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely, Anat Carmel  
Director, Yad Layeled  
[acarmel@gfh.org.il](mailto:acarmel@gfh.org.il) ✨



Too bad it isn't a process issue rather than a power one. It would be nice if we could all agree on a process and, if a potential convert completes it, then he or she becomes a Jew.

But then we'd have to agree, wouldn't we?

Mary Hofmann welcomes comments at: P.O. Box 723, Merced, CA 95340; [Mhofwriter@aol.com](mailto:Mhofwriter@aol.com). ✨



## Young People

BY RABBI MOSHE BEN ASHER, PH.D.

### Mamlechet Hachai (The Animal Kingdom): Do we have to feed wild animals if we see that they're hungry?

What are we to do about feeding our domestic animals if there isn't enough food for people?

One of our great rabbis, Rabbi Huna, taught that food fit for humans should never be given to animals.

Why do you think he taught that?

You might be interested to know that in ancient times, dogs were considered wild animals, so they had to get their own food.

We know *torah* teaches we are to take care of animals, which of course includes feeding them. But are we supposed to take care of *all* animals in the same way? Do we have to feed *wild* animals if we see that they're hungry? And if not, why not?

Torah teaches that we are required to feed only domestic animals, those that are directly useful to us. The reason is that the Creator has created a world in which each creature has its place, its ways of living and surviving, without our help.

But can you think of any reasons why we should protect wild animals from mistreatment and wholesale slaughter?

They are a part of God's creation, like us, and should be protected for that reason alone. (If people learn that they can mistreat and kill God's animals willy-nilly, that may encourage them to think they can treat people the same way.) They are an important part of the "eco-system" – do you know what an eco-system is? – and their loss could affect the system in which we live in ways that we can't predict but which could be very destructive.

Although we're not required to feed and take care of wild animals, there are some things Judaism teaches us about their care. Judaism teaches that we must not do anything that could destroy an entire group of animals.

What kinds of things might destroy a whole group of animals?

Environmental pollution; poachers (those who illegally kill buffalo, elephants, and such); and the growth of cities

What can we do to protect wild animals? And have you ever done anything practical to protect wild animals?

Do youth groups such as Scouts, Woodcraft Rangers, and the like ever do anything to protect wild animals? And do you know of any other groups you could join or support that are working to protect wild animals?

If you don't know of any groups or organizations that are working to protect (see ben Asher, page NAT 15)



## Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### A Christian pastor in Jerusalem

"I have an identity nationally and culturally and in my soul with the Jewish people," exclaims Dr. Albert P. Nucciarone III, with passion. Then he pauses and continues, "when I grew up, my best friends were Jewish, I went to bar and bat mitzvahs and 40 percent of my high school were Jews!"

Maybe that's part of the reason why it felt so natural in December 2007 to come to be pastor of the Jerusalem Baptist Church. Dr. Nucciarone came with his wife, Billie, and their daughter, Allison, now 16 years old. Libby, their 24-year-old daughter graduated Wheaton (Illinois) College, works in Wheaton and was married during the summer. Emily, 21 years old, is a philosophy-politics-economic junior at Kings College in New York, and spent her junior semester abroad in Jerusalem.

Born in Newark, N.J., and raised in Short Hills, Dr. Nucciarone has had a colorful life. He's 100 percent Italian, the grandson of four grandparents born in Italy. In the 1970s he was studying government at the University of Maryland, planning to be a lawyer. The summer he was 19 years old, he was working in Richard Nixon's law firm filing, went to church but was "not much of a church goer," and went to see Billy Graham.

"I found the Lord," he says. He continued studying to be a lawyer but got involved with some Christian groups and then got "a calling to the ministry."

He went ahead and received his BA but then acquired what he calls "a personal relationship with the Lord" in a changed direction. He enrolled at Dallas Theological Seminary. Then, in 1975, he went to serving Baptists on a music outreach team in Italy, playing mandolin. There he met Billie, from North Carolina, who played ukulele and was attending Columbia Bible College in South Carolina.

Dr. Nucciarone continued in his pastoral learning, and in 1978, he graduated from the Dallas Theological Seminary and became a pastoral intern for two years in two Pennsylvania churches. He and Billie got married in 1979, but he felt a call to go to Italy, so in 1980, they went to study in Florence. A year later, they moved to Milan and started a church. Daughters, Libby and Emily, were born there and they remained in Italy for 12 years where he was pastor to one church in Italian in the morning and another in English at night.

In 1992, Dr. Nucciarone says he got a phone call that the Grace Church in Vienna, Austria, needed a pastor. He applied and was accepted, and the family moved to Vienna where Allison was born

in 1993. The family lived there 14 years, and the girls went to the Vienna Christian School, an American school, until they left for college.

In 2006, Dr. Nucciarone took a year sabbatical and was based at a Philadelphia church. "It was a retooling time, retreading, a time of study and reflection." During that time, he came on a 10-day pastors' trip to Israel to learn how to be a tour organizer and lead church groups to Israel.

"I visited the Jerusalem Baptist Church, and after services, the pastor asked me to give a greeting. One of the deacons said I looked Jewish and I had an Israeli or Mediterranean personality. He said "you could be a good pastor here."

Dr. Nucciarone said he didn't think much about the comments until about six months later when he began to wonder, is this what the Lord wants me to do?



Dr. Albert P. Nucciarone III with his wife Billie. Photo by: Barry A. Kaplan.

"It seemed the Lord was closing the door in Vienna, and he must be going to open one somewhere else," remarks Billie.

Dr. Nucciarone called the deacon to see if the job was still available and he said yes, so he came in October 2007 for "candidating." He was accepted, and the family moved to Jerusalem soon after.

Three times a year Dr. Nucciarone is pastor for Lesea Broadcasting, which owns and operates METV. Groups come for seven to 10 days and tour with an Israeli company and tour guides and interact with Israelis.

"They see the sites and gain an understanding of Biblical sites, we help them get to know the people here so they are able to go back and encourage others to take tours here."

Four congregations use the church building, but Pastor Nucciarone preaches a church service at the Baptist Church on Sunday, conducts prayer meetings during the week and leads a prayer meeting in the Old City.

"We work with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Support comes through them," he explains. "Basically, we try to help Muslim and Christian sports organizations for young people's teams such as the Palestinian Basketball League, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic Action Center – all in Bethlehem."

Dr. Nucciarone says their goal is to teach sports skills and values. Recently he made contact with the American Football League in Israel and brought some

coaches to them to help train some of the football players. He also works with a Baptist Sports Village in Petach Tikvah, the largest baseball field in Israel.

Billie Nucciarone describes herself as "a wife, a housewife, and mother." She is also class administrator for a Bible Study Fellowship, a worldwide organization to teach the Bible where each course is a year long. Christian women in Jerusalem are the students. Billie also works with music in the church, directs a Sunday school for children and is now working with them on a Christmas musical.

Christmas eve, the pastor took a group of about 70 to sing Christmas carols in Manger Square in Bethlehem, an activity he does every year. Once a month, he preaches on a Saturday at the Baptist Village and occasionally he helps a church group in Bethlehem. In addition to all this, a lot of his time is spent helping needy people, particularly older ones.

Now that the family is here two and a half years, Allison is a junior at the Anglican International School in Jerusalem where instruction is in English. The school has about 200 students, grades K-12.

"For me, Vienna was home," said Allison. "I really didn't want to leave, but after a couple of months here I was adjusting," she says.

"God was good to her, and he gave her friends," says her mother.

When she is not in school, she is involved with a group called Model UN, she is on the student council, she sings and plays soccer and she baby sits a lot. Emily completed her junior semester abroad in Jerusalem studying at the Jerusalem University College (formerly the Institute of Holyland Studies).

"I chose Israel for my family," said Emily. "During this time in history, I thought it would be interesting to study here and I want to do some research."

Libby who visited over the winter break a year ago before returning to Illinois to work, said, "I never thought of Israel as anything special," she says. "The more I've been here, the more I've come to like it. It's starting to feel like home."

Her mother concurs. "I like it. I feel like I have really enjoyed seeing everything [like the Christian sites]. In Austria, you had to be perfect. In Israel, I don't have to be perfect. I can be myself. I feel at home," she says.

How does Dr. Nucciarone feel as a Christian in Israel? "I don't feel like a minority. We have the same Bible. The Jews gave us everything. We feel a oneness, an affinity with the Jewish people. Our faith is based on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the prophets."

"It's like a gratitude to the Jewish people, we feel," adds Billie.

"I do feel G-d gave this land to the Jewish people. I believe what the Bible says. The amazing part to me is the survival, the fact that the Jewish people have remained. This indicates this is what G-d intended," he says. "This is evidence there was a G-d."

### Media distortions and Israel PR

Tom Gross is a political analyst, originally from England, and regular columnist to *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Review* and *National Post*. He appeared at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an independent policy research institute for Israeli foreign affairs, whose president is Ambassador Dore Gold, as part of their lecture series.

His subject was how bad the media is and how Israel PR could be improved, which he characterized as a "complicated subject to a distinguished audience."

He cited examples of "blatant anti-Semitism" from mainstream papers including the BBC, the world's biggest news broadcaster and "probably the most significant global service in the world."

His response was that Israeli diplomacy is not effective, although Israel can produce good spokespeople, but they have to be the standard of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Peres. The reason there are very few people doing adequate public relations for Israel, particularly in the Foreign Ministry, is two fold: Those dealing with *hasbara* (public information) "do not understand the media, how complex it is, how complicated it is"; they do not understand nuances and relationships. The second reason is clumsiness, ineptitude, mismanagement and lack of coordination.

He commented that Israel is being held to impossible standards. The "broader progressive left needs an issue; now it is global warming and Palestinianism. [These are] treated with exaggeration, not rational treatment; it's a trend and a fashion."

He also mentioned that some in the Israel media nurture damage, such as the English edition of *Haaretz* and individual Israelis who "make a career out of attacking their own country."

Commenting on the recent issue of the *New York Times* correspondent, Ethan Bonner, who is married to an Israeli and whose son is serving in the Israel Defense Forces, he called Bonner generally "a balanced and fair reporter, typical of *New York Times*, with liberal views but sympathetic to the Palestinian cause."

