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Shana Tova Umetukah

Art: *Syncophony #2* by John Domont



Editorial

When Ari Kaufman first submitted his article on Eva Kor (see page NAT 9) he wrote, "In Judaism, a person cannot obtain forgiveness from G-d for wrongs done to other people, only for sins committed against G-d. For sins against others, Jewish law and tradition require offenders to express remorse and repent, and directly ask the victim for forgiveness."

I responded and told him that is not accurate. I wrote back, "In Judaism G-d will forgive a person who has sinned against another person if the offender does what you said: show remorse, repent, ask for forgiveness, and when faced with the same offense not repeat it. But after the third time of asking for forgiveness from the person one offended, if he or she still refuses to forgive, God will forgive the offender."

I knew that because in my editorial from this time last year, I had quoted Rabbi David Wolfe in *Finding a Way to Forgive*. This booklet is part of a series called Life Lights (brief essays on wholeness and healing), published by Jewish Lights and edited by Rabbi Nancy Flam.

Rabbi Wolpe wrote, "We forgive, in part, because we need forgiveness. Every one of us has bruised another, betrayed and ill-treated even those whom we love. Can any marriage or any friendship endure without constant forgiveness? What we hope for in the world we must create. We cannot have what we will not give."

Wolpe suggests developing strategies and practices of forgiveness. "Lifting ourselves out of the here-and-now can give us a truer perspective on our predicament. Will this insult matter in 30 years, or even in 30 days? If you could fly and take an eagle's view of the crisis, would it still matter so much? In short, is what happened as grievous as it seems?"

"Judaism teaches those who have done wrong to seek forgiveness. It mandates that the offenders must sincerely ask pardon and seek to correct the wrongs they have done. But it also teaches that after a certain point – three sincere apologies, an attempt at restitution, and a clear indication that the person has changed – it becomes the obligation of the wronged party to forgive."

Rabbi Wolpe advises us to take heart, take time, and begin the journey. "Forgiveness takes time. Forgiving is a process we go through to attain the state of forgiveness. There will be anger and backsliding. But like all true journeys, we cannot now exactly imagine where we will end up once we have taken the journey. To forgive another is to open up a new pathway in your spirit."

This reminded me of a column I wrote in July of 2007. I had just finished buying

fresh produce at the Broad Ripple Farmer's Market when I ran into a friend. He told me about a trip he took to India for two weeks for a yoga retreat and a class that he had taken on the subject of Ayurveda and healthy eating. Ayurveda is a natural healing system originating in India several thousand years ago. I am far from an expert on it, but to briefly describe one aspect, Ayurveda focuses on the use of herbs, massage, diet, exercise, and meditation among other methods to help maintain or restore the body back to a proper balance and health.

My friend commented that at the end of the class a student raised her hand and reminded everyone that the teacher had taught the class all kinds of recommendations for a healthy diet. She then asked the teacher, "If there were only one piece of advice that you could share with the class that would be the most helpful, what would it be?"

(This reminded me of the story where a man asked Hillel if he could teach him all of the Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel responded, "Do not do unto others what you would not want done to yourself. The rest is commentary, now go and study.")

I started thinking about all of the different dietary recommendations that I had learned from Ayurveda. I remembered that the diet is made up mostly of fruits and vegetables, some dairy products, very few animal products and several dishes like brown rice and dahl, which is made from yellow split peas and curry spices. I thought about little remedies for conditions such as insomnia – drink a warm cup of milk with a dash of nutmeg; headache – rub the temples with sesame oil.

Then I thought about how our society flip-flops about products such as coffee. One day it is considered a very healthy drink. The next day a scientific study proves it causes some health problems and the following day that study is contradicted and it is again considered healthy. After that I was really curious to hear what all encompassing suggestion stood the test of time.

"What was the one piece of advice the teacher gave that would help one maintain or bring about a state of good physical health?" I asked my friend.

His response: "Forgive everyone unconditionally."

I have one addition to that. It's been a rough year with natural disasters, an oil spill, the recession, the Ponzi scheme committed by Bernie Madoff, to mention a few major challenges. Don't be too hard on yourself. A Jewish teaching says that one who has sinned and repented is valued higher than one who has never sinned. Don't forget to forgive yourself.

The staff and all those involved in producing this newspaper wish you, our dear readers a very happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful 5771.

Jennie Cohen, September 8, 2010. ✨

About the Cover Syncophony

John Domont speaking about his art, life, and *Syncophony*:

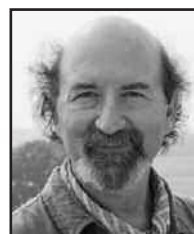
Syncophony is a series of paintings inspired by the nature of nature.

Life is a manifestation of essence into matter and consciousness. Ablution is cleansing by water.

Cacophony is a plethora of sounds.

Snyncophony is a made-up word to express the harmony and intelligence of the apparent chaos and randomness of life.

To breathe and stand naked with our selves and the universal soul is the rhythm and task of this time of year.



John Domont

About the artist: In his late 20s, Domont worked exclusively for conservation groups photographing threatened habitats and endangered species around the world. He photographed so many different mammals in water habitats that water became a primary focus for his artistic endeavors.

In the process of abstracting the qualities of water, as transformed into its various aspects of light, color, movement, and energy, he began to experience a relationship with painting. By 1983, painting had become the primary focus of his work.

Domont's paintings are an expression of inspirations from nature and his relationship to the landscape. He strives to create harmony among the three forms of light available to an artist: surface light, the light of nature, and the light of spirit. His art is about presence and place.

Domont works in the Heartland, his home, where roads, pastures, fields, and forests are the essence of the landscape of the American Midwest. This countryside

is both simple and nourishing. It is in the basics of the landscape that one can see and feel the beauty of the essential – the elements of land and sky, of nature and humanity coming together. Rather than portraying the realism of the country scene, Domont is in pursuit of the experimental expression. When one stands alone in a field with grain and sky, wind and color as companions, an experience of unity can occur.

Domont is interested in expressing the harmony of the seen and unseen. This experience of unity, which brings with it a sense of awe, supports and guides his work. His paintings are an attempt to honor the beauty and magic of living in our time and place.

Domont spends his days painting, photographing and writing poetry. During the past two decades, his paintings have garnered wide recognition from collectors, museums, and other institutions. His large-scale works with saturated colors have been acquired by museums and hospitals.

In 2001, he received the prestigious Creative Renewal Fellowship, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., and awarded by the Arts Council of Indianapolis. He used the funds to travel to China and Nepal, where he spent two and a half months writing, drawing, painting, and photographing. From November 2003 through January 2004, the Swope Museum of Art in Terre Haute featured an exhibit of his work, a mid-career retrospective.

In 2008 he was awarded American Artist Abroad by the United States government. He acted as an artist ambassador to the nation of Thailand. In 2009 he has received a second Creative Renewal Fellowship, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., and awarded by the Arts Council of Indianapolis.

The Domont Studio Gallery is located at 545 S. East St. in Indianapolis, but you can check out his work on his Web site: www.domontgallery.com or email him: john@domontgallery.com. ✨

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Shabbat Shalom

By Rabbi Jon Adland

Sept. 3, 2010, Nitzavim-Vayeilech
(Deuteronomy 29:9–31:30), 24 Elul 5770

The Jewish New Year 5771 begins Wednesday evening. Jews around the world will gather in homes for holiday dinners and in synagogues on Thursday morning to hear the sound of the shofar and begin this period of introspection and self-realization. The Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur urge Jews in the community to join together in celebration of the New Year by reaching out to ask for forgiveness, and to look forward, in anticipation, to the year to come. This year my Holy Day community will be in Bloomington, Ind., at the Indiana University Hillel. I've volunteered to help lead the Erev Rosh Hashanah, Rosh Hashanah morning, and Yom Kippur morning services. Rabbi Klotz will lead Kol Nidre. I look forward to seeing my daughter and other students at these services.

As I mentioned, one aspect of these Holy Days, these ten Days of Atonement, is to reflect on the year that is about to end. Many Jews already started doing this through daily prayers and meditations connected to the month of Elul. Others will begin the process of atonement at a Selichot service on Saturday night. Regardless of how one goes about preparing for the Holy Days, preparation is a key.

Take a look back over the past year. Think about the people you encountered, the things you said and the things you did. Though your thoughts might turn to what others did to you, you can't control those words or actions. If they did something wrong to you, then they will need to seek forgiveness from you.

We can only be responsible for what we said or did to others and if it was wrong then seek to make things right or better by asking to be forgiven. We are taught by our ancestors that we must forgive those who seek forgiveness from us. It doesn't mean we have to become best friends with that person, but if someone says, "Please forgive me," then we must say, "Okay."

At the same time that we look back and review the year behind us, we can also take time to look forward. Looking back gives us an opportunity to say, "What if..." We can't change what was, what was said, or what we did. We can anticipate the next year and what we can do to make the world a better place, improve our relationships, and strengthen our own souls. As Hillel said, "*Say not: When I have time I will study because you may never have the time.*" The same should go for all of our hopes and dreams. Don't say to yourself, "When I have the time," but make time for tomorrow in your life today. What is it you've wanted to do? What have you wanted to work on? The Holy Days are a great time to ask this question, but when the sun sets on Yom Kippur and you hear the final sound of the Shofar, don't let these thoughts slip away. Make a "to do" list and check it off. It may be finding an old friend or reading a book you've wanted to read or going to some location to see a sunrise or studying or learning something that seems to live in your soul. We can't control time, but we can use it to the best of our ability.

I hope and pray that these holy days will be meaningful to you. Use them to look back and forward. Use these special days to contemplate how you can be better tomorrow than you were yesterday. Think and act on making this world a better place. In services, don't just go through the motions, but take time to listen to the words speaking to you from



An Observant Eye

By Rabbi Avi Shafran

Great Expectations

Thoughts of consequence can sometimes arise from the most mundane experiences, even a headache.

Opening the medicine cabinet one day, I was struck by a sticker on a prescription container.

"Not for use by pregnant women," it read.

"And why not?" part of my aching head wondered.

Because, another part answered, a fetus is so much more sensitive to the effects of chemicals than a more developed person. Partly, of course, because of its very tininess, but more



the outside and your soul speaking to you on the inside. Rise up on your toes as the shofar is sounded and notes are carried to God with our prayers. May God hear these prayers.

On behalf of Sandy, Joshua, and Rachel, let me wish all of you a happy and healthy new year. Who knows what tomorrow will bring, but I am going to do my best to make it a great year.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for the opportunity Judaism gives us at this season to make ourselves right with those about us and the encouragement to look deeper into ourselves. Light the other for this last Shabbat of 5770 and may we all look to an even better 5771.

Rabbi Adland has been leading Reform congregations for more than 25 years in Lexington, Ky., and Indianapolis, Ind. ★

importantly because it is an explosively developing thing. While a single cell is growing to a many-billions-of-unbelievably-variegated-cells organism in a matter of mere months it is easily and greatly affected by even subtle stimuli.

Which thought led, slowly but inexorably, to others, about the creation of the world – the subject, soon, of the weekly Torah portion – and about the beginning of a new Jewish year.

"The Butterfly Effect" is the whimsical name science writers give to the concept of "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" – the idea that beginnings are unusually important. A diversion of a single degree of arc where the arrow leaves the bow – or an error of a single digit at the beginning of a long calculation – can yield a difference of miles, or millions, in the end. For all we know, the flapping of a butterfly's wings halfway around the world yesterday might have set into motion a hurricane in the Atlantic today.

The most striking butterfly effects take place during formative stages, when much is transpiring with particular rapidity. Thus, the label on the medication; the gestation of a fetus, that single cell's incredible journey toward personhood, is strikingly responsive to so much of what its mother does, eats and drinks. The developing child is exquisitely sensitive to even the most otherwise innocent chemicals because beginnings are formative, hence crucial, times.

Leaving the realm of the microcosm, our world itself also had a gestation period, six days' worth. Interestingly, just as the initial developmental stage of a child takes place beyond our observation, so did that of the world itself. The event and processes of those days are entirely hidden from us, the Torah supplying only the most inscrutable generalities about what

(see Shafran, page NAT 15)

Chassidic Rabbi

By Rabbi Benzion Cohen

A friend of mine, Shalom Mordechai Rubashkin, was recently sentenced to 27 years in prison. He is 51 years old, a father of ten and a very fine person. He has been a big help to a lot of people. You can find more information about him on the Internet.

What can we do to help him? A lot. Every *mitzvah* that we do will help him and all of the world.

The Baal Shem Tov taught us that everything that happens in the world is part of the Divine plan, and we can learn from it. What can we learn from this? I think that Hashem is telling us to wake up! Do more *mitzvos*! Bring *Moshiach* now, today! Don't let Shalom sit in jail for one more minute!

Moshiach will gather all of the people of Israel to the land of Israel. No one will

be left behind. The Lubavitcher Rebbe told us that the time of our redemption is here. The Torah has assured us that at the end of our exile, eventually the people of Israel will return to Hashem, and immediately they will be redeemed. What are we waiting for? Let's do it now.

Do you believe in Hashem? If not, look for Him. Hashem is everywhere, but He has hidden Himself. If you look for Him, you will find Him. To find Hashem is the first step in returning to Hashem. The next step is to learn His Torah and fulfill His commandments. The Torah is the infinite wisdom of Hashem, and the *mitzvos* are Hashem's will. When we learn Torah, we are learning Hashem's wisdom. When we do *mitzvos*, we are carrying out Hashem's will. By learning Torah and fulfilling *mitzvos*, we can come closer and closer to Hashem.

This is a wonderful feeling – the most wonderful feeling that we can ever experience. Hashem is our Father, our

Creator. He is infinite, and His love for us, His children, is infinite. To experience Hashem and His love for us transcends all worldly pleasures.

What is exile? It is being far from home, far from our Heavenly Father. Each step that we advance in fulfilling the Torah and *mitzvos* is taking us out of exile and closer to Hashem. Do this for your own sake, for the sake of my friend, and for the sake of all of us. To a certain extent all of us are in prison. Until *Moshiach* comes, we are all in exile. We aren't in our true home, sitting around the table with our Heavenly Father in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The invisible prison walls of exile separate us in many ways from our Father, even if we are fortunate enough to live in Jerusalem or Kfar Chabad.

If you believe in Hashem and live a life of Torah, do more. There is no end to good. No matter what our level of observance is, we can all do more. We can bring ourselves closer to Hashem,

and we can help our family, friends, and all mankind to come closer to Hashem, and do more *mitzvos*. We don't know which *mitzvah* will bring *Moshiach*, but for sure every *mitzvah* is bringing him closer.

I go regularly to our local hospital and encourage people to put on *tefillin* and to do other *mitzvos*. I have talked to many people about my friend Shalom. I asked them to start putting on *tefillin* every day and to do more *mitzvos* in order to bring *Moshiach* now and thus free my friend Shalom and help all others who are in need. The majority of the people that I spoke to responded warmly and positively. Please pass this message on to your family and friends and as many people as you can.

We wish all of you to be inscribed for a good and sweet year. We want *Moshiach* now!

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



Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Rosh Hashanah reminds us we have the power to change

It's that time of year again. Backpacks and school binders tumble off the shelves at Target, crossing guards in bright orange vests patrol the road, and parents are bemoaning the frenzied schedule that "back to school" requires. But there's a positive energy in the air as kids, tanned and freckled from the summer, greet each other in the school yard as they begin a new school year.

The fall is a time for new beginnings and the Jewish calendar is right on track. Rosh Hashanah, which in Hebrew literally means "head of the year," kicks off the parade of holidays with a spirit of perennial optimism. When we wish one another *L'shanah tovah tikatevu v'taihatemu* (May you be inscribed and sealed for a good life), we are saying that we hope this year will be a good one all around; a year of good health and well-being in relationships, family, work and life.

But if that isn't enough, we are given another ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (called the Days of Awe or *Yomim Noraim*) to reflect on where we have been, where we are going, and what we want to do differently in the coming year. It's a time of personal and spiritual introspection grounded in the idea that we have the continuing capacity, each and every year, to change the way we live. Judaism promotes and is based upon this powerful idea: that in each one of us, at every age and stage of life, is the capacity to change. This power of personal transformation is not beyond us but within us, and Judaism gives us guidance by which to make it real.

We encounter this wisdom in a prayer that is unique to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur called the *Unetaneh Tokef*, which inscribes our fate for the coming year on Rosh Hashanah and seals it on Yom Kippur. This prayer tells us that through repentance, prayer and charity (*teshuvah*, *tefillah* and *tzedakah*), we can change the severity of God's decree and alter our own fate.

I ask you: If repentance, prayer and charity are strong enough to change God's mind, then shouldn't we consider them as worthy tools to help us change our own minds and lives in the year ahead? And if so, doesn't it require us to take a closer look at what each word means and how together, they can help us in our own efforts to change?

Repentance requires us to recognize that we have done something hurtful or

wrong and to feel badly, maybe even guilty, about it. But awareness is not enough. Repentance demands that we commit to behaving differently in the future. In essence, it demands that we become a "new" person the next time we are tempted to gossip, cheat on our taxes or misrepresent the truth.

Prayer means different things to different people, but many of us intuitively feel that prayer has the power to heal, comfort and even change circumstances. Whether we pray formally using the words of our liturgy or informally with words from the heart, prayer is a language and a pathway that lets us be in relationship with the Divine.

Prayer also helps us focus our attention on what is most important to us at any point in life. A sick parent or a marriage on the rocks, the birth of a child or the purchase of a new home; all of these can elicit an urge to speak to God. Words of gratitude, requests for healing, prayers for strength or comfort, all give us an opportunity to articulate and affirm the feelings we have deep inside. But even more than this, prayer can help us change our perceptions about what is possible in life because it enables us to be in conversation with something much greater than ourselves, a divine source in a universe where anything is possible.

Tzedakah is most often translated in English to mean "charity," but in truth, it is much more than that. Charity suggests benevolence and generosity and is purely a voluntary act. *Tzedakah* comes from the Hebrew word *tzedeq*, which means righteousness or justice. The justice we speak of stems from the idea that everything we have or possess comes from God who is, in a sense, the Ultimate Landlord of the Earth. As tenants, we don't really "own" anything we have; rather, we are given the gift of using it for our benefit during our lives. But this privilege comes with responsibility and we are commanded by God to care for the world and those in need. That's why in Judaism, we don't give to the poor because we want to. We give *tzedakah* because we are *obligated* and *have* to, whether we want to or not.

In its broadest sense, *tzedakah* means acting righteously, which in the Jewish tradition means following the commandments. *Tzedakah* reinforces our humility and our humanity; it reminds us that regardless of what we *want* to do, we must do more simply because it is the right thing to do. Knowing that we can and must do the right thing requires us to admit to ourselves what we already know: that we have the power to become the person we want to be.

No one ever said change is easy because...it isn't! But knowing that there is a time each year to think about the changes we want to make and to commit to making them is the first step. Repentance, prayer and charity are



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Forgiveness – A source of healing and blessing

As we learned in the last month, the headquarters for forgiveness is this month of Elul. Rosh Hashanah is upon us, the first day of the new cycle. What we are able to open to on this holy day will correspond to the work of forgiveness that we do during this month.

Forgiveness is a gift that we offer to others, as well as to ourselves. If we understood the impact of the negativity that results from anger, we would make great efforts to forgive ourselves and others as quickly and deeply as we can. I heard an interesting story recently on the relationship of forgiveness and healing. When I told it to a friend, it was so important to her that I am encouraged to share it with others.

When a woman's son was diagnosed with leukemia that was not able to be effectively treated, she went to a rebbe to find out what she might be able to do spiritually to help her son. The rebbe inquired, "Was she angry at anyone? If she forgives, if she lets go of her anger and forgives, her son will be healed."

Initially, even though she did not feel that she was harboring anger or resentment, she went through her blackberry and all her diaries to review all her relationships. Upon reflection, she realized that she was still quite angry at the principal of the school who had fired her for no reason a few years ago. She worked hard to let go of her anger and forgive this person spiritually, within herself, by developing her faith. When that was completed, her son's leukemia miraculously went into remission. After many years, this horrible disease again expressed itself, so this woman returned to the rebbe for help. He advised her to get the forgiveness directly from this principal. When she tried to track down the principal, she discovered that the principal had recently died. She was then advised to go to her grave with ten people and plead for forgiveness.