For me, personally, the highlight of the time at the Jerusalem Center was a prelecture conversation with an attractive, dignified woman with frosted blond hair and a British accent who identified herself as Freda Keet. Freda had a long career with Kol Yisrael, Israel Broadcasting Authority, as well as an anchor person and investigative journalist.

Born in Zimbabwe and educated in England, she moved to Israel in 1963 and began work at Kol Yisrael. She was one of the few women war correspondents in 1973 during the Yom Kippur war, reporting from the Golan Heights and Sinai; she covered the Pope Paul Israel visit in 1974 and was recipient of the Seef Prize for promoting and defending the image of Israel in the outside world. Today, she lectures on public relations and media attitudes.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ✪



## Interview

CONDUCTED BY EDWARD HOFFMAN

# Advancing Jewish Studies in Japan: An interview with Hiroshi Ichikawa

*Interviewers Note: In the past few years, I have enjoyed the opportunity to become acquainted with Hiroshi Ichikawa, a professor in the department of religious studies at the University of Tokyo – among Japan's most prestigious institutions of higher learning. As perhaps his country's leading scholar today in the field of Jewish Studies, Professor Ichikawa has done much to encourage awareness of Judaism among his compatriots and is a frequent visitor to Israel. Based on conversations we had when I was in Japan for a grant that Professor Ichikawa sponsored in October 2009, this subsequent interview was conducted by email.*

**Professor Hoffman:** When you were growing up in Japan, were you exposed to Jews or Judaism at all? If so, what was the nature of your contact?

**Professor Ichikawa:** I had almost no exposure at all. As a child, I had virtually no conception of what is a Jew.

**Hoffman:** How did you first become interested in Judaism and Jewish Studies? Was there a single momentous event, or was it a gradual process?

**Ichikawa:** It was a gradual process. When I was a college student, I first became interested in Christian thought, for at that time, I began to ponder such questions as: "What is the goal of human life?" "How I am to live?" In due course, I began to read the Hebrew Bible, and as the prophetic writings attracted me very much, I strove to read these in the original Hebrew. At the age of 20, therefore, I began to study biblical Hebrew. As I was majoring in Japanese law, I wasn't initially planning a career in biblical scholarship. However, toward the end of my BA coursework, I decided to become a biblical scholar and was accepted into the University of Tokyo's graduate program in religious studies. I took courses in the Hebrew Bible, the sociology of religion, and ancient Near Eastern studies, but still I didn't find the appropriate subject to satisfy my yearning about questions of life-meaning.

Because I wasn't a Christian, I had no interest in studying the Christian Bible. Rather, I wanted to study the Jewish tradition encompassing the Hebrew Bible and its various commentaries. At that time, in the mid-1970s, there were virtually no Jewish courses or even scholars of Jewish studies at the University of Tokyo – or in all of Japan, for that matter. Thus, I began

to study for myself the Judaic religious background of Christianity by delving into such sources as the *Mishnah* and *Midrash*. Soon after embarking on learning modern Hebrew, I began to seriously consider graduate study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Fortuitously, I became acquainted with an Israeli family living in Tokyo. Ziona was at home full time, and tutored me privately in modern Hebrew for about two years. Her husband, Avi, was strict, modest, and polite, whereas she had an extroverted personality and radiated good cheer. Ziona taught me more than language, such as interpreting the Hebrew Bible using Rashi's commentary. She also explained many things to me about contemporary Jewish life.

Of course, Ziona posed many questions about Japan and its current way of life, and sometimes, I had no answer for her. Two profound questions that I still recall are: "Why are Japanese fathers so indifferent toward raising their children?" and "These economic boom years for your country won't last forever, as history shows. Are you Japanese preparing for the days when this prosperity will be gone?" This second, prescient question was posed way before the "Lost Decade" of Japan's economic stagnation.

With tears in her eyes, Ziona also related a sad story involving the Holocaust. I found her a typical Jewish mother or typical Jewish spirit: very wise, kindhearted, enthusiastic, and cheerful.

Then, in 1982, when I was 28 years old, I was accepted on scholarship to study *Mishnah* and *Talmud* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Those three years of intense academic coursework and living in Israel have been the basis for my entire subsequent career as an academician in Jewish Studies.

**Hoffman:** What have been your experiences and impressions of Israel? How has your time in Israel affected your scholarly work?

**Ichikawa:** Unquestionably, my three years in Israel have constituted the single most important event of my career. Finally, I felt I could immerse myself in scholarship that was personally fulfilling. Besides academics, my major purpose in Israel was to experience the Jewish way of life as fully as possible, and so, I tried to immerse myself in it – both at the Hebrew University and outside it. I enjoyed friendships with several Israelis that helped me a great deal in this regard.

First, I became acquainted with a sage named David Hirschberg who was serving as cantor for the Hong Kong Jewish community at that time. This acquaintanceship was initiated by my Hebrew tutor Ziona, who had met David's wife while on board a flight to Israel. At the beginning of my sojourn in Jerusalem, David helped me in many ways, and my wife and I rented an apartment from his son in the bustling neighborhood of Neve Yaakov, on the northeastern tip of modern Jerusalem.

During my second year in Israel, David advised me to attend synagogue every

morning. This was initially difficult, but it gave me a new understanding of Jewish ritual and worship. I learned a great deal about the Jewish way of life as well as ritual practice. Every morning, I would awaken about six and attend synagogue services. The congregants there helped me in many ways. Initially, a middle-aged man brought me a *talit* and pair of *tefillin*, and instructed me on their use. Within a week, I became accustomed to donning these during prayers. However, one day a more religious congregant saw me and told me not to wear these because I was not a Jew, and I complied.

After morning prayers at the synagogue, I would re-read the prayerbook several times upon returning to our apartment. This practice lasted almost a year, and it became an inseparable part of my life. In some ways, I felt like a "God-fearing Gentile" who wanted to be a good friend of Jewry.



Professor Hiroshi Ichikawa.

My second important friend was Yitzchak, an architect living in the center of Jerusalem, in an old district that Moses Montefiori had founded in the early 20th century. In visiting Yitzchak most Fridays, my wife and I would pass through Jerusalem's oriental marketplace and see many men buying food and wine for Shabbat preparation. Yitzchak recounted many things about his family and Jerusalem's history, sometimes taking us to visit special sites.

Yitzchak's story of his origins in Syria's Jewish community surprised me and also sensitized me to the variety and historical profundity of Jewish families now living in Jerusalem and throughout Israel. I found that virtually everyone in Israel has his or her unique, historical and cultural background – and that this fact has produced the incomparable unity in diversity of Judaism. I also owe much to Yitzchak for introducing me to S.Y. Agnon's memorable novels.

Before long, I became much interested in other aspects of Judaism, such as the traditions of the Asian Sephardic and Mizrahi communities. I felt a kind of kinship with them because of their similarity to East Asian people.

My third close Israeli friend was Gideon, who represented a very different aspect of his country's culture. Originally raised on a left-wing kibbutz in the Galilee, he had relocated to Jerusalem. Gideon was politically liberal and often expressed the desire to found his own factory or office based on economically progressive ideals. He was also convinced

that Israeli politics had changed much for the worse after the Six Day War – that the Israeli occupation of the West Bank had caused not only security problems, but also a demise of social justice.

Gideon learned Japanese and read several Japanese novels in English translation. His impression was that my country's post-World War II culture had been considerably affected by its wartime experiences – and I found his insight personally enlightening. One day, Gideon took us to his former kibbutz. We met his parents, who were from Rumania and were among the kibbutz's founding generation. A concentration camp survivor, Gideon's mother did not want to discuss her horrifying experiences. But her living presence made me feel a kind of solemn revelation of the divinity.

**Hoffman:** How long have you been a professor of Jewish Studies? What have been some of your areas of scholarship, such as courses and publications?

**Ichikawa:** After returning to Japan, I was hired in 1986 as a research associate at Tsukuba University. After five years in this work, I was appointed in 1991 as an associate professor in the department of religious studies at the University of Tokyo. Since 2004, I have been a full professor.

My scholarly focus has encompassed three main areas. First has been the religious aspects of ancient Judaism, especially the nature of the Holy Temple's rituals and divine revelation during the Second Temple period. Second has involved the hermeneutics of Jewish religious thought and the modes of Talmudic thinking reflected in the *Mishnah*, *Midrash* and *Gemara*. Basic to my work in this area has been translating these works into Japanese. And third has encompassed research on the nature of Jewish self-identity and the challenges faced by the Jewish people from the Age of Emancipation onward.

I have been teaching courses on many different themes relating to Judaism, ranging from ancient to contemporary aspects – and focusing on religious thought, philosophy, history, and topics pertaining to religious studies in general. I have recently taught courses on Biblical Hebrew grammar, reading Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* in both the original and English translations, and reading the Talmud *Massekhet Sanhedrin* in English translation.

I have written about 50 academic articles concerning Judaism, almost all of which are in Japanese. I have translated into Japanese seven Judaic books originally written in English or German. My major publications include:

- A Japanese translation of the tractate *Megillah* of the Talmud Bavli. Published in 1993 by the Miki Corporation, this was accomplished with the financial support of Mr. Kazuo Kimura, president of this diamond company.

- A Japanese translation of the tractate *Makkot* of Talmud Bavli, published in 1996.

- A book titled *Spirit of Law in Rabbinic*

*Judaism*, published by the University of Tokyo Press in 2004 in Japanese.

• Most recently, a book titled *A History of Judaism*, published by Yamakawa Publishing Company in 2009 in Japanese.

**Hoffman:** *What most inspires or interests you these days in the field of Jewish Studies?*

**Ichikawa:** In the last decade, my interest has expanded to virtually all spheres of Jewish studies. Certainly, I've proceeded with the three areas of Jewish studies I earlier mentioned after returning from Israel in 1986. However, since then, I've also recognized the crucial importance of both American-Jewish scholarship and American Jewry itself, as I gradually became acquainted with various American-Jewish scholars.

Because Japanese universities lack Jewish Studies departments, it has been very important for me to establish scholarly associations and diverse study groups to promote this discipline. For example, I have been active with The Society for Jewish Studies, which hosts an annual conference in addition to sponsoring several lecture meetings, promoting friendship among members, and giving the opportunity for university students to present papers.