In my book, *New Age Judaism*, there is a chapter on suffering and one on *teshuvah* (fixing one's mistakes) that condenses and simplifies much Jewish wisdom on these important topics. As a general rule,

part of our tradition that can help us in the process.

Lederman is an award winning author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney who lives in Tucson. Visit her website at amyhirshberglederman.com. ★

when we are suffering, we need to review our own deeds, our thoughts, and our speech, as we create most of our suffering. Being able to identify the connection between our actions, our thoughts, and our speech and our suffering is a great spiritual gift. It is wonderful because we can change, we can heal, and we can act differently in the future.

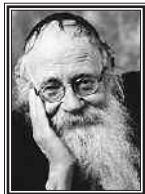
As we prepare for the new year, it is now the time to forgive people who have hurt us and ask for forgiveness from those we have hurt. Sometimes, we might not know that we have hurt someone, and they are harboring anger toward us. Though they may not even really want to hurt us, it still may hurt us on an energetic level. Therefore, it is the custom to ask everyone for forgiveness. It is a little scary to make ourselves vulnerable in this way and I know that it is not always easy to forgive when we have been deeply hurt. Even though it is hard, we must make an effort and do what we can. It is possible that we may ask for forgiveness and the person will not forgive us, but we should do what we can to obtain the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness is ultimately a divine gift.

"Forgiveness does not mean that we condone a negative action, nor do we deny our angry and hurt feelings. Forgiveness asks us to see beyond the limits of our personality or that of the person who hurt us, and to open our heart to love. Though it is an act of grace, forgiveness is a process and may take time. It is easier to forgive others and even ourselves when we are willing to take responsibility for the negativity we experienced. In the act of forgiveness, we substitute compassion for blame, and we trust ourselves and God that we have grown and will continue to grow from the pain or challenge we experienced. Forgiveness is complete when we gain insight into how the challenges and difficulties we have faced in this last year have supported our growth" (*Kabbalah Month by Month*, page 309).

There is so much negativity in the world. We can make a difference by forgiving others, ourselves and even God. As the song goes, "Let there be peace and let it begin with me." In conclusion, I ask for forgiveness to anyone I may have inadvertently hurt and I forgive those who have hurt me.

May we each be blessed to go into the new year with an open heart, ready to draw down blessings of love and goodness for ourselves, our families, the Jewish people, and the whole world.

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



Jewish Scholar

BY RABBI ADIN STEINSALTZ

This is My God

I cannot say that I have ever rejected God. There were some years in which I was not interested, and that, perhaps, is the greatest rejection of all (much more than hostility or lack of faith). But then the world seemed too small, too confined, far too senseless without Him: To me, He is the all-embracing, all-encompassing being, the great Mystery, the transcending reality that is above, beyond and behind all that exists.

It is also true that God plays hide-and-seek with us; He hides and I must seek Him so I can cry triumphantly: "I've found Him!" This rediscovery happens throughout a lifetime. There are always periods when there is a feeling of distance, almost of alienation – even if one observes the formalities of ritual and formal prayer; yet these times are followed by a renewed finding, a new love.

How can one characterize God? Whatever we say is going to be both right and wrong. All the good, beautiful and sweet things in this world are actually His attributes and every day, nay, every moment, we see Him differently. What is the color of a bubble of water? That depends upon the angle from which I look at it; and when I gaze at it long enough, I shall see in it all the colors and hues: Great, Mighty, Compassionate, Gracious, Awesome, Un-understandable – but forever extremely close to me.

It seems to me that every human being, not just religious (or exceptionally holy) people, experiences such moments of grace – these are moments when one feels the great Presence, how God is close, nearby. This feeling is actually a lot more frequent than people think, but we cannot always identify it. Some people get this feeling from seeing or feeling any kind of sublimity. Others may just suddenly experience, without any prior preparation or knowledge, the bliss and security of this closeness.

God is not just the originator of the universe – an entity that gave the universe an initial momentum and then left it. I believe that creation is an ongoing process; the world is being created anew each and every day, each and every instant. The world's existence is the result of God's constant presence within it, and there is no life and no reality without that constant Presence – at any given moment in time, in every single particle of matter.

I also believe that God supervises the smallest details and every single individual: His Providence and interest are not confined to human beings but include every created thing. And just as

He is the ruler of the great galaxies, just as He is in charge of the great eras, so too He is present and oversees every movement that every human being makes, and also every flying bird, every fish in the water, every skipping grasshopper, every leaf drifting in the wind, every wisp of smoke coming out of a chimney – God watches over all these things and cares about them.

Thus, God has a plan for each and every human being and every single creature. But I cannot know what His plan is for me. Every now and then I ask Him (and sometimes receive an answer, either directly or indirectly): What am I supposed to do now according to the plan? Have I done what You wanted me to do, or have I erred and misunderstood You?

At the same time, no matter whether we acknowledge it or not, each of us has a personal relationship with God. My relationship is always personal and private; precisely because He is so infinite and unlimited, He relates personally and specifically to me. It always is a one-to-one relationship, when I am by myself as well as when I am in a crowd; somehow we are always alone together.

That is why prayer, no matter the form, is so important. Prayer is always a conversation with God. It is the way we relate feelings, fears or aspirations, or make requests. There is also prayer for one's community, for one's own nation or for the world as a whole. And prayer can also be a different sort of conversation: an urge to say thank you, to say, "How good it is that You are there."

We pray to God; in some ways, He answers us with decisions about our fates. Every person's private reckoning, either for the good or for the bad, is far too complex, and no one is able to appraise oneself properly, let alone appraise others. Every year, there is a time of Judgment (on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, and also later) in which one's fate for the coming year is generally determined.

But these judgments are not absolutely decisive. Judgment and verdict are according to man's state at that particular moment in time. When one makes a dramatic change in life, either for better or for worse, one's verdict changes accordingly. The "book" in which God "writes and seals" judgments is, in a way, like word processing on a computer: On any day, at any time, it is possible to change, delete and rewrite.

More than that – we can appeal. Human beings have the right (perhaps also the duty) to converse with God, to ask things from Him and also to complain to Him, to claim: "You're not right." It is the same right that a child has to cry and to say, "Why do other kids get more?" A human being is entitled to complain. God wants us to be honest with Him. But still and all, He cannot be judged.

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, who is internationally regarded as one of the leading scholars and rabbis of our time, has made it his life's



Judaism & Ecology

BY MARK DWORTZAN

Local group is bringing kosher closer to nature

RUTLAND, Mass. (Sept. 16, 2009) – On a cloudless summer morning, a dozen kosher-observant men and women are gathered at a 20-foot table in a barn here to do something they've never done before: begin the koshering process on freshly slaughtered chickens. Leaving the knife work to a *shochet*, or ritual slaughterer, the group's main task is to pluck 100 birds. This quickly generates a steady rain of feathers.

The ringleader, Marion Menzin, 33, of Newton, is cofounder of their organization, LoKo (local kosher). Once the chickens are plucked, they have to be soaked in water, salted, and triple-washed (to remove as much blood as possible), and then weighed and bagged. Menzin and her cohorts, who range in age from 23 to 60, are inside on this perfect summer day in pursuit of an ideal. They want to eat chickens raised humanely and sustainably.

The workers will all be observing Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, which begins Friday at sundown. For the holiday meals, many will simmer a chicken in soup or roast one until golden. In fact, what they're doing in this barn isn't very different from what their grandmothers did before kosher meat became industrialized after World War II.

Menzin, her husband, Abe, and their three sons, Lev, 5, Ari, 3, and Isaac, 1, will sit down to a chicken dinner, perhaps cooked a favorite way: roasted with olive oil, garlic, and the Middle Eastern mix *za'atar*. Other LoKo birds will be bought by the participants, who freeze what they don't use right away.

The chickens were raised by Dave Petrovick at Caledonia Farm in Barre, Mass., where they spent about eight weeks on pasture land, eating grass, clover, and 100 percent vegetarian feed, with no growth hormones, antibiotics, or animal byproducts. They cost \$4.50 a pound,

mission to translate the Talmud into modern languages to return to Jews the ancient wisdom and knowledge that is their rightful inheritance. On Nov. 7, he will complete his 45-volume original translation and commentary on the Talmud, and Jews around the globe will come together in their communities, homes, and online at www.TheGlobalDay.org to celebrate his accomplishment with the first worldwide, transdenominational and nondenominational event devoted to Jewish learning. ★

about \$1.70 more than kosher whole chickens at the Butcherie in Brookline, and about \$1 more than a naturally raised kosher brand that isn't free range at Whole Foods Market in Brighton.

Most kosher birds are raised no differently from industrial birds.

Two years ago, Menzin took matters into her own hands. She had recently relinquished a doctoral program in history at Harvard to raise her sons. She enlisted three families, secured a *shochet*, and paid Caledonia Farm to raise 100 chickens.

On harvest day, only Rabbi Natan Margalit, a rabbinical school professor at Hebrew College in Newton, came to pluck. Local farm families finished the job. To mount a better-organized effort earlier this summer, Margalit and Menzin cofounded LoKo and recruited participants, as well as an ecologically minded *shochet*, Naftali Zvi Hanau. The organization was launched.

At first, Abe Menzin, a real estate developer and amateur kosher winemaker, was skeptical. "It sounded a bit eccentric to process your own meat," he says. "But as I started to understand her reasoning, it made more sense to me."

Now, on this mid-August day, Marion Menzin, Hanau, Petrovick, three farmhands, and LoKo participants are processing birds. "The work is hard and messy and at times pretty gross," says Menzin. "But at the end of the day, we've taken 100 live chickens and transformed them into nourishing kosher food, and done it the right way for the animals, for the farmer and workers, and for us."

Talya Brettler, 23, of Newton, was skittish initially. "It helps that this is a communal experience." Rhoda Grill, 60, also from Newton, adds, "I wanted at least once in my life to participate in a process like this."

Rabbi Margalit, a specialist on the nexus between Judaism and ecology, views LoKo as a way to practice *kashrut* (the Jewish dietary laws) as he understands their original intent. "This is a richer, more real experience, and the food tastes better."

Because many of these chickens weigh over six pounds, Menzin recommends a flattening technique or a longer braise in a covered pot. "The basic, foolproof method is to butterfly the chicken or cut it into parts," she says.

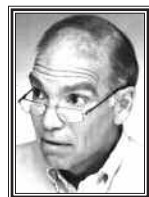
LoKo plans to raise 20 Thanksgiving turkeys and identify an heirloom chicken breed to replace the commercially bred Cornish Rock Cross it's using now.

"Since our grandparents' generation, *kashrut* has lost its way and become a business," says Margalit. "Now it needs to return to the original impetus: respect for life."

For more information about LoKo, e-mail lokomeat@gmail.com.

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Dwortzan is a Boston-based freelance writer focused on science, technology, business and the environment. His website is at www.dwortzan.com. ★



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

By any other name

We cannot mask our true feelings forever. Putting lipstick on a pig does not change the name of the animal. If it quacks like a duck, etc. There is something very nasty going on in the U.S. and, for that matter, around the world.

The moment of euphoria we all felt on that night in November of 2008 has pretty much evaporated. The extremists have come out of the woodwork. Churned on by the likes Rush Limbaugh, Glen Beck and Laura Ingraham, they do everything but use the "N" word when discussing the president of the United States.

It has always been thus. For a very long time, it was us. Country sliding into a depression? Blame the Jews. Prices getting out of hand? Blame the Jews. Now there are new targets.

The embattled establishment, the good, God-fearing Christian white Americans are under siege again. They lost to us some time ago. Jews are no longer faced with quotas at med schools, shut out of Ivy League colleges and corporate boards. But, the new "threat"? Why, it's those dark-skinned Hispanics. They want to take all the jobs from Americans. You know, like flipping burgers and picking grapes and digging ditches. And that black man in the White House? Why, was he even born in America?

Tell you, my friends, all of the above is believed by more folks in this nation than you would believe. And they are not the "rabble" that takes to the streets and throws garbage cans through windows. They meet in air conditioned halls and dress in Colonial uniforms and spout about the second amendment (don't tell me I can't have an AK47 to defend myself when they come to get me). They have never read the 14th amendment, but they want it repealed. And government? Get them out of my life (well, except for my Medicare and Social Security).

Domestically, that is how frustration is being played out. Internationally, there is an even more sinister plot afoot. It is the constant drum beat seeking to delegitimize the Jewish State. Israel has won every war it has been forced into. It has staved off attempts to destroy it by radical Islamist terrorists hiding in adjacent territory (some of which Israel left to the Palestinians).

It is now faced with two new threats. One comes from Iran, which has stated very clearly what its plans for Israel are. The other comes from various organizations and media outlets around the world, seeking to convince us that the Jewish State, founded in the land of the Jewish People, has no right to exist.

Why is it that Israel alone of any nation on this Earth, when its citizenry is attacked – brutally attacked by its neighbors – is not supposed to fight back. The historical dictum that the way to destroy force is with even more massive force is not to be available to the Jewish people.

This is a blatant attempt by these organizations, these media outlets, these poorly disguised anti-Semites, to once again make the Jews "The Other." That is what the rhetoric from everyone from Ahmadinejad to J Street is attempting. It is not the "Zionist Entity" that is under attack. It is us. Every one of us. Because, just like a great deal of the nastiness poured on Obama is a disguised attack on the fact that there is a black man in the White House; a great deal, if not most of the abuse poured on Israel, is due to the fact that it is Jews who have reclaimed their heritage and built a strong nation in the middle of the corrupt squalor that is the Middle East.

Interesting that in the middle of all of this, the building of a Muslim Community Center in downtown Manhattan has almost pushed the financial crisis, to say nothing of the international crises, almost off the front pages and been brought front and center of the American consciousness.

It is planned to be built in a remodeled building two blocks away from Ground Zero. It is on a city block called by some "hallowed ground." Hallowed ground shared in this case, by law offices, a strip club and various other legitimate commercial enterprises. Nowhere in this loud rhetoric does anybody mention that the congregation to be served by the new location is right now in a building closer to Ground Zero than the building in dispute.

The president has waffled on his feelings on this. Big mistake. The facts, of course, do not matter in this case. The fact that there are hundreds of mosques in New York right now does not matter. The fact that the deadliest of the imams from the U.S. now in the middle of Al Qaeda and the rest came from places like Indiana and Gaffney, Ala. does not matter.

No, it is just one more thing on which those who love this stuff vent their vitriol. All the political campaigns this year are negative, nasty and biting. The undercurrent of racism is there. And dear friends, it is a danger to us all. From the Tea Parties to the anti-immigration bias to the anti-Semitism expressed as anti-Zionism.

We should not be a part of any of it. We should not tolerate it. Think of those, even Jews, who were silent when Hitler first appeared. We know what that meant. Eventually.

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. ★

Take hint from history and let the mosque be built



BY RABBIS
DENNIS C.
AND SANDY
EISENBERG SASSO

Depending on what news source you read and to what pundits you listen, you probably already have a firm opinion about the building of the mosque near Ground Zero. The New York Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously voted to allow its construction.

The debate goes on, but here are a few facts.

The proposed building is actually two blocks from the World Trade Center site. The neighborhood is filled with offices, restaurants, bars, churches and even a strip club and an off-track betting parlor. The facility will have a prayer room but is not a typical mosque. It rather takes its vision from Jewish and Christian community centers that serve the general population regardless of religious affiliation. Plans include a swimming pool and gym, classrooms, a restaurant and a memorial to the victims of 9/11.

The imam of the community behind the project, Feisal Abdul Rauf, has been a spiritual leader in New York for almost 30 years. He is engaged actively in interfaith dialogue and has preached and written about an Islam compatible with American values. Plans to build this facility reach back to 1999.

There has been much inflammatory and outright bigoted rhetoric about the center – expressions of a hatred no reasonable citizen would condone. The battles over the building of mosques in

Tennessee, California and Wisconsin reveal that the opposition is not just about the proposed site, but about intolerance of Islam.

Another argument focuses on the sensitivity to the memory of the victims of 9/11. Yet some of these families have declared themselves in favor of the project.

At a recent Sabbath evening service, we conducted an open discussion on the proposed community center. We expected, on the one hand, to hear a strong defense of religious freedom and, on the other, ambivalence about the timing and location of the proposed center.

A faithful member of the congregation, a Holocaust survivor who lost most of his family during that time, ventured to speak.

He always stands for *kaddish*, the Jewish prayer of remembrance for the dead, but doesn't often express himself in open discussions. This time he did. We thought we knew what he might say, but we were wrong.

He tearfully remembered how once a Jew in his family's town in Hungary had committed an act of violence against a German. In retaliation, the Nazis targeted every Jew in town, including this kind gentleman's family.

"You can't blame everyone for the acts of a few," he said. "I know. It happened to me. I think they should build the mosque."

American history has much to teach us. In 1654, 23 Jews, escaping religious persecution in South America, landed in New Amsterdam, which is now New York. The governor, Peter Stuyvesant, refused their entry, declaring that Jews were "deceitful" and "hateful blasphemers." Stuyvesant was forced by his superiors in Holland to permit the Jews to remain. Still, restrictions were imposed, and it was not until the beginning of the 18th century that New York Jews won the right to build a synagogue.

It would take an act of Congress in 1856 to allow a synagogue to be built in Washington, D.C., where many people believed that only churches should exist.

The promise of religious freedom is why so many of our ancestors, escaping oppression and persecution, came to settle in America. It is why we have struggled so hard to maintain that freedom.

But sometimes we forget. It takes a history lesson and a kind gentleman to remind us.

The Sassos are senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis, Ind.

(This is reprinted with permission from the Indianapolis Star Aug. 24, 2010.) ★

On this date in Jewish history On September 8, 1729

The foundation stone of the first synagogue building in North America was laid by Congregation Shearith Israel of New York.

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

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The Art of Observation

BY RABBI ALLEN H. PODET

Thank God for the Israelis

One can always rely on them for interest and excitement in a religious scene that can, all too easily, become routine and boring. Who can forget the hilarious case of Brother Daniel Rufeisen?

A young boy was placed in a convent by undeniably Jewish parents to save him during the Holocaust. He grew up to be a good, convinced Catholic. So convinced, in fact, that he became a monk, or more properly, a Brother.

When he discovered that he was really a Jew, it occasioned a sea change in him. He became committed, as a Catholic Brother, to enriching and developing his Jewish nature and affirming his Jewish heritage. Still, as a Brother and a committed, practicing Roman Catholic.

Eventually he moved to Israel (of course), and instead of applying for naturalization, as here a long and tedious process, he chose to apply for instant citizenship granted to all Jews under the "Law of Return."

The Reform authorities said that, as a practicing Catholic, he was no Jew, never mind who his parents were. But the strictly Orthodox authorities, compelled by their laws to consider only that his mother was Jewish, were forced to assert that he was fully Jewish and entitled to citizenship under the Law of Return.

What fun!

The Reformers were the strict ones, and the Orthodox were the permissive ones. What a bonanza of sermons for rabbis sweating the High Holy Days messages.

Well, they have done it again.

The Knesset or Parliament is now seriously considering the Rotem Bill, introduced by Orthodox Jewish member David Rotem who represents, curiously, the overwhelmingly secular Russian immigrant community.

He asks the Knesset to give the Chief Rabbinate absolute authority over all conversions in Israel, in place of the present system where the religious authorities can do whatever they wish – do you really think you could produce certified documentary proof that your mother was Jewish if she grew up under the Communist regime? – but the state must recognize, for citizenship purposes, all conversions, by all denominations.

This is supposed to make life easier for the approximately 350,000 Russian immigrants who are in Israel under the Law of Return but are not recognized by the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox establishments as Jewish under the *halacha* or religious law. Because they cannot prove their mothers were Jewish.

Of course they could convert to Orthodox, which means swearing to observe all the punctilia of *halacha* that most Israeli Jews – and American Jews – either ignore or interpret very liberally. (For example: Pork is absolutely forbidden except in a Chinese restaurant if you don't ask.)