In addition, my colleagues established another Judaic academic association – based in Kyoto – focusing on Jewish intellectual contributions. Perhaps translated into English best as “The Kyoto Association of Jewish Thought and Ideas,” it has attracted scholars in both Christian and Islamic thought, and even those in Japanese Studies.

Since 1991, I've also had the good fortune to participate in an archeological project with friendly colleagues at Tel Aviv University. Involving Japanese scholars and Japanese student volunteers working at Kibbutz En-Gev, this long-term project has allowed me the opportunity to visit Israel for a hot summer's month nearly every year – and to survey in the areas of the Galilee and the Golan Heights. More than 200 Japanese students have visited Israel for this exciting archeological project – which has given many the impetus to continue their learning about Judaism and even specialize in Jewish Studies.

Finally, I've helped to invite foreign scholars in Jewish Studies – especially from the United States and Israel – to share their expertise with my colleagues and students. Since 1991, I have hosted more than 20 foreign scholars in Jewish studies for lectures at the University of Tokyo and have secured public funds for four scholars for extended lecture series. These have included Hillel Levine of Boston University, Rachel Elior of the Hebrew University, Leora Batnitzky of Princeton University, and yourself. It was like a dream for me to attend these classes in Japan, with colleagues and students listening to their special lectures. In this way, my knowledge and appreciation for Jewish civilization has been greatly enhanced.

*Edward Hoffman, Ph.D., is an adjunct*



## Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### A trilogy of wedding thoughts

“Another bride, another groom...”

This is a sentence from a song made famous by the late, great comedian, Eddie Cantor. The song went further to say... “think what a year can bring.” This song came to mind when I realized that another year is here. Where has the time gone?

So many questions run through my mind: Have I? Should I? Could I? So much to think about and, at the same time, so grateful that there is a period set aside to start anew and possible correct the wrongs.

There are so many challenges that come to mind as a New Year begins, or in this case, as a New Year continues. All of us receive the blessings of life not because we will it but rather because we make it happen. As corny as it may sound, determination and faith make all things possible. Happiness is not an accident waiting to happen. Happiness occurs because we put effort into making it so.

Life is a story of struggle and courage and perseverance. Life is what we make of it understanding that there are good times as well as bad. Our responsibility to each other and ourselves includes living life, loving life and sharing life with those we love.

There will be another bride and another groom as sure as there is another season. And as the song continues: “Lots of rice, the groom is nervous, he answers twice.” And it goes on to state that: “Picture a little love nest down where the roses cling. Picture that same sweet love nest, and think what a year can bring.” Our relationships are determined by our faith in each other and our determination to find love in order to be fulfilled.

Doing for one another is the ultimate expression of love for humanity and enhances our love for God. The bond between husband and wife is the secret of true faith. When a husband and wife begin a new life together, they reinforce that bond. The mystics wrote that God is forever creating new worlds. How is this done? By bringing about new marriages.

And the song goes on: “The choir sings here comes the bride. Another bride and groom are side by side. It surely is the season....”

#### “Marriages are made in heaven”

It wasn't that long ago when marriages were arranged between families. The

associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University, and the author of numerous Judaica books including *The Way of Splendor*, and most recently, *The Wisdom of Maimonides (Trumpeter/Random House)*. ✨

bride and groom never saw each other until the day of the wedding. In fact brides wear veils because of that custom. It was so the groom would first see his bride at the wedding ceremony.

These arranged marriages were organized by a person called the “marriage broker” who would search far and wide to accommodate the needs of the prospective families. We know them by another name, *shadchin*, “matchmaker.” Perhaps you will remember the movie, *Fiddler on the Roof* or *Hello Dolly* in which the matchmaker assumes the role of broker to arrange marriages according to their understanding of the needs. It is not far from the truth.

There is a story of such a matchmaker who called on a young man of poor circumstances to attempt such a match. “Frankly,” the youth said, “The only girl I would consider must be young, beautiful, come from a good family, and even own a delicatessen.”

“What!” shouted the indignant marriage broker. “You, a poor man, expect all that? You are not even passably good-looking and you have no trade. A girl such as you describe would have to be crazy to marry the likes of you!”

The young man shrugged. “So, she's crazy! As long as she has all the other qualifications, who cares?”

I, too, once had to officiate at a marriage that was prearranged. The bride and groom never saw each other, because the families lived quite a distance apart. Most of the arrangements were made either by mail or phone.

In fact I had to meet each separately as well, traveling from one location to the other. And while I talked to each, I would ask how they felt about arranged marriages in general and their up-coming nuptials in particular. Without hesitation each spoke of their duty and responsibility to their respective families expecting that they would not be disappointed and in time would grow to love one another. I must admit I was impressed with their sincerity. And I knew that neither of them was crazy.

The ceremony was phenomenal. Everyone looked great. The groom walked down the aisle first surrounded by his parents. Then came the usual compliment of bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girl, and ring bearer. Finally the music began to play a different melody and all knew that the bride was about to enter. My heart raced as though I were the intended and not the officiant.

Down she came, everyone rose to their feet. She was, of course veiled, and looked beautiful even though we still could not see her face. Then came the moment when the veil was thrown over her head and revealed a most lovely woman.

The wedding ceremony began, and as it ended and they kissed for the first time, I turned to the parents and whispered, “Marriages are made in Heaven.”

#### “A groom's thoughts”

Most often when we think of marriage, we are thinking of the bride. After all it

is “her day.” All the fuss surrounds her entourage and the preparations for a memorable milestone in her journey to the path leading to the nuptials. We tend to forget the groom.

There is the hustle and bustle of finding a suitable wedding dress, the arrangements for the bridesmaids, the flowers. On and on, the list is endless. The excitement builds. The makeup, the hairdo, the wedding bouquet. It just never ends. And we continue to forget the groom.

We forget that the concept of marriage was formed by Divine inspiration: “In time, a man leaves his father and mother and joins to his wife so they become as one flesh.” Biblical writers understood the loneliness men encounter. Then the moment of love reaches fulfillment in the joining of heart and spirit.

The Sages of old subscribed to the theory that there are three views of life that are considered beautiful in the eyes of God and man: Harmony between brothers, closeness among neighbors, and a man and his wife who are as one.

Sometimes I try to imagine what is going through a groom's mind when I stand with him waiting for his bride to make her way down the aisle. I guess part of what he is thinking is thankfulness for reaching this milestone unscathed in the tumult surrounding the very moment of commitment. And then, perhaps, thoughts settle on the very time and space that he finds himself reaching out to complete the process of fulfillment.

And maybe he concentrates on the act of love that finds him standing next to the one he loves because he understands that the act of love should bring every level of humanness into play: intuitions, emotions, logic and mind.

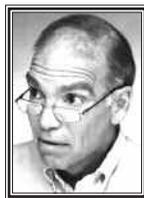
There is a story of two men having a debate regarding the value of marriage. One man claims that God is a thief because He made Adam fall asleep and then stole one of his ribs. The other responds with a little anecdote that spoke of a thief entering a home in the middle of the night and taking a silver tray and replacing it with a gold one. The first man replies that if only that were to happen to him. And the second man explains that is exactly what happened when God took the rib from Adam and enriched him with a wife.

Is that what he is thinking when he is about to enrich his life with the person he searched for and found? Does he believe that his life has truly been blessed with the gift, the most valuable of gifts, the bond between male and female, which is the secret of true faith?

A group of men were meeting for their weekly lunch together. And as is the custom, they began to tell each other jokes. One piped up and asked the question: “What did Eve do whenever Adam came home late in the evening?” And he answered his own question: “She counted his ribs.”

Perhaps levity is the order of the day as the groom watches the world around him

(see Wiener, page NAT 15)



## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### Ambassador Oren, I know how you feel

Some months ago I participated in a "Forum" discussing the situation in Israel vis a vis the Palestinians. Each member of the panel got five minutes for an opening statement. Mine was simple: "Do you really believe that if peace were achieved tomorrow between Israel and the Palestinians (assuming not by destroying the Jewish State) that Alqueda would lay down its arms and the Taliban would sing *Kumbaya* with their brothers in Afghanistan and Pakistan? That Hamas and Hezbollah would be satisfied to go back to basket weaving and olive farming?"

We then took prepared questions, read by the moderator, and everyone on the panel got to answer. Every time either I or anyone else on the Jewish side of the question got the microphone to answer, an unruly group of students shouted us down.

I mean, man – this was a private, well-funded college! Who would have believed? The moderator lost total control of the crowd, which grew more and more vocal and impolite. Those of us who were there to represent the Israeli point of view stood our ground. We did not abandon the stage.

What was obvious to me and most of the panel was that these "students" had no desire to learn various points of view. They did not want to hear facts. They wanted to shout slogans and create chaos.

Okay, lesson learned. Again. Last week the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., Michael Oren, a distinguished diplomat and author was invited to speak at the University of California at Irvine. He too was shouted down to the point where he left the stage, and the students, plus this time some professors, succeeded as hooligans.

It is a tactic learned well by the so-called Tea Party. Shout down logical, intelligent discourse with slogans and talking points (written on their hands?) until the opposition leaves the stage.

What do these people learn? What do they discuss? In the case of those at Irvine, were they outraged because civilians were killed in an urban guerilla war where the citizens of Gaza played reluctant host to terrorists in their midst? A sadness but a reality of that kind of war.

If a member of Hamas came to UC Irvine, would he be shouted down because of the constant shelling of the city of Sderot by his forces? In answer to the infamous Goldstone Report, Hamas apologized for any civilian casualties caused by the thousands of rockets that rained down on this civilian town. They said that their aim was military targets. Right. Sure. But dudes, there are no military targets in Sderot. Duh!

Well, Hamas is not coming to American colleges; they cannot get in the country because Hamas is a terrorist organization. One wonders where the balance of information and exchange of views that is supposed to be the lifeblood of the American higher education system has gone.

My Daddy taught me years ago, in any situation where you seek an answer, follow the money. Might not work 100 percent of the time, but it is a good place to start. How many chairs at these schools are funded by Saudi money? How many biased professors trained by Arabists of one kind or another are spewing stuff at our kids?

Hey – one of the kids on my panel had been a representative from the U.S. at the Seeds of Peace program in Israel. Did she return with a "fair and balanced" approach to Arab Jewish relations? At our panel she rose to tell the audience that they should protest to their congresspersons that U.S. tax dollars are being used to give Israel weapons to kill Arab babies.