And the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox authorities are serious: Recently they actually rescinded a proper conversion by one of their own rabbis, on the grounds that the convert was not observing *halachic* law to their satisfaction!

So this proposed law wants to establish that, according to the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Israeli authorities, Reform and Conservative rabbis are questionably not real rabbis, and the 85% of the affiliated U.S. Jews who are Reform or Conservative may not be, in the view of the Israel Chief Rabbinate, real Jews.

And thus they would not only delegitimize all of our Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative rabbis, but also Orthodox rabbis who don't meet their standards, whatever those may be today.

And this is coming exactly when so many are excited about Obama's suspected hostility to Netanyahu, if not to the whole Israeli establishment, and the support of the American Jewish Community is absolutely vital.

What fun!

From an American point of view, the religious establishment has no business dictating political decisions, or entering into a monometude with the overwhelming majority of world Jewry. And the existence of a Chief Rabbinate that makes – and periodically adjusts and changes – legally binding decisions that affect status questions makes no sense to us.

The Chief Rabbi of England is understood to represent only those Jews who choose to acknowledge his representation, which excludes the Reform and Progressive Jews. But the Orthodox establishment in Israel votes in the Knesset and is part of the ruling coalition. As long as we are only talking about the government coalition agreeing to ban buses on Shabbat in Jerusalem, there is no problem.

When we talk about citizenship rights, however, the great power of the Orthodox parties is noteworthy. In a coalition government, such as a parliament, even a small party controlling but a few – but a needed few – votes, exerts disproportionate power.

Naval Captain Oliver Hazard Perry, on defeating a British fleet, wired: "We have met the enemy, and they are ours!" Pogo, in the comic strip, said it better for the Israeli government: "We have met the enemy, and they are us!"

Well, not to worry. We love them anyway, and will do what we can to help. Blood is, as the Italian "families" say in the movies, thicker than water. But one cannot help but wonder at their hebetude: What on earth are they thinking?

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com. ★



Notes from the Antipodes

BY DR. RODNEY GOUTTMAN

A moment of contemplation

The late Israeli religious academic, Rabbi Pinchas H. Peli, recalled a terse conversation between two prominent members of the Zionist Executive Committee in Jerusalem during some very dark days in Israel of 1948 when Arab forces were attempting to throttle the fledgling Jewish State at birth. The American leader, Rabbi Israel Goldstein claimed that the Jewish State was a contract forged by the Jews of Israel and the United States. He characterized it by the Hebrew word *damim*, which has the dual meaning of "blood" and "money." Rabbi Goldstein stated that Israeli Jewry had provided the blood, and American Jewry, the money.

Somewhat bemused, Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan, a doyen of religious Zionism in Israel, retorted that while the two Jewries formed a partnership, it was not one between equals. While he was certain the Jews of Israel would fight to their last drop of blood for their new state, it was extremely unlikely that American Jews would give of their last dollar to ensure this venture.

This exchange has certainly been, and will continue to be, repeated many times and in numerous forums, between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. Equally certain is that this moral contract will be affected by the realpolitik within which either side operates, both international and domestic. A central point of difference is that Diaspora Jewry don't have sovereign responsibility, as Jews, of direct governance. The Jews of Israel, in concert with other citizens of the Holy Land, do. The bottom line is that the Holy Land is their only home and not just a place where the Jews of the Diaspora visit occasionally.

This fact is often conveniently disregarded even by those critical voices of Israel in the Diaspora who claim some feeling for the Jewish State. How much more so by those who seek to lambaste the country whenever and wherever possible. In the purview of these people, only the Palestinians deserve human rights. Israel alone, it seems, deserves an obscene level of scrutiny, cynicism, and denunciation. The enemies of Israel can do no wrong, whatever the baseness of their attitudes and actions.

There are far too many Jews who are willing to break bread with Israel's enemies. Some feel they have a need to outdo others to be accepted by them. A range of motives drive them. These include extreme leftwing ideology, interpretations of Judaism, which exclude a man-made Jewish state, a selective

understanding of human rights, to a belief that Israel's existence increases the sum of anti-Semitism in the world.

Undoubtedly, the Jewish State's outmoded political system fuels much legitimate in-house criticism that eddies abroad. It is also a fact that even before the declaration of Jewish statehood, a Jewish sovereign state was a contested idea. Even among those who advocated it, a great diversion of opinion existed as to its nature. This remains a subterranean political dispute. Today, some suggest, that ideology in Israel is dead, having been replaced by political party expediency and politicians' personal ambitions. What is obvious is that domestic politics in Israel is played much rougher than in most Western democracies. Its own citizens find it as bewildering to read as do outside observers.

From a strictly theoretical perspective, dissent is the sine-qua-non of democracy. In practice, however, a functioning liberal democracy whatever its complexion, requires that it restrain voices and movements intent on its destruction. The only principal point of debate is when such restraints should be invoked. However, only in Israel, does a national parliament tolerate those within its ranks who contest the very sovereignty of the state. Israelis also endure sections of their mainstream press, which too often demands of policies regarding the Palestinians that if followed would lead to national suicide. These views are eagerly seized on by international press and electronic news agencies not known for their love of the Jewish State. They rationalize this disingenuously with the argument that if Israelis say these things, why shouldn't we?

Israel's enemies have a plurality of personae. They sit in judgement on her in international and regional forums, are poised menacingly on her borders, and spread hatred within them. Of course, there is a history of nations that have attempted to use an advocacy of the Palestinians against Israel as a prelude to their wish to the control the Middle East as a whole. The latest example of this genre is the Republic of Iran led by an Islamic theocracy fired by hatred of its perceived foes and a genuine bloodlust. Even the Arab states fear its intrusion, though will admit this only in private. Raw Judeophobia drives its aggression against Israel. Let one be assured, Iran's ruling mullah-ocracy should be believed when it threatens to nuke the Jewish State or seeks to follow a scorched-earth policy against her using its agents, Hezbollah and Hamas. Such calls also have the intended purpose of diverting the attention of the burgeoning Iranian population away from their country's dire economic situation.

In Australia, as elsewhere, anti-Israelism plays a pivotal place in the conversation and behaviour of many nongovernment organizations, which pump a never-ending supply of money and effort into the

(see Gouttman, page NAT 19)



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Relationships

Sometimes we take relationships for granted. We assume that people will react as we do to situations that require compassion and understanding. And then we see, all too often, the disregard for feelings and the contempt that develops because of familiarity.

Such is the ultimate fate of getting involved with people. We are born to be together and yet, we find it difficult at times to maintain closeness. We discard as fast as we accumulate. The friend of today will probably not be the friend of tomorrow. How sad when you think of all the effort involved in cultivating relationships and maintaining them.

Sometimes we think that one feeling or sentiment fits all. But we know this to be untrue. Moses Mendelssohn, the German-Jewish philosopher of the 18th century wrote: "If we are seeking to be genuinely sympathetic to others, then we must not think one emotional blanket will cover all when God by design and act shows sympathy for each of us as individuals." His philosophical teachings took Jews into the Renaissance with a feeling of connection and purpose.

A recent movie titled *Toy Story 3* gives the perfect example of how we sometimes take things seriously and when we are finished we just abandon any feeling of connection. In the movie there are toys that were part of a boy's development and growth. He played with them throughout his youth and then when he was ready to move-on, to go to the next-step in his maturity, he puts them in a chest and doesn't think about them again. That is, until he gets ready to go off to school.

He begins to clear his room of all his boyhood memories and comes across these toys that brought him so much joy. Eventually he decides to place all but one in the attic and that one special toy he wants to bring to school with him as a reminder of those happy moments.

The story is quite amazing because it gives us insight into our own relationships with friends and family. Most of us have had childhood friends that matured with us. Some have had very good friends or best friends and as the years progressed, so did we, and those friends are, for the most part, not involved in our lives anymore. It's not that we don't have fond recollections, but rather we have moved on, and they don't seem to be necessary anymore.

Some, I am sure, still have childhood friends that are still here with us in our more mature age. These are rare. Our society is so mobile. Once we lived within a stone's throw of each other; we now find ourselves in different corners

of the country and even the world. So we engage new friends and new acquaintances. However, there is always something happening that reminds us of that special girl or that special boy. It could be a smile or an experience or a location, and there it is – a reminder of those pleasant times, or maybe not so pleasant times, when we were in school or on a first date.

Eventually these memories are relegated to the chest of remembrances to be opened occasionally when we go to attic or the basement or the storage closet. The albums come out, the pictures are there to constantly bring to mind the times of pimples or bobby sox or peg pants or slick hair gel that brought your hair back to a meeting place at the back of your head. You remember hair?

The story reminds us that today we still do the same things. We may not have the same friends, but the new ones come and go faster than we would like. As we get older, it is harder to make friends and even harder to keep them. We have family that occupy our time even more because they are growing and increasing so we need to find the energy to keep up with it all. It is daunting, to say the least.

On top of all that, we have friends and neighbors who need us as we need them. That is especially true for those who live far from family. No longer are we just around the corner or upstairs or next door. Once we took a few steps and we were connected, and now we have to travel great distances. And it seems that this great family experience is an effort more for them more than for us. After all, we are two, and they are many.

Now we are witnessing a different dynamic. Our families are no longer an integral part of our daily lives, and the friends with whom we once shared all our deepest most intimate thoughts are memories never to be repeated. We don't keep in touch nor do we make any serious attempt to reconnect. We discard old reminiscences as though they no longer matter, and we forget the significance of these past relationships.

Today's cliques are born out of yesterdays remnants. We tend to forget. As the Yiddish folk saying goes: "Those who think they can live without others are wrong. But those who think that others cannot survive without them are even more in error." Friendships are created and nurtured with effort and action, not by accident.

The past teaches us that friendships come and go because we neglect to continue showing forgiveness and respect. The Ethics of the Fathers, the writings of the Sages, instructs us by asking simple questions: "Who is wise? Those who can learn from everyone? Who is strong? Those who can control their passions? Who is honored? Those who honor others." This is the essence of true and lasting friendships.

In a New Year, perhaps, we should remember our past encounters as a lesson in understanding ourselves and in so

doing our expectation of friends will not cause friction but rather connection. We need to be reminded of something Cynthia Ozick, the American writer, wrote in the early 20th century: "When something does not insist on being noticed, when we aren't grabbed by the collar or struck on the skull by a presence or an event, we take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude."

What better way to celebrate a New Year than to be grateful for each other; to appreciate each other; to be respectful of each other, and to love each other as we would want to be loved.

Choices

Sometimes when things do not seem to go according to our wishes or desires, we tend to say that it is *besheirt* – it was destined to be. It is a simple way of explaining the unexplainable. After all, we are not built to delve too deeply into things that seem to make no sense. It is a defense mechanism that gives us the ability to cope.

And yet, when the dust settles, there is a frustration that leaves us even more puzzled about life and its many experiences. It is frustrating because we are taught that we have the ability to choose the path we take with many of the decisions we make. Do we go to the left or to the right? Do we accept one answer without looking for another? Are we satisfied that our choices are motivated by fact and not fantasy? All these come into play when deciding our journey through the adventures of life.

Even the venerated sage, Rabbi Akiba, pronounced that everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given. On the surface this would seem to be contradictory. But think about it. We are faced with choices every day. Some choices are simple, such as what to wear or what to eat. And then there are choices that can be mind boggling, such as to love and be loved and by whom or to go to war or make peace. In the end what we decide can be construed as being pre-ordained. No matter what choice we make, as Shakespeare said, "it is written in the stars."

Here is where the test of faith and understanding takes root. How can we, on the one hand, be free to choose our destiny, and on the other, be told that the exercise is futile? Why? Because we are also taught that the fate of man is self-determining. And we also know that we are responsible for our choices, right or wrong. We are answerable for choices even though, in some instances, we were forced into them.

I recently watched an old movie. It was 1950s vintage and concentrated on the "lost war" – the Korean Conflict, as it was called. The subject matter dealt with the horror of imprisonment by the enemy and the torture that was endured, both physical and mental.

The ranking officer in this particular prison environment was a major who, it

was thought, became a traitor and even gave support to the enemy. Eventually when the war ended, he and his men were returned and he then faced court martial charges of treason as well as the responsibility for the death of two of his subordinates.

It was an imposing movie because the major offered no explanation and even refused to defend himself. One by one his men gave testimony supporting the charges. I will not go into the details other than to state that it was clear to me that sometimes we make choices that are difficult to accept and perhaps even more difficult for others to understand.

I doubt even God would have known what this man would do or, for that matter, what we would do. We all have differing degrees of conscience. What can break one person would not necessarily break another. Sometimes, in fact, we find that we can muster the courage to do things we never thought we were capable of.

At the end of the movie we are told, in the most compelling display of emotion and contrition, that his choice to give aid and comfort to the enemy was dictated by his desire to keep his men alive. These lives were threatened daily, and the enemy commander made it perfectly clear that if he did not agree to deliver the messages and make an attempt to indoctrinate his men, that he would be made to watch each one die in front of him, and they would also be forced to watch. What would you do?

All of us can sit back and watch this unimaginable ordeal unfold and offer different opinions, but in the end, it really doesn't matter because we can never know for sure what our choice would be and if we could live with the choice.

Here we are at a crucial juncture in our lives. The Gates of life are open and we have the opportunity to walk through. But it is not that simple. The Gate is within our reach and yet seems to be unreachable. The year is ending, and a new one is beginning. What kind of a year has it been? Sure it was filled with happy times and memorable occasions, but it was also filled with disappointments and frustrations.

There was illness and recovery. Perhaps we lost someone we loved or just casually knew. Could it be that we offended someone and now seek forgiveness? Did we not care enough and now regret that action and seek to recapture the feeling of connection? In all these instances, we faced choices and we made some good ones and some bad ones.

Here and now we have the ability to take that step that will bring us closer to the Gate and even garner the strength to make-it through. It is within our grasp. It requires our ability to remove the shackles of hate and indifference. We need to determine that it is necessary for us to move forward enabling us to begin a new chapter that is void of unnecessary

(see Weiner, page NAT 19)

Forgiving – Not just for Yom Kippur

BY ARI J. KAUFMAN

Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor traveled to Germany toward the end of August to offer her forgiveness to former Nazis. The events that took place between Aug. 20 and 28 and attracted over 200 people from all over the world – Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Italy, the USA, Canada (many who are children and grandchildren of Nazis) – were organized by Church Communities International.

For years, these former Nazis that Eva met have placed a letter every fortnight between the ovens at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, asking for forgiveness and begging for healing and world peace.

Mrs. Kor founded CANDLES (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments) Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, Ind., in 1995. She has told the story of Dr. Josef Mengele's vile genetic "experiments" at Auschwitz on Jewish and Gypsy twins numerous times in order to spread her message of forgiveness.

Brought to Auschwitz in 1944 when she was 10 years old, Eva and her sister, Miriam, were immediately separated from their family because they were twins and therefore useful in the medical experiments of infamous Nazi Dr. Josef Mengele. Never to see their family again, Eva and Miriam spent nearly a year enduring starvation and experimentation that almost killed both.

Kor attracted worldwide attention a quarter-century ago when she publicly forgave Dr. Hans Münch, a Nazi doctor who worked with Mengele at Auschwitz.

Though Judaism does not require her to forgive Mengele, on that day Eva says she stopped being a victim of Auschwitz, realizing she had the personal power to forgive and that no one could take that power away.

Pre-trip, I asked Kor if her Jewish upbringing helped her to forgive the perpetrators of such unimaginably horrific acts.

"I wish that I could impress upon my fellow survivors and fellow Jewish people that God made Yom Kippur to help heal their own soul by forgiving their enemies, and people who hurt them," she claimed. "Nowhere does it say in the Jewish prayer book that some crimes are unforgivable. The idea is pure and wholesome that we should start the (New Year) Rosh Hashanah with a clean slate."

As for the pain, sadness, anger and mental anguish in actually forgiving evil-doers, Eva relayed that, "For almost 50 years I was a good victim, that means I was hurting, I was angry, I hated the Nazis, I felt helpless, hopeless and powerless to change my painful destiny," Kor said.



Eva Kor speaks at the memorial at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp outside Weimar, Germany. Courtesy of: CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center.

"In 1993, I went to Germany to meet a Nazi doctor by the name of Hans Muench. He told me about the operation of the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Then I invited him to join me in Auschwitz in 1995, and sign a document of the operation of the gas chambers to publicly admit to the world that they did indeed take place. He immediately agreed.

"Once I realized that I had the power to forgive, I decided to forgive everybody, and by doing so I discovered that it freed me from all the pain, empowered me and healed me," Eva stated.

After Mrs. Kor returned, she told me "The events in Weimar and Buchenwald were intense, with many questions."

Kor asked the attendees to make a silent pledge that they'll work on trying to forgive the Nazis because, as Eva often notes, "forgiveness is a gift they give themselves, and they deserve to be free of the Nazi's crimes."

According to Jewish law, a person cannot obtain forgiveness from G-d for wrongs done to other people, until they have asked those people for forgiveness. For sins against others, Jewish tradition requires offenders to express remorse and repent, and directly ask the victim for forgiveness. Obviously, Josef Mengele did not repent, and he did not beg Kor or other victims for forgiveness. Holocaust survivors and others who disagree with Kor forgiving the Nazis say she has no business forgiving because the perpetrators of these horrible crimes never asked for it.

Kor certainly could not speak for her family or other victims. This is why Eva often says she speaks only for herself.

"I accomplished many goals: to lecture and touch the hearts of Germans, just as



Jews by Choice

BY MARY HOFMANN

Israel, supersimplified

I'm sure many of you can (and probably will) tell me who famously said that if the outside world ever stops trying to destroy the Jews, we'll probably destroy ourselves from within. This is the concern of those worried about becoming too complacent, too secular, too acculturated, intermarrying, and so forth. I'm beginning to think, though, that we might just destroy ourselves over Israel...if the ultra-conservative Moslems don't do it for us.

I've received fascinating intellectual tracts and reading recommendations since my last article about the conversion bill recently delayed by the Knesset. All are serious attempts to sift through the enormous complexity and develop almost painfully fair ways of dealing with the staggering array of problems. I wonder how much similar discourse went on among European Jews in the 1930s. Sometimes our strengths are also our weaknesses, and increasingly I think we're overintellectualizing, overmoralizing, – overthinking in a sincere attempt at *tikkun olam* that might well land us right back where we were during that time we are "Never To Forget!"

Israel was established as a place where Jews could go to be safe. It wasn't established as a place for the ultra-Orthodox to boss everybody around. It



I am trying to touch the hearts of Jews; to try to get the survivors to forgive, and give themselves the gift of freedom from the past in conjunction with Yom Kippur," she said. "I am trying to shock them and give them a gift to try this idea. So far I am not sure how it will work until I have some more results."

Eva met with a member of the Bundestag to learn that the German Parliament would not let her speak if there was to be protest from any Holocaust survivors (many of whom disagree with Eva's stances on forgiveness) because, politically, they are very sensitive to survivors and related issues.

Kor may return to Germany next year, but "it will depend on how the Bundestag will deal with my ideas," she claims.

In the past, Eva Kor has even attempted to contact Holocaust-denier and Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad inviting him to meet with her at Auschwitz in 2007.

She'd like Arab leaders to tour Auschwitz with her 2012, "so I can show them where I was and the place the murders happened...I should invite Al Jazeera TV too," she believes.

(see Kaufman, page NAT 19)

was a place for all Jews to go to be safe...no hairsplitting proof required.

Let's step back and simplify. Perhaps even oversimplify. If the Jews of Europe had done that and accepted what appears to be obvious in retrospect, maybe there'd be more of us now.

Look on a map, folks. The great and powerful Israel is a tiny sliver in a gigantic bed of Islam. A war of words over tiny bits of land without which Israel would end up an even tinier sliver of (very vulnerable) Swiss cheese becomes a little silly when you look at what's already been given up.

Jordan, which is huge, was the Arab "half" of Partition, was it not? Gaza, which no one has ever wanted unless they're in front of a microphone, was "returned," only to become Hamas Haven.