The influence and the money that we supply the Saudis and others every time we fill our tanks with gas is deadly for Jews. The Chinese know that we have a mutual death grip on each other. They cannot afford to stop lending us money because a lot of that money goes right back to them to give us cheap goods.

The Arabs do not have that problem. They have oil trillions to spend on their agenda, whether it is feeding Wahabi philosophy to the Taliban and Alqueda, or influencing the opinions on our college campuses. Keeping us and the world in turmoil works for them. It works for them to demonize Israel. They are simply taking a page from medieval Europe where the princes of the city-states had the Catholic Church condemn the Jews for the problems of the simple folk.

And now that danger comes to our shores. Not just on the college campuses. Oh no. The Supreme Court of the United States has declared that a corporation is the same as an individual. A corporation or a lobby can now spend unlimited funds to influence elections.

While the religious right might focus on local judges, these foreign sovereign funds have higher targets in mind. Can they influence congress? How about not supplying Israel with needed arms or loans? How about a well dressed K Streeter in the pay of a foreign interest group walking into a congressional office and saying to the congressional representative, as the *New York Times* suggested: "Vote this way or I will spend the money to bury you in the next election." Food for thought. Ambassador Oren, me and a slew of others might get shouted off a stage. That's okay. It's what lies behind the shouting and the money that pays for it that should frighten us.

*Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommunications. He began his working life in radio in Philadelphia. He has written his JPO column for 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. ★*



## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### Haiti, Rabbi Jacob Neusner and Lady Gaga

It has been a number of years since I taught English and communication. I taught everything through writing. Obviously composition and grammar were taught this way, but literature, criticism and current events all ended up as written assignments as well. There was, at the time, a great deal of moaning, but over the years, many of those students came back to say their writing drew compliments.

One of my favorite assignments was to take a group of disparate ideas, and to challenge students to find some way to bring the disparate together. In this column, I am expecting the same result of myself. How can I possibly bring the tragedy of Haiti, a recent column in the *National Jewish Post & Opinion* by Dr. Jacob Neusner, and the performance artist Lady Gaga all in some meaningful column. This time all of you get to give the grade.

The series of earthquakes in Haiti and the tragedy to its vulnerable population is in every sense horrific. It will take time, for even those of us who were only indirectly affected, to try to "get our minds around it."

First, there was the sheer magnitude, the numbers of dead, the numbers of the injured, and the long time that was necessary for aid to become effective, even after it was in miles of its target.

There are so many layers of this tragedy. Just as in the last tsunami, the numbers of dead will never accurately be known. Their census figures were primitive. Bodies, by necessity, were buried in mass graves because there were no other realistic alternatives given the number of dead and the danger of not burying them.

Everything in Haiti was in ruin before the tragedy. Roads were nonexistent to certain parts of the county. There was an insufficient substructure to handle all the needs of the country during "normal" times. The nation was plagued with insufficiencies.

National and political issues have haunted the nation for decades, and a history of problems has been left unsolved. Everything in every part of life was at best bandaged, and nothing human or structural, ever healed or was resolved. People survived on whatever help was given, whatever life they could scratch out, and the most fortunate left.

The quakes were democratic, taking the most able who were left along with the poorest, and once the immediate issues are dealt with, all of the issues that were

never dealt with will reemerge. It is not hopeless; it is Haiti. The will of Haitians to solve any of the issues that face them, small and great, has been broken over time, and there is a necessary but cruel discussion going on about the necessity of the helpers not adding to the misery.

This is not an issue only in Haiti but in many parts of the world where there are so many problems, so much suffering, and so little resource. All of this is happening in another world, just air-miles away in every direction where there is comfort and health and surplus wealth. It is surreal.

Some weeks ago, readers were treated to a paper given by Dr. Jacob Neusner at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Reform at the Bamberger Lecture, and his receiving of an Honorary Doctorate. Those of us who have been readers of the *National Jewish Post & Opinion* are familiar with Dr. Neusner and have followed his writing from the time he was a professor at Brown University and now at Bard College.

Dr. Neusner's work is always thoughtful, provocative and, for the benefit of his readers, accessible. His own life path, which he has shared, is insightful. Through his writing, we see the difference between academics and Main-Street Jewish thought. Both are relevant and give readers a larger view of the Jewish world.

The privilege of being an academic and speaking in an academic setting is the protection against the reality in which most of live. The academic, by virtue of his setting and the view it offers, is separated from the harder realities of day-to-day life of Jews contending with day-to-day issues.

I do not take issue with anything that Dr. Neusner spoke about Judaism in the abstract, but being a Main-Street Jew, committed to the concepts of continuity and survival, I am affected by the reality of the issues not apparent. Less than 50 percent of all the Jews in America today appear on the screen he described, the continuum from left to right. Less than 50 percent of all the Jews in America today subscribe to any other self-definition than the recognition that they are Jewish. They do not belong to synagogues or temples; they do not support Jewish causes; they do not subscribe to magazines, newspapers or journals of Jewish thought. They are not running from their Jewishness, it is simply a nonfactor in their life. If there was a similar category to describe Jews as we do morality, moral, immoral or amoral, they would be a-Jewish.

Without that 50 percent in the equation, we are automatically talking about one half of the people in the United States who might identify on a census as Jewish. And with the other 50 percent, it would be a struggle to identify the nature of their attachment and affiliation. And while it is always easy to point at the extreme groups, they are hardly as simplistic as most people would think. There are just too many kinds of Jews to create a simple demography, even when we are just talking.

(see Karsh, page NAT 15)



## Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

### Sondheim strikes again and *The Diary of Anne Frank* from another perspective

Stephen Sondheim, the child of Jewish parents and raised on the upper West Side of Manhattan, has become, arguably, Broadway's most famous composer/lyricist. He has certainly, in any event, changed the face of Broadway, bringing a new, fresh, innovative approach to the genre. He is certainly an appropriate successor to his mentor/father-figure Oscar Hammerstein (who dominated Broadway with composer Richard Rodgers for decades).

Not surprisingly, Sondheim is currently represented by two shows on Broadway: *A Little Night Music*, which is in open run, and the revue *Sondheim on Sondheim*, scheduled to open in March.

*A Little Night Music* reminds one of how much Sondheim has changed the face of contemporary musical theater with his music, themes, and lyrics. The show opens quietly on a darkened stage, a lone cellist mournfully picking out a tune. The scene gradually lightens as each dancer enters and whirls on stage. In contrast, many prior musicals would have opened with a bouncing, raucous chorus number.

Thus the mood is set for *A Little Night Music* – a bittersweet tale of regrets, rueful memories and longings. Director Trevor Nunn is clearly in tune with these visions, bringing the musical to life with a masterly hand.

Though based on Ingmar Bergman's film *Smiles of a Summer Night*, *Night Music* is not what one expects of Bergman. In contrast to his usual work, the piece is light, amusing, sexually driven, and thoroughly European. Yet the darkness menaces, like moments in a summer storm.

Specifically, the middle-aged actress Desiree has returned home between engagements. She is known for her interpretation of Ibsen heroines. She runs into her former lover Fredrik and is determined to win him back, though he is married to child-bride Anne. Desiree's present lover (the Count) is furious when he finds Fredrik in Desiree's boudoir. At the same time Fredrik's son, Henrik, is desperately in love with Anne. Even the maid, Petra, carries on with her own peccadilloes. Desiree's mother, Madame Armfeldt, presides over it all with a jaundiced eye, as she recalls her own liaisons. And on and on. So the values of a 19th-century European culture are spelled out.



Pictured (l-r): Angela Lansbury (Madame Armfeldt), Catherine Zeta-Jones (Desirée Armfeldt), and Keaton Whittaker (Fredrika Armfeldt) in *A Little Night Music*. Photo by Joan Marcus, 2009.

The unexpected and dazzling surprise is film star Catherine Zeta-Jones in the lead, thus proving that a performer can make the transition from one media to another. For starters, Zeta-Jones is simply gorgeous in face and figure, deliciously displayed in David Farley's period costumes. No need to get the right camera angle, as she moves about the stage. But, more importantly, she takes command of the role, combining Desirée's earthiness with wit, poise, and high style. When she delivers the most famous song of *Night Music* – *Send in the Clowns* – she makes it her own. She is well matched with Alexander Hanson as Fredrik, whose comic skills mix with his sexy appeal.

The other big name is Angela Lansbury, who plays Madame Armfeldt. Is Lansbury really this old or is it pretense? In any event, Lansbury no longer sings, but recites her songs as she views proceedings from her wheelchair. No matter. That this much-revered trouper is here at all is enough to delight the audience.

It is a first-class cast all around, as it glides smoothly through the scenes, with the exception of the ingénue and her young lover. Hunter Ryan Herklicka and Ramona Mallory, playing Henrik and Anne, are quite out of control, as they hysterically deliver lines. Why didn't the director rein them in? David Farley's mirrored set design is also a disappointment. It feels more like a portable set serving a road tour, ready to be folded up and opened at the next site.

But these are minor quibbles, given the over-all experience that Zeta-Jones and company offers. A show worthy of Broadway, Sondheim, Bergman and all.

#### **Compulsion—The Diary of Anne Frank from another perspective**

*Compulsion* is now enjoying its world premiere at Yale Repertory Theatre in Connecticut (co-produced by the Public Theater in New York and Berkeley Repertory Theatre in California). This new production offers the best of stories and the best of intentions – the diary of Holocaust victim Anne Frank and the struggle of Meyer Levin to get his Anne Frank play recognized and performed. But good



## As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

### The object of my disaffection

Every now and then I come across a CD that, try as I might, I have to give in to the "dark side." Perhaps it would have been kinder if I did not review this particular CD, but I can't always give a thumbs-up type of review. The object of my disaffection is a CD by the Jewish folk ensemble Pharaoh's Daughter called *Haran* (OY 1), produced by Frederik (sic) Rubens for (appropriately enough) oy!hoo records, c. 2007.

The soloist, composer and/or arranger for the ten tracks is one Basya Schechter. Other collaborators include: Jason Lindner (keyboards, piano); Mathias Kunzli (percussion); Daphna Mor (ney [classical Arabic flute], recorder, background vocals); Uri Sharlin (accordion); Meg Okura (violin); and Yuval Lyon (drums). Many guest performers are listed also, and the musical advisor to the ensemble is Yisroel Schechter.