Check out the *other* photos of Gaza....the ones with shopping malls and fancy hotels. The ones nobody wants the world to see. If Gaza is a nightmare, it's because the Arab countries like it that way. They learned PR from the best.

Hitler realized that The Big Lie was impervious to logic or intellectual argument. People believed it because it was easy. Just like believing that Israel is some big, bad superpower holding all of Arab Asia hostage. Does this not ring a bell? Wouldn't it be funny if it weren't so damned scary?

Cut Israel some slack, for God's sake. Read a couple of Daniel Silva's novels (he, like me by the way, is a convert to Judaism who hails from Merced, Calif.). No, I don't agree with the ultra-Orthodox radicals or the Israeli government that allows them to ride rough-shod over it. No I didn't have an Orthodox conversion, which would have required me to lie about theological and moral issues vital to me. I am a modern, committed Jew who converted 40 years ago in a Reform conversion.

There are lots of different kinds of Jews, folks, and there always have been. Maybe it was a mistake, historically, to create bureaucracies that gave definition to the overwhelming majority of Jews who are not, and never have been, "Orthodox," but it's what exists. Live with it.

So, no, I hope and pray that the Knesset doesn't take the self-destructive step of giving the ultra-Orthodox any more power than they have, which is way too much. Let Israel defend its borders, and when it makes mistakes and goes too far, you will certainly cringe, but understand that when the world sets Israel up every day for a fall, how could it not?

I have a scary vision of liberal Jews (and I am one!) chewing this thing to death and hanging Israel out to dry so that next time, it doesn't have to be a Hitler or a Hamas to do us in. We'll exceed their greatest expectations all by ourselves!

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



Seen on the Israel Scene

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Cooking from the Heart

Coming to Jerusalem soon? Enjoy a special experience eating in the garden of this Jerusalem restaurant.

Chef Marwan Jaber comes from the Arab suburb of Shuafat and has been part of the Ticho House Café-Restaurant family for 17 years. Born in Jerusalem, he took a job in the restaurant, after high school, at the age of 18, washing dishes in the kitchen. He was very good and after a year, he was put into the kitchen to cut vegetables.

Then for a year he worked also at Tmil Shilshom, the restaurant-book shop in the neighborhood behind Zion Square,

Ticho house was one of the first houses in Jerusalem built outside the Old City Walls, in the second half of the 19th century. Anna Ticho, an artist, had come from Moravia (the Austrian-Hungarian Empire). She immigrated to Palestine in 1912 with her cousin, Dr. Avraham (Albert) Ticho, an ophthalmologist, whom she later married. They bought the house in 1924 and converted the lower level into an eye clinic where she worked as his assistant. Dr. Ticho died in 1960. Anna died in 1980 and bequeathed the house to the Israel Museum. The house contains temporary exhibitions, an exhibition of Anna Ticho's works, Dr. Ticho's collection of Chanukah lamps, a reference library and a café with garden.

The "Little Jerusalem" café and restaurant have been managed by Nava Bibi since 1994. Her husband, Joseph, looks after a variety of things in the restaurant and helps take care of the grandchildren. He is eager to talk about the Bibi ancestor, his great-great-grandfather, Rabbi David Shaul Chai, who came to Palestine in 1890 from Iraq to Syria to Tiberias by horse and cart.

The two Bibi daughters work in the restaurant as well – Anat in charge of all groups and events since 1995; Orit is in charge of the staff and service since the beginning. Anat's husband, Roni, makes the phone orders with supplies. Sharon Karni, a nonfamily member, has also shared managerial responsibilities with Nava for the past ten years.

Nachlat Shiva. They offered him a job, but he declined.

In 1999, Nava Bibi really wanted Marwan to go and study. "She saw in me potential," says Marwan, so she paid for me to go to the culinary department of Hadassah College. For a year and a half, Marwan went to school in the daytime and worked at the restaurant at night.

"Because he knew how to work in a kitchen and wasn't a regular student, he made food in Hadassah College for the teachers," says Anat, the manager's daughter.

"The chef giving classes told me I was so talented, he could learn from me also," adds Marwan. "I think I was the first Arab to take the culinary course. It was very hard for me to write in Hebrew," he adds.

"He would listen and when he came to the restaurant, we helped him," says Anat.

Marwan also did some apprentice work at the Nova Hotel in East Jerusalem. When the chef there saw how he worked, he gave two students to learn from him and offered him work at the hotel, but Marwan said he did not want to leave the family business at Ticho House.

Marwan graduated Hadassah College in 2000 and then took some small courses at the Tadmor cooking school in Herzliya such as fish, sushi and Italian food.

He then became chef at Ticho House. "I was born here, and I will finish my life here," he declares. "I feel very good here. It's not like I am coming to work; I am coming to my family. When I am coming to their houses, I am very comfortable and I always feel I am one of the family."

Over the years, Marwan has built a good team. A Moroccan woman (Orit's husband's aunt), Marwan's brother and another Arab work the morning shift; four, including Marwan's cousins, work the evening shift and all are from Shuafat.

"We work together, but if someone has a new idea or opinion, I want them to try," Marwan says.

Because the staff is very good, Marwan says, they all work here a long time, and because of the atmosphere in the kitchen, "they work from the heart."

Anat says because the kitchen is very important to Marwan, everything he learns, whether from TV or elsewhere, he puts in his brain, like a computer, to use sometime in the future.

All different styles of food are served, says Marwan, and people find good taste, simple and tasty food, and fresh every day.

The menu, which is in English and Hebrew, is sprinkled with Anna Ticho's art. Hot and cold beverages, pasta and sauces, baked potatoes, sandwiches, sautéed options, omelet's, soups, salads, appetizers, children's menu, alcoholic beverages and a wine list are included.

"The good taste is because we do it from the heart," says Marwan. "They're my family," he repeats again. As far as his kitchen team is concerned, "at work, it's work. They are individuals, but they can't be angry or argue. They come because they love their work."



Chef Marwan Jaber prepares bread bowls for serving onion soup. Photo credit: Barry A. Kaplan.

Anat says during the time of the intifada, some of the bombings were very close. Marwan adds, "In the kitchen we didn't give the owners bad feelings. We didn't feel they were to blame."

Anat's husband, Roni, made sure the workers got to and from their village, sometimes sending them by taxi. "Roni is like Marwan's right hand," says his wife.

"We would tell the police, they are part of us," added Anat. During Ramadan when the kitchen workers fasted, Roni made it a point not to eat in front of them, Marwan tells us.

The goal of the restaurant is to make the clients happy. If someone wants a special dish, they are able to prepare it. When Marwan first became chef, a few items appeared on the menu; now there are 60 different things and every year they remove six or seven dishes that didn't go well and add a few new ones. Now they are emphasizing healthy food, and they mark on the menu the dishes that are especially low in calories.

The only advertising the Anna Ticho restaurant does is making people happy so they will tell other people.

"We want everyone who comes to go and say they had a good experience, the service was nice, the atmosphere was nice," says Marwan.

"We are the only restaurant in Israel with a senior citizen menu," says Anat, where portions are smaller. "We have a lot of people who come once or twice a week because of this."

In the past five years, in particular, the kitchen has learned to handle more people when the restaurant is busy with both private clients and events. The garden can accommodate 300 for weddings, bar or bat mitzvot, britot and lots of business groups, such as those from the Hebrew University and Israel Museum; the inside seating capacity is 80.

For the past 11 years, every Tuesday evening, Ticho House hosts "Jazz, cheese and wine," an evening with a buffet dinner including wine, cheese, soup, salad, pasta and coffee; there are also Friday morning chamber music concerts and Saturday evening dining with music.

On the personal side, Marwan is 33 years old, married and has three daughters, ages 6, 4 and 1. His girls like to cook and they like to go to eat in restaurants. "They are very intelligent girls," says Marwan. "They speak Hebrew better than Arabic and a little English." At home, Marwan says his wife cooks everyday. If they have fish or a special salad, he makes it.

What are Marwan's future plans for the Ticho House kitchen? Until just before this article was written, it was just getting Orit's daughter's *bat mitzvah* ready for 320 people. "It was incredible!" exclaims Orit. "We never had food like this!"

Realistically, the Ticho House won the right to operate three restaurants in the Israel Museum to be ready by 2010 and Marwan will be working there. There will be a regular restaurant, an espresso bar and a cafeteria. "We are starting to build the menu and we'll have events there also," says Marwan.

Ticho House, also known as "Little Jerusalem," is located at HaRav Kook 9, midway between Rechov Haneviim and Jaffa Road; phone 02 6244186. Hours are 10 a.m. to midnight, Sun. - Thurs.; Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Saturday night from sundown until midnight.

Chef Marwan's Stuffed Artichokes with Fresh Vegetables in Lemon Sauce (3-4 servings as a main course; 6 servings as an appetizer)

Artichokes
1 egg
3 carrots
1 potato
1 zucchini
2 celery ribs
12 artichoke hearts
Olive oil
1 egg
3 Tbsp. flour
Nutmeg to taste
3 tsp. bread crumbs
1 1/2 tsp. vegetable soup powder
Sauce
1 carrot
1 onion
2 celery ribs
1 Tbsp. flour
1/4 cup lemon juice
Salt, Pepper, and Nutmeg to taste

Preheat oven to 325°F. Cook the artichoke hearts in boiling water for 6 minutes. Let cool on the side. Grate the carrots, potato and zucchini into a bowl. Chop the onion and celery. Heat oil in a frying pan and fry onions and celery until golden. Add carrots, potato and zucchini and sauté a few minutes. Cool on the side.

(see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 19)



Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

The Dybbuk rises again

Julia Pascal brings her own piercing, powerful interpretation of *The Dybbuk* to the stage. The British playwright/director takes this timeless Yiddish classic into the 20th century as she interweaves past and present.

Pascal's *Dybbuk*, which originated in England in 1992 and toured the United Kingdom and Europe, is now enjoying its American premiere off-Broadway this month. The piece makes its impact as part of the Theater for The New City's Dream Up Festival.