While the texts are drawn from rabbinic and Talmudic sources, nothing in the music reflects the meaning or spirit of the various texts in the songs, at least to me.



intentions do not necessarily translate into drama, and *Compulsion* is a case in point.

Certainly author Meyer Levin's historic connection to *The Diary of Anne Frank* is fascinating – and with dramatic potential. He had had a stake in the project from the beginning. He was responsible for bringing the diary to the attention of the American public. In his review for *The New York Times*, he turned the book, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (published in 1952 by Doubleday & Company), into a best-seller. And he had the blessing of Otto Frank (Anne's father) for turning the book into a play.

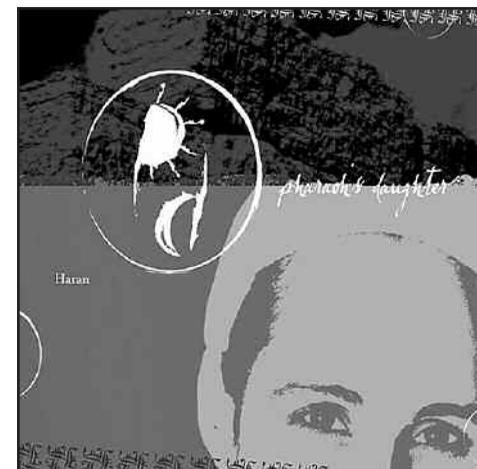
(see Backalenick, page NAT 15)



Mandy Patinkin (Mr. Silver, a.k.a. Meyer Levin) interacts with a puppet in *Compulsion*. Photo by Joan Marcus, 2010.

Ms. Schechter has a thin, even wispy, small voice and at times the ensemble covers her up. (If I wanted to really be nasty I could continue by stating that this is not necessarily a bad thing!)

The orchestration is the best feature on the CD, but it is atmospheric at best and not much contrast exists from one song to the other. It is this sameness, this quality of little stylistic difference that first put me off. I do not know if I was more irritated or annoyed as the CD progressed from one song to the other. I do know that if I had to listen to this CD continuously, I would be inclined to confess to almost anything (and by the fifth hearing, forget the word almost.)



To my ear, the melodic lines are lacking in what can be called melodic implications. Repetition is not the same thing as development. The words may be sung, yes, but there is no tune to speak of, except for a brief pattern of notes which is then repeated many times and often interspersed with instrumental phrases. The character or style of the music suggests Morocco or Algeria rather than Israel, the souk rather than either the concert hall or synagogue.

The use of a phrase from "Malaguena" by LeCuona in Number 5, used as a kind of ostinato in the bass guitar, is not particularly ethical since the phrase should be very familiar to most musicians. (While it may be a commonly used phrase, credit should still have been given.)

While I have to admit that I really did not care for the music composed by Lucas Foss, which I reviewed in a recent column, mostly because of the style of the music, I had every respect for the ability and integrity of the composer. He is a skilled composer and has a firm command of the elements of composition. In all honesty, I cannot say the same for Ms. Schechter.

It may very well be that many people do like this kind of music and are fans of Ms. Schechter. Well, it is a big world, full of many different kinds of people. Should you like her singing and the music she either wrote or composed (as on this CD) – well and good. That is your prerogative. As this is my column, I have to state that I do not.

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor and music columnist for the Post & Opinion. He may be reached at: [drmortongold@yahoo.com](mailto:drmortongold@yahoo.com). ★

## Travel & Arts

BY ROSE KLEINER

### South Florida winter arts scene – resplendent

Festivals, exhibits, concerts, theater and more are now as much a part of south Florida's winter scene as are its glorious sun, sea and sand. Whatever the state of the economy, an escape to south Florida's warmer climate, even for a weekend, can soothe the spirit as much as the body.

The Jewish Film Festival may be over, but so many other diversions will keep visitors involved and entertained. The following is just a small sample of the myriad art events in south Florida this winter.

Among the comedy acts booked at the Coral Springs Center for the Arts are Lily Tomlin who appears Feb. 26, and The Jewish Princesses of Comedy, on March 13.

The Parker Playhouse brings *The Kosher Cheerleader*, April 20–25. *Fannie & Sadie* will be at the Tamarac Theatre, March 6–28. *The Quarrel* will be shown at the Gablestage, in Coral Gables, April 17–May 16.

Among the plays coming to the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, West Palm Beach, is *My Broadway*, with Chita Rivera (April 13), and *The Life and Loves of Maria Callas* (April 17). *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* will be at the Delray Beach Playhouse March 26–April 11.

Neil Simon's *Come Blow Your Horn* runs until March 7, at Theatre #2 of the Stage Door Theatre, Coral Springs. Theatre #1, at the same venue, will show *Singin' in the Rain*, starting Feb. 12 through March 28.

The Broadway in Miami program, at the Arsht Center, Miami, includes Jackie Mason on Feb. 27; *Wicked*, March 3–21; and *Mama Mia*, March 30–April. The impressive Arsht Center has all sorts of free family, and music, programs, along with free tours of the Center.

Joshua Bell, one of the most celebrated violinists of the modern era, will appear at the Broward Center on Feb. 15. Kiri Te Kanawa performs March 9 at the same venue.

The New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy, under artistic director, Michael Tilson Thomas, at the Arsht Center, brings a concert titled, *Romantic Encounters*, on Feb. 20, with music by Barber, Rachmaninoff and Gershwin. On April 10 and 11 they will play Mahler's Fifth Symphony and music by Copeland.

*A Tribute to the Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, with Bob Lappin and the Palm Beach Pops, takes place at the Kravis Center March 2 and 3. Engelbert Humperdinck presents his *Legacy of Love* concert at the Broward Center, Feb. 26. *A Tribute to Frank Sinatra*, with Michael Feinstein and John Pizzarelli, at the Arsht Center, is scheduled for March 19.

The Florida Grand Opera is presenting Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, at the Arsht Center for the Arts in Miami, Feb. 20–28, and at Fort Lauderdale's Broward Center, March 4 and 6. Bizet's *Carmen* will be shown at the Arsht Center, April 24–May 2, and May 13 and 15 at the Broward Center.

*An Evening to Remember Tribute Concert* by the Florida Grand Opera, at the Arsht Center, Feb. 25, will honor the Opera's general director, Bob Heuer. More than 20 famous arias will be sung by over 30 renowned opera stars, with full orchestra and chorus.

Fine accommodation in south Florida is available all along the coast, and discounts may be offered at different times. Of course, in spring and summer the rates plummet, often making the most luxurious establishments affordable.

For an extra special experience, close to various arts venues, the Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach is perfect. This five-diamond establishment is minutes away from the famous Kravis Center, where outstanding music, theater and other arts events draw large audiences.

Built in the Italian Renaissance style, and inspired by the magnificent Italian villas of the 1400s, this legendary resort is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and offers regular tours of its stunning grounds.

The Breakers is also a venue for numerous major, high-profile charitable events, for the general and the Jewish community. The Palm Beach Synagogue is walking distance to the Breakers and is located in a beautiful, renovated, 1929 Italian Gothic design building.

Down to the south, in Miami Beach, a very lovely new all-suite oceanfront resort, the Grand Beach Hotel, has spacious rooms, with such promotions as a free night's stay, when reserving a room for three nights, until July 31, 2010. Cheerful, bright surroundings, and a most attractive lobby, give this Swiss (Montreux-Suisse Hotel Group) owned establishment a truly welcoming ambience.

For exhibits, the Jewish Museum of Florida is housed in two adjacent restored National Register synagogues, covering the history of Jewish life in Florida over the past 250 years.

"MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida, 1763–Present" is the ongoing exhibition. There are also films, Jewish timelines and guides, as well as a museum store, and Bessie's Bistro for snacks.

The museum's current exhibit, *48 Jews: What It Means to Be Jewish*, runs to April 4. Celebrating and questioning notions of what it means to be Jewish, the exhibit consists of a series of Warholesque portraits by Absalom Jac Lahav. Another exhibit, *Judy Chicago: Jewish Identity and the Multicultural Connection*, runs to the end of February.

For an outdoor exhibit, Miami's beautiful Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is showing, through May 30, works from Yayoi Kusama's exuberant new sculptural ensemble, *Flowers That Bloom at Midnight*. There is also a multipart floating work by



### The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

#### After a while, crocodile

By expelling the Jews from England in 1390, King Edward I retarded Hebrew scholarship for centuries. So when King James I ordered a new translation of the Bible in 1604, Hebrew dictionaries and grammar books were rudimentary. Occasionally, the translators sought divine inspiration to understand obscure Hebrew words. Naturally, some interesting errors resulted. Modern translations generally rely on the King James version, which has acquired prestige with time. As a result, the errors are often retained and polished, but not corrected.

One interesting error concerns a reptile known in Hebrew as a *tannin*. In Exodus Chapter 4, Moses and Aaron inform the Israelites that God will free them. In the next chapter, the pair tell Pharaoh to release the Israelites to serve God. Sarcastically, Pharaoh asks, "Who is Adonai that I should obey *him*? I don't know Adonai and I won't release the Israelites." He then worsens the people's burdens. Moses and Aaron visit Pharaoh a second time, and Moses tells Aaron to throw down his staff, which turns into a *tannin*. Unimpressed, Pharaoh's magicians do the same, but Aaron's *tannin* eats theirs.

The King James Version translates *tannin* as *serpent*, a large legless reptile.



the same artist that was specifically conceived for one of the large ponds at the Fairchild Garden.

The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse in Miami presents *Micro & Noguchi – Masters of Surrealist Sculpture; 100 Years of Photography, 1909–2009*; and *George Segal – Depression Bread Line*. All these three exhibits run through April 30. The beautiful Wolfsonian Museum is showing *Women's Work/Men's Work – Labor and Gender in America*, through April 25.

The Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, presents *Habsburg Treasures: Renaissance Tapestries from Vienna*, until April 11, and *Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker*, until May 9. The latter exhibit was organized by the Jewish Museum of New York.

There are many kinds of tours in the Miami area. The Design District has gallery walks the second Thursday of every month, 6–10 p.m., visiting the area's galleries and showrooms. To explore the Art Deco District in Miami Beach, there are guided walking tours, as well as self-guided audio tours. There are now easy riding bike tours of South Beach, as well as Art Deco Seaway tours.

Among the many festivals in the region

Yet the related Arabic word means *dragon*, a large four-legged reptile, and the related Egyptian word, *stnn*, means *raised up off the belly*, a characteristic of a legged creature. And elsewhere, *tannin* clearly means *crocodile*, a large four-legged reptile. Of course, the King James translators had probably never seen a crocodile, and their mistranslation is "close enough for government work." But the mistranslation is not trivial. It hides the significance of the entire event.

Specifically, each pharaoh bore the title "the Great Crocodile," among others. The title referred to the ruler's power of life and death over his subjects. It also referred to the god Sobek, patron of the pharaoh's army and symbol of his authority, who was depicted as a man with a crocodile's head. Egyptians and Israelites would instantly have understood the transformation of Aaron's staff into a crocodile as a direct challenge to Pharaoh's authority and as a demonstration that Sobek, his patron, was powerless. The eerie event discredited Sobek, in keeping with God's promise to execute judgments on all the gods of Egypt. As noted in *The Exodus Haggadah*, the remaining gods of the Egyptian pantheon are judged with each plague that follows. But mistranslating *tannin* as *serpent* renders the event a mere parlor trick.

*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 ocicat. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com. ★*

the Miami International Film Festival, at various venues, runs March 4–15, and the Palm Beach International Film Festival runs April 22–26.

Kosher restaurants continue to proliferate in south Florida, offering a large choice of menus and dishes. On Harding Ave., in Miami Beach's Bal Harbour, no less than four restaurants are within walking distance of each other, plus a kosher takeout place where whole meals can be purchased.

Harding Avenue's The Harbour Grill, Steak and Sushi, advertises itself as "the best kosher steak and sushi in South Florida," also offering "Gourmet Shabbat Catering."

On 41st Street, Miami Beach, there are also about half a dozen meat and dairy establishments, some less formal than others. Most prominent is the restaurant, Rare, which specializes in steaks, but has an extensive menu of other dishes as well. Their dinner accompaniments are most generous, "family size," and their creamed spinach is excellent. Other restaurants on the street or nearby are Kicker Tel Aviv, Pita Hut Grill, Lofty Latte Café, with their selection of crepes, both savory and sweet, as well as other fine pasta dishes.

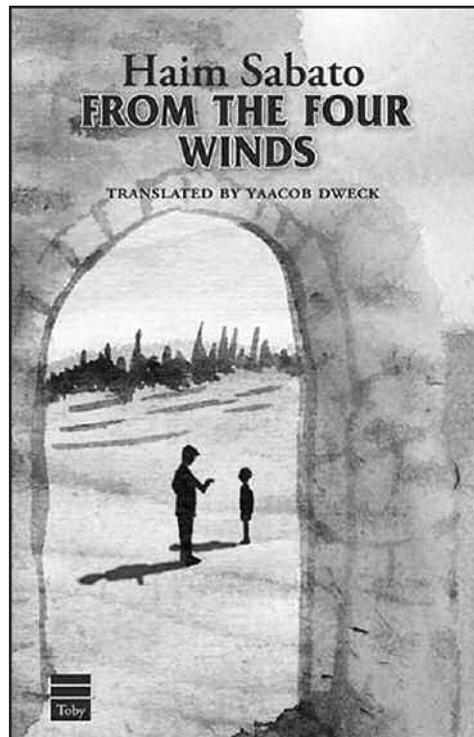
There are also various kosher restaurants in Ventura, Fort Lauderdale, and Boca Raton, in addition to the many take out places. ★

## Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

### Novel on new immigrant to Israel in 1959

*From the Four Winds.* By Haim Sabato. New Milford, CT: Toby Press. 2010. 160 Pages. \$22.95.



This is the fourth novel from the skilled pen of Haim Sabato, an Israeli writer who was born in Cairo and who came to Israel as a young boy in the 1950s. He writes in Hebrew, so his work has to be translated into English. His first book, *Aleppo Tales*, appeared in 1997; his second, *Adjusting Sights*, came out in 2000, and his third novel, *The Dawning of the Day*, was released in 2005. The English editions of all four books are available from Toby Press.

Just as is the case with this latest book, *Adjusting Sights* is based on Sabato's personal experience. The new book, *From the Four Winds*, draws on Sabato's early days as a new immigrant to Israel. *Adjusting Sights* is a fictionalized version of what happened to Sabato as an Israeli soldier during the Yom Kippur War of 1973. It was so effective and so appealing that it won two prestigious prizes in Israel.

*From the Four Winds* opens in 1959, a few months after the first-person narrator arrived in Israel. His name is Haim and he came from Egypt, just as is the case with Sabato. Haim and his family were sent to a rudimentary transit camp in which many of the new immigrants were Hungarian survivors of the Holocaust. The harsh living conditions were typical of the early immigrant absorption centers where newcomers to Israel were placed. Basic housing needs were met on a minimal level and particular attention was paid to schooling for the children.

Haim's interaction with others in the community resulted in his hearing

disturbing stories about the horrendous experiences of the Holocaust survivors. Upset by these distressing sagas, Haim eventually found some surcease when he came under the protection of Moshe Farkash, a neighborhood grocer who had come to Israel from Hungary some time ago. Haim needed this association since he had many questions but his father was too preoccupied with his work and his mother was too busy looking after Haim's younger siblings to answer them.

As the story proceeds, Farkash, who is married and has children, helps Haim with his adaptation to life in Israel and tells the youngster about many of his experiences in Hungary. Their relationship ripens when Farkash confides in Haim. With the passing of the years, there is a subtle shift as Farkash comes to depend on Haim, rather than the other way round as it was when they first met. This delicate rendition is replete with delicate and sensitive perceptiveness.

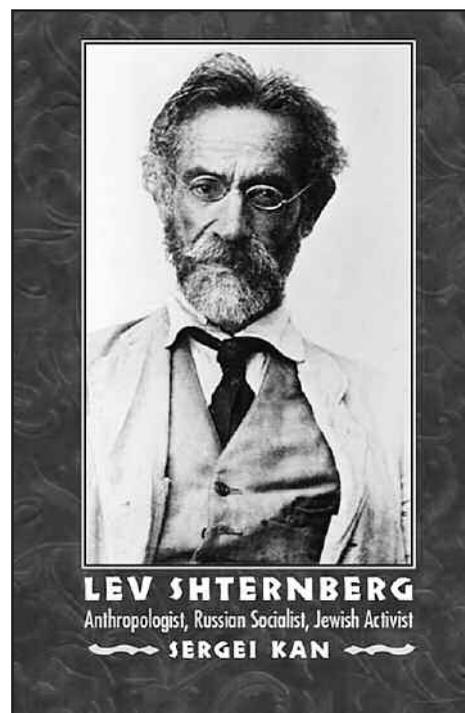
Sabato demonstrates a firm grasp of the problems associated with adapting to life in a new land and of the complexity of flesh and blood interactions. This easy-to-read story is deceptive in its seeming simplicity, which masks the author's sympathetic understanding of the intricacies and entanglements in the human condition. Sabato has succeeded once again in presenting a reality-based novel that deserves a wide readership.

### Leading Russian Jewish anthropologist

*Lev Shternberg.* By Sergei Kan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 574 Pages. \$65.

This scholarly biography of Lev Shternberg, a leading Russian anthropologist, will be of interest to his fellow social scientists as well as to followers of Russian history and especially to those concerned about the experiences of Jews in Russia during the late tsarist and early Communist years.

Shternberg, who lived from 1861 to 1927, was active in the Russian Jewish community and in the Socialist opposition to the tsar. As a Populist, Shternberg was involved in "clandestine revolutionary activities" that resulted in his arrest and imprisonment for three years from 1886 to 1889. He was then sentenced to ten years of exile and he was sent to Sakhalin Island, off the coast of Siberia, to serve out this punishment. Although he had majored in the natural sciences at St. Petersburg University, he was especially interested in the social sciences. Accordingly, during the years of his exile from 1889 to 1897 when his sentence was commuted, he devoted himself to studying the native peoples on Sakhalin Island. He learned their language and systematically acquired knowledge about their material, social, and spiritual culture. He wrote up the results of his work in relatively obscure journals, but they received sufficient attention so that after his release and three years in Zhitomir, his



Ukrainian home town, he was finally allowed to move to St. Petersburg, where he secured employment as a curator at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. While waiting for permission to settle in St. Petersburg, he married, and by the time he and his wife arrived in St. Petersburg, she gave birth to their son.

Shternberg's productive use of his exile years for ethnological research anticipated what happened in 1914 to Bronislaw Malinowski who became a leading British anthropologist. Born in Poland and, therefore an enemy alien, he was stranded in the South Pacific where he had gone to do field work when World War I began. The authorities gave him two choices: internment in Australia or exile to the Trobriand Islands for the duration of the war. He chose exile and then devoted himself to studying the native people whom he called the "Argonauts of the Western Pacific." His book, under that title, became an anthropological classic. Thus, both Shternberg and Malinowski used their exile years to establish themselves as leading anthropologists. Malinowski established the London School of Economics as a key center for anthropological study while Shternberg, who trained many Russian anthropologists, struggled to survive in Russia both before and after the Communist revolution.

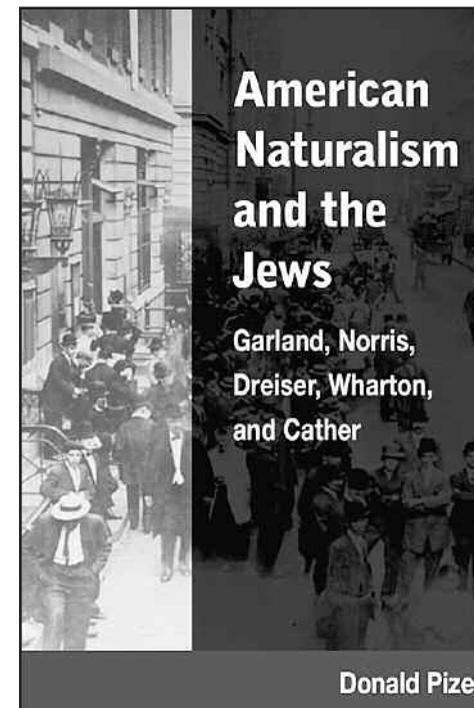
Kan, a professor of anthropology at Dartmouth, has produced a thorough study of Shternberg's life and influence. He recounts in considerable detail, sometimes tediously, what happened to Shternberg following the 1917 revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union. Of particular interest is Shternberg's determination to develop Jewish ethnology with "an academically based ethnographic study of Jews and Judaism." He had only limited success because of his resistance to the Communist government, especially to its "politicization of the curriculum and the periodic student purges."

Although this book with its 73 pages

of notes and bibliography will appeal primarily to academicians, the patient general reader will find much of interest in this thorough account of Shternberg's important contribution to Soviet anthropology, his friendship with Franz Boas, the great American anthropologist, and his deep concern, against considerable odds, with the intellectual life of the Russian Jewish community.

### Anti-Semitism of five American naturalist novelists

*American Naturalism and the Jews.* By Donald Pizer. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008. 112 Pages. \$30.



Author Donald Pizer is a distinguished English professor, retired from Tulane University. He is an expert on Theodore Dreiser and American literary naturalism. In this book, he incisively examines the anti-Semitism of five American naturalist novelists: Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, Edith Wharton, and Willa Cather. He explores the contradiction between the progressive attitudes espoused by these writers and their blatant prejudice against Jews. Except for Garland who did not express his anti-Semitism in his novels but rather in his diaries and autobiographies, the other four authors depicted Jewish characters unfavorably in their work.

Pizer reviews each of the authors and their books, fully demonstrating the breadth and depth of his scholarship. He asserts that they were influenced in their bigotry by the populist movement among Western farmers, which tried to limit the power of trusts and corporations but that also had a degree of nativism and anti-Semitism. Fortunately, their prejudice was limited in its impact, but it reflected the degree to which anti-Semitism existed

(see Teicher, page NAT 15)



## Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### Fill up the cookie jar

A few weeks ago, I went to the board meeting of my Jerusalem English-speaking Nachama chapter of Hadassah, and the hostess had some cookies that were fantastic. I asked for the recipe and altered it to make it parve and with sugar substitute, but they just didn't seem right so I emailed and asked her. The answer came back, Oy vey! She had left out the flour. Here it is with the flour!

#### Elisheva's Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies

- 1 cup softened butter or margarine
- 1 1/4 cups brown sugar
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 Tbsp. milk (or nondairy creamer or soy milk)
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 3/4 cups flour
- 2 cups uncooked oatmeal
- 1 package chocolate chips
- 1 cup coarsely chopped nuts (optional)

Heat oven 375°F. Beat margarine or butter with sugars until creamy. Add eggs, milk or creamer and vanilla and beat well. Add flour and baking soda. Stir in oatmeal, chocolate chips and nuts and mix well. Drop by tablespoons onto ungreased cookie sheet or baking paper. Bake 9–10 minutes for chewy cookies or 12–13 minutes for crisp cookies.

The following recipe in my files is from a 1941 *Woman's Day* magazine with the butter or margarine used today.

#### Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

- 1 3/4 cups uncooked oats
- 1 1/3 cups flour
- 2/3 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/4 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup milk

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease cookie sheets. Mix oats, flour, raisins, walnuts, baking soda, cloves and allspice. Beat butter or margarine and sugar in a bowl until light and fluffy. Beat in egg. Stir in oatmeal mixture alternately with milk. Drop by tablespoon on cookie sheets. Bake 15 minutes.



## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### Sherlock Holmes

Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* is as ribald and raucous as Holmes and Watson have ever been depicted. Even novelist Sir Arthur Conan Doyle would have required a double-take to recognize them. Robert Downey, Jr., and Jude Law bring vitality and intelligence to these respective, time-honored roles. Holmes is presented as an addictive personality, not only to drugs and alcohol, but to danger.

The cinematography is powerful and memorable. One has a sense of being in a vivid late 19th-century stereopticon, witnessing characters and events and yet having them dangle from the screen. The dark grey colors lend a beautiful effect of historical witness and of quiet foreboding to the plot.

The film is about terrorism, but not religious terrorism. The terrorists here are a Masonic-like organization run amuck. A fanatical British cultist, son of Lord Blackwood, is hijacking the Temple of the Four Orders, whose secret society has, according to one of its members, "steered the world toward good for ages." Yet we learn that the mad Blackwood was the seed of one of the Temple folk's sordid rituals. Despite the cult's dedication to mastering the magic of every culture, Blackwood's mother died in childbirth.

Yet Blackwood is convinced that magic, or at least getting the masses to believe that he has magical powers, will bring redemption to British society in the form of undisputed power. He hopes to "take back the Colony" – that is, the United States of America, now vulnerable after



#### Oatmeal Lace Cookies

- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 1/2 cups brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 1/4 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup melted butter or margarine

Preheat oven to 325°F. Grease a cookie sheet. Put oatmeal in food processor and blend until fine like flour. Add brown sugar, egg, vanilla and melted butter and mix thoroughly until batter is dark brown. Spoon on greased cookie sheet 2 inches apart. Bake in preheated 325° oven 8–12 minutes. Remove cookies and roll around a handle or spoon while warm. Optional: melt chocolate chips and dip ends of cookies in melted chocolate.

*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. ✨*

the ravages of the Civil War. Blackwood declares: "Magic will lead the way.... We will remake the world." Though captured and executed for a human sacrifice ritual, he manages to pull off a resurrection, leaving his tomb within three days, frightening British society with the prospect that he is a nefarious counter-Christ on the prowl.

As if all this were not bad enough, Blackwood is a proto-Nazi. His plan is to asphyxiate Parliament with poison gas piped into the sacred chambers of British government, so that any opposition to his plans will perish. As we are shown shrines of the cult that produced this bad seed and that he would further subvert to his own designs, we come across quotations from the Book of Revelations in Christian scriptures, and half-hearted references to the cherubim and to the chariot in Ezekiel's vision in the Hebrew Bible. There are even Hebrew words and letters bandied about and associated with the cult's dark arts. At one point we see the word, *zedek*, or "righteousness."

Within days after the film appeared, reviewers and bloggers, both Jewish and Christian, protested what they regarded as anti-Semitism in the association of Hebrew words with a cult intent on taking over the world. The concern was that the Hebrew letters would lead viewers to associate this dark cult of world domination with Jews, in the perverse tradition of the false accusations in the vicious anti-Jewish tract, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Several writers speculated that Guy Ritchie was using the film to attack Kabbalah because Madonna's involvement in the Kabbalah Centre, an unabashedly New Age approach to Jewish mysticism, may have been a factor leading to his divorce and estrangement from her.

I certainly would not discourage Jews and non-Jews alike from pointing to the dangers of films that relate Hebrew words and letters to Jews and to Jewish mysticism. Through the years, I have had to do my share of that in this very column. But are Ritchie's critics being fair?

According to BANG Media International, Ritchie asserted that the Hebrew calligraphy in the film has its origins in Albert Pike's 1871 book, *Morals and Dogma*, which draws parallels between Kabbalah and Freemasonry. In other words, he used the Hebrew as a period piece. While it is true that the Freemasons and similar groups, all precursors of New Age thought, drew upon earlier mystical and magical traditions in a syncretistic and rather patronizing way, Ritchie must have read somewhere that this sometimes led to canards about Jews and Masons joining forces against orthodox Christian faith. Ritchie certainly takes a stand against New Age, magic and occultist pretensions in this film, and deserves credit for that. The question is where he regards "the Jews" in all of this. That question may have been posed here with the Hebrew letters, but no response is given.

The reaction to *Sherlock Holmes* does pose a couple of significant challenges to the Jewish community. Supposing that Ritchie's film is an attack on Kabbalah, whether subtle or subliminal, unconscious or conscious, what approach to Kabbalah is he attacking? Is there something in the way that Kabbalah was taught to him that would have him regard it, in any way, as an exercise in magic and the occult? Traditional Jews know the Kabbalah as a spiritual encouragement to perform the *mitzvot* or commandments because they have cosmic significance in the process of redemption. Would Ritchie regard this as magic no matter how it was explained? Or is he responding to a latter-day approach to Kabbalah that is obsessed with what Ritchie regards as magic?

In addition to how Kabbalah is presented is the challenge of how American Jews literally respond to Hebrew letters. A blogger saw the same letters that appear on his *zedakah* (charity) box, and concluded that somehow a Jewish charity box was made a symbol of a Freemason cult. Another blogger pointed out that it was not the word *zedakah*, but the word *zedek*, righteousness. (In Hebrew, charity is not simply a matter of generosity or compassion, though these are very important, but of righteous or just sharing. The word *zedakah* does not only refer to the just act of giving, but to doing justice in general.) Clearly, in order to defend the faith, Jews must know Hebrew.

It would be interesting to know how Ritchie chose his calligraphy; it may simply reflect some of the spiritualist books at the time that mixed Kabbalah and other forms of mysticism.

None of the bloggers seemed to pick up on a Jewish connection that may be (albeit slightly) more explicit and more significant than the Hebrew letters. After all, Kabbalah itself is not discussed in this film, but the third most important character is one Irene Adler. Some have speculated that the original character was intended to be a Jewish woman. But we have only the Jewish-sounding name. Mainly, Adler is presented as a diamond thief and as an all-around dabbler in deception, defrauding, and double-dealing.

Dr. Watson reminds Holmes that Adler is the only one who has ever outsmarted him, and more than once. Watson asks: "Why is the only woman you were ever interested in a world-class criminal?" Holmes constantly wants to know: "Who are you working for?" Actually, the proper question is: "For whom are you working?" Whether or not Ritchie is guilty of anti-Semitism, he is certainly guilty of mangling Holmes's use of the King's English.

Yet the true intents in this film do rest in the way that question will be resolved, for in the end, we are told that Irene Adler works for Holmes's arch enemy and foil, Moriarty. We learn this in the last frame, and are thereby informed that a sequel is

(see Gertel, page NAT 15)

**ROBERTS***(continued from page NAT 5)*

husband puts down his foot”but the Talmud and a couple thousand rabbis disagree.

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**BEN ASHER***(continued from page NAT 6)*

wild animals, you might try to Google “conservation organizations” to learn more about them and decide if you want to support one of them.

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

change forever. After all, the world is built by love as the Scriptures tell us. And all the “ribbing” in the world won’t change that.

Is that what a groom thinks on “his day” too? If not, perhaps he should.

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**MEDAD***(continued from page NAT 16)*

Neve Yaakov fled, fearing an attack. The area remained empty of Jews and was occupied by the Jordanians until the conclusion of the Six Day War in 1967. I remember being shown the early construction to its present buildings when we spent Shabbatot in Beit HaShiva, Beit Chanina, Jerusalem, in 1970–71.

Here are some recent pictures of Neve Yaakov and Pisgat Zeev, which was built to provide physical continuity to the rest of Jerusalem.

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**KARSH***(continued from page NAT 10)*

The Reconstructionist Movement, which was described during the period of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, and later, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, is devoid today of any set of structures that would define it, other than by each congregation’s right to define itself. The Conservative Movement is in a struggle to help its membership redefine itself. Its membership are often more the children of Conservative Jews, and more than Conservative Jews; and the Reform Movement has a continuum of ever-extending size, and oftentimes, the description is more fitting of the leadership than the following.

Centrist Orthodoxy, right wing Orthodoxy, ultra-Orthodoxy have in the main a stronger core, but only if you look at their life-walk and not judge them by their look and succumb to talking about them as a group.

Recently I spent a week in Monsey, N.Y., where we welcomed a new great-grandson, Avishai Wiener into the family. I discovered that there are over 100 Orthodox shuls in Monsey. During the week, I davened in a number of them, and while the davening was mostly consistent, they would not easily fit into a descriptive list.

It was surreal.

And finally, there is the phenomenon of Lady Gaga, a performance artist, whose work appears on the tops of many lists, and is mostly defined by her outrageousness. She is a performance artist, and the world seems ready now to incorporate “outrageous” as an art form. The artists are of every faith: Lady Gaga is Catholic, Sasha Baron Cohen in Jewish, as is Amy Winehouse.

What they have in common is their willingness to attack the normative definition of artistry and open it to whatever people will pay to see.

It is surreal.

So there you have it. Three disparate thoughts that find a common thread, they all challenge any simple explanation of the complex world in which we live. They are all real. They all depend on the individual’s ability to maintain his own center in a rapidly changing world.

Nature continues to operate; we continue to live trying to right the world so that we can all maintain our balance in our functional-dysfunctional existence.

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**BACKALENICK***(continued from page NAT 11)*

As forces rallied against Levin, having his Anne Frank play staged became a “compulsion” for him – and not only for personal professional reasons. He believed it was of paramount importance to keep the Holocaust story and its moral message alive. It became a monumental struggle.

Given such material, why doesn’t *Compulsion* work on stage? The play, alas, lacks a dramatic arc. It starts on a high note of hysteria, with Mandy Patinkin, as Mr. Silver (a stand-in for Levin) pulling out all the stops. From the first act on, he is an ill-used writer fighting, screaming, for his rights. Where can this play go? Certainly there is no sense of growing intensity. The long, complicated tale, which spans Levin’s 30-year battle, merely offers a series of episodes.

A further difficulty is the fact that Meyer Levin once wrote a play about the Leopold-Loew murders, which he called *Compulsion*. This is confusing for any theatergoer who has seen the earlier *Compulsion*.

Yet there are compensations. Oskar Eustis (who directs the piece and is the Public Theater’s artistic director) offers some beautiful moments, interweaving puppets with live performers (thanks to puppet-designer Matt Acheson and skillful puppeteers (Emily DeCola, Liam Hurley, and Eric Wright)). This is an appropriate bow to Levin’s one-time involvement with a puppet theater in Chicago. And, more importantly, it creates a play-within-a-play – separating the Anne Frank scenes from Levin’s daily reality. And designer Eugene Lee’s sets work well for both kinds of scenes.

Live performers are generally competent, with Patinkin a most vulnerable, driven Meyer Levin. Hannah Cabell as his editor at Doubleday creates a character loaded with charm, but driven by ambition. And Stephen Barker Turner, who plays all other roles, is brilliant as Levin’s Israeli theater director. His style, accent, movements are all right on target.

Yet *Compulsion* proves to be a disappointment. In attempting to cover history, biography, plot, character development, and moral message, has writer Groff simply taken on too much?

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**GERTEL***(continued from page NAT 14)*

immanent. Will Ritchie be kinder both to Kabbalah and to women with Jewish-sounding names in the promised sequel? His attitude toward Jews and Jewish mysticism may well be revealed there.

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**TEICHER***(continued from page NAT 13)*

in late 19th- and early 20th-century America.

The issue that Pizer discusses so ably raises the vexing question of how Jews should deal with anti-Semitic writers and artists whose work we admire. Should we shun Shakespeare because of Shylock? Should we detest Dickens because of Fagin? The problem becomes more difficult in the case of music. Should Jews listen to Wagner even though his anti-Semitism is a matter of record? This question evoked great emotion in Israel where his work is generally banned.

Should we reject art because the artist is or was obnoxious? Should the message be separated from the messenger? How should we regard the work of the painter and sculptor, Edgar Degas? His anti-Semitism became acute during the infamous Dreyfus affair. However, he produced beautiful pictures and sculptures of ballet dancers that contained no reflection of his biases. Should we turn away from the work of this great artist?

What about Shakespeare? Shylock, the character whose depiction caused condemnation of Shakespeare as an anti-Semite, was also shown by the playwright to have nobility and dignity. Some would claim that Shylock’s famous speech, “Hath not a Jew...” shows Shakespeare’s ambivalence about Jews since he redeems Shylock by ascribing to him a sympathetic humanity. Shakespeare also makes Jessica, Shylock’s daughter, a heroine of the play, along with Portia.

Some more recent writers mellowed with age. F. Scott Fitzgerald was originally hostile toward Jews but later asserted that he could not share the racism of the Nazis. In *The Last Tycoon*, he depicts the Jew, Monroe Stahr, as a congenial character. Even T.S. Eliot escaped from his distorted views as he grew older. In 1953, he condemned Russian anti-Semitism, comparing it to the anti-Semitism of Hitler’s Germany. Late in life, he called anti-Semitism a “heresy.” Thomas Wolfe, an anti-Semite in his early years, matured beyond his youthful, home-born prejudices.

It may be argued that there is a backlash against anti-Semitism as evidenced by the award of the Nobel Prize for literature to Shmuel Agnon, Saul Bellow, and Isaac Bashevis Singer. The best-selling popularity of many American Jewish authors today supports the notion that there is decreasing anti-Semitism in American literature today.

Donald Pizer did not confront the broader question of whether the creative product should be separated from the creator. However, he has made an important contribution to a difficult debate.

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## Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

### My occasional walking partner

No, I'm not the one holding the leash.



I sometimes walk with a neighbor who has this white dog. When the dog is with us, the dog decides the pace, which is rather irregular, considering that dogs don't "walk" to "walk." When I'm totally on my own, I walk as quickly as I can and sometimes do the double circuit without stopping or slowing down.

When I'm just with a friend, we talk and try to adjust our very different paces to match. But the dog has a very different agenda.

Yesterday I didn't get out at all. It was raining on and off during the earlier part of the day, and by the time my father was up, showered, dressed and had eaten, I was afraid to take him out. And then my husband got home too late for walking, and it was already pouring rain. If I had the space, I'd get a treadmill or some other exercise machine. But I wonder if I'd use it, because for me exercise has to be social or at least outdoors. I can never get through my exercise DVDs alone.

### Spices

No doubt that it's possible to buy every imaginable spice in Israel.



This spice store is in Jerusalem's Machaneh Yehuda Market, aka "The Shuk." I don't keep all that many spices in my closet/pantry. Fresh spices don't stay fresh all that long. They lose their potency and get buggy, too.

Our menu doesn't include the sort of foreign exotic foods demanding anything fancy. Recently I began sprinkling *curcum* (turmeric) on my morning omelet,

because it's supposed to be medicinal. A doctor even told me that it's good to put on cuts to make them heal more quickly.

A Yemenite neighbor told us that their traditional spice is a combination of curcum, paprika and black pepper. That's pretty easy. Beware, it can cause a serious arthritis flare-up for those sensitive to nightshades.

Not long ago I bought pieces of real ginger, which I've added to all sorts of things. It's powerful. My latest Apple Compote was cooked with ginger root, cinnamon stick, freshly squeezed orange juice and water. No sugar, of course! That was easy and delicious and perfect if you're trying to keep your weight down.

### To be young again



Doesn't the picture speak for itself? On a warm winter's day...

### Grey days, winter in Israel

Thank G-d, we have been having a real winter. We need every year to be this wet or wetter. These aren't rain pictures, just grey ones.



The first was taken in Shiloh, one of those morning Brigadoon shots. Those large homes, mansions, castles you see in the distance are Turmus Aiya, the Arab town in the Valley of Shiloh. We, Jews, have much more modest homes in Shiloh.

### Neve Yaakov, not just a Jerusalem neighborhood



Today, Neve Yaakov is a Jerusalem neighborhood, but its history predates the State of Israel, as the land was purchased by Jews in 1924.

Before it was a neighborhood on the northeastern tip of modern Jerusalem, Neve Yaakov was a Jewish settlement. The land was purchased by Jews from the Arabs of Beit Haninah in 1924. At the time it was one of only two settlements north of the Old City, where most of the Jewish population lived. An economic backwater, the settlement didn't have electricity until 1939.

The impetus for the founding of Neve Yaakov was religious. Its original settlers were followers of Rabbi Yitzchak Yaacov



Reines. These followers consisted of about 150 families.

When the Jordanians marched on Jerusalem from the north, the residents of

(see Medad, page NAT 15)

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### Excerpts:

*"When Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe at the Nile, slave girls walking along the riverbank, she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to get it. She opened it and saw him – the child – a crying boy, and had compassion for him. 'This is one of the Hebrews' children,' she said."*

### Plague of Frogs - Judgment against Heqet.

*The Egyptians depicted their fertility goddess Heqet as a woman with the head of a frog. By controlling the fertility of her creatures, frogs, Moses discredited Heqet in the eyes of the Egyptians.*

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