Pascal's take on *The Dybbuk* is expressionistic in form and substance – and yet intensely realistic. With the work of her colleague Thomas Kampe, the stage set portrays a bleak, seedy Ghetto room. Buckets, blankets, ladders, palettes, and old clothes (used in numerous ways) provide the only décor.

The playwright has skillfully created a play within a play within a play, rather like a nest of Russian dolls, taking the viewer from a shaky hold on the present back to a legendary past. The tale begins in the present. A British woman goes to Germany, where she senses the country is full of wandering dybbuks (or lost souls). As the Old Testament has it, any one who does not live out his appointed years (three score and ten) is destined for that role. And indeed the millions of Jews who were exterminated in the Holocaust fit that profile.

The woman imagines a 1942 ghetto scene, where five Jews (two men and three women) await deportation. "This is a mistake," one woman cries (or words to that effect). "I'm not Jewish. Only my father. My mother is Christian." But the others laugh at her protestations.

Though hungry, cold, and terrified, they manage to turn their minds back to medieval times, as one of the five gets the idea that they act out *The Dybbuk*. But again and again they are reminded of the present, as deportation trains roar in the background.

The British/European cast (Juliet Dante, Stefan Karsberg, Adi Lerer, Simeon Perlin, Anna Savva) show strength and versatility, as their words, gestures, movements, and ensemble work play out the story.

This *Dybbuk* reminds one once again of the power of theater – of the value of storytelling and story performance – even (and perhaps especially) in the direst of circumstances. Think Terezin, where the doomed Jews created music, art, drama – and especially drama. Think of *Our Country's Good*, a play about English convicts who land in bleak Australia. Theater offers a kind of resurrection.

In all, Pascal's *Dybbuk* is a statement about the stubborn human will to live and to create. And indeed the play ends on an ambivalent note, as a seemingly long parade of victims march off – not only to death, but perhaps to a renewal of life.

There is surely hope in Pascal's bleak piece, but it is also a reminder that we Jews are forever haunted – by our thousands of years of history and, more specifically, by our recent Holocaust.

The 14th Annual New York International Fringe Festival – Jewish plays and otherwise

Scotland's Edinburgh has made the Fringe Festival format famous – to be followed by many look-alikes as time

has passed. New York itself now features numerous such events.

But the favorite, by far, for this reviewer, has been the International Fringe Festival – held each August throughout the East Village and West Village in New York City. Now in its 14th season, the Festival continues to grow and to thrive – this year featuring some 200 shows and 5,000 performers from the States and abroad, taking place in 18 venues. It is the chance for young companies to make their mark, for aspiring playwrights to raise their voices, for actors to work, for reviewers and theatergoers to race about madly in quest of the ultimate theater experience.

The Jewish presence was not as heavy this year as in some years, but 12 plays could be found all the same. Those shows were as follows: *Abraham's Daughters* (three college freshmen struggle with their friendship and their Jewish, Moslem, and Christian faiths); *AK-47 Sing-Along* (children's television in Gaza, while Arabs and Jews struggle to communicate); *Dear Harvey* (a profile of Jewish American gay activist Harvey Milk); *Feed the Monster* (an Orthodox Jew in Brooklyn); *A Gilgl Fun a Nigun* (history of one song – all in Yiddish); *Jew Wish* (Jewish dating game); *Just in Time* (Judy Holliday story); *The Mad 7* (modern riff on Hassidic beliefs); *My Name Is Ruth* (modern version of Biblical tale); *Omarys Concepcion* (Puerto Rican girl goes to Israel); *Two Girls* (a Black and a Jewish girl face off in South Africa).

Particularly noteworthy in this list of Jewish pieces is *A Gilgl Fun a Nigun* – a solo piece performed in Yiddish by Rafael Goldwasser. This accomplished performer acts out the evolution of one song – from wedding march to symphonic piece – with grace and elegance. It is based on an old I. L. Peretz tale. Also intriguing is *The Mad 7*, another one-man show, which translates a Hassidic legend to modern form. But though soloist Yehuda Hyman moves well, with strong performance, acting and dance skills, his piece (based on an 1810 Hassidic story *The Seven Beggars*) never lives up to expectations.

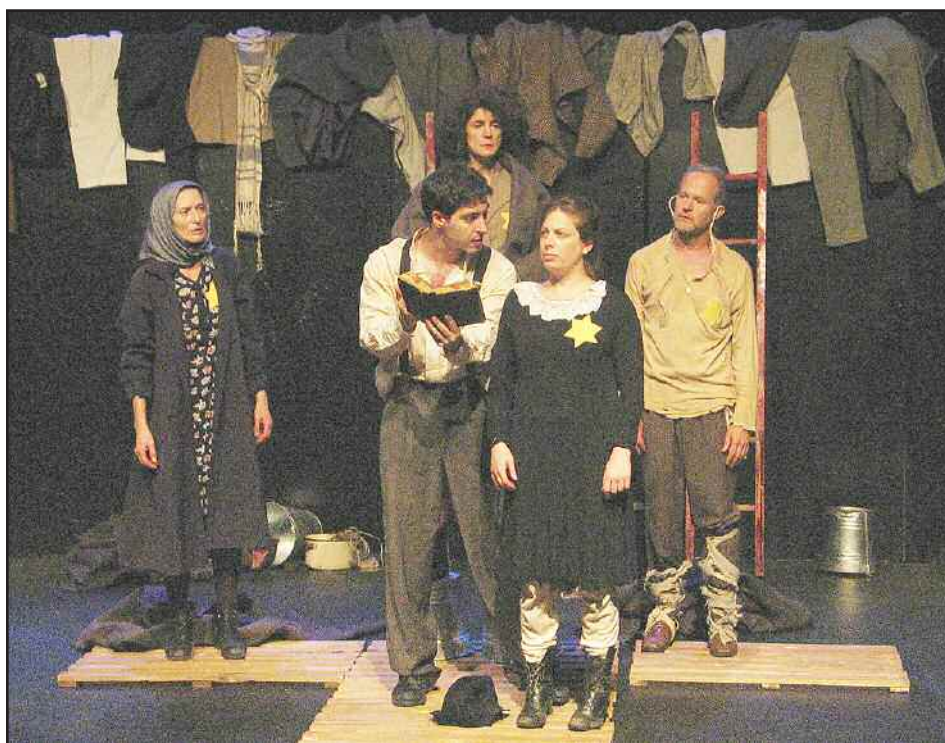
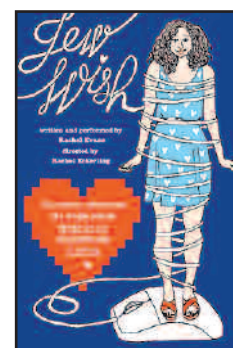
But on to other Fringe shows. For this reviewer, one particular Saturday provided the ultimate challenge, with four shows on that day. My friend/playwright Eleanor and I sprinted from theater to theater, on occasion boldly grabbing cabs out from under the very nose of other would-be passengers. Sandwiches and other refreshments were sandwiched in, between shows. This Fringe, for all its high-sounding missions, tended to be slapdash, with volunteers manning the entry lines and lobbies. It occasioned fierce determination – press card or no press card – to get that seat, to cover that show.

But we saw all four shows scheduled on our Saturday agenda. Despite the rigorous screening of applicants, shows ranged wildly in quality – more often disappointing than promising, this year as in other years. (Every year finds at least one star that goes on to fame – *Urinetown*, for example.)

Jurassic Parq (note the spelling) was a memorable new musical, irreverently spoofing everything from God to science to gender identity to Broadway musicals to the noted film *Jurassic Park* itself. It was clever, youthful (as to audience and performers), and very much of the moment – with its own kind of offbeat wit. Another show – a spoof of *Hamlet*, proved far less successful. In fact, the title – *Hamlet Shut Up* – was the best part of this lumbering, amateurish effort. Last show of our evening was *For the Birds*, a moving, but sad, sad piece about adoption, insanity, sterility, death. This piece was a joint Irish/American effort, and theater people from both sides of the Atlantic are to be praised.

As for those that we considered failures, the less said the better. Let us pass them by, not naming names. As usual, we found that the usual percentages held fast – out of a possible four, one was first-rate, one was adequate, and two were disasters. But, in all fairness, we managed to see only a small percentage of the possible offerings. We hope to do better next August – with more Jewish shows and more shows of quality.

Irene Backalenick critiques theater for national and regional publications. She has a Ph.D. in theater criticism from City University Graduate Center. Her book *East Side Story* won a first-place national book award in history. She welcomes comments at IreneBack@sbcglobal.net and invites you to visit her website: nytheaterscene.com or at: jewish-theatre.com. ★



(L to R) Juliet Dante, Simeon Perlin, Anna Savva (behind), Adi Lerer and Stefan Karsberg in *The Dybbuk* by Julia Pascal. Photo credit: Cathy Rocher.

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Parsha Perspective



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

A tale of two goats

On Yom Kippur we read in the Torah a tale...not of two cities, but of two goats: One, a goat for God, which dies in the sanctuary. And the other, a goat for something called *azazel*, sometimes referred to as the scapegoat, since Aaron, the high priest, confesses the sins of Israel over its head.

One goat dies and one lives, although in every other way, they are identical – the same in appearance, height, weight, and coloring. Both are picked at the same time. Both are to atone for the community. And then the live goat, the so-called scapegoat, is set free.

Now a scapegoat, of course, is someone or something that is made to bear the blame for others. But how can a goat possibly be blamed for something that a human being does?

Much of our answer to this question comes from the commentary of Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888).

Some people actually think that this free goat is sent away to appease a demon by the name of Azazel who lives in the wilderness. But the word used in the Torah, *l'shalach*, doesn't really mean sending to. In the Torah, this particular form of the verb usually means to send *away from*.

But send away from what?

Literally, it is to send away from the altar in the sanctuary. But in the sanctuary, everything and every moment have meaning, what we could call a teaching moment. Our sanctuary, for example, is teaching us, at this moment: First, there is a vision for our lives in the Torah, an ideal that can make us holy. But this moment of Yom Kippur is also teaching us that it's not enough to think about the ideal. We also have to think about how far away we are from that ideal. And it's only by acting on both of these teachings at the very same time that we can reach the spiritual heights, which the altar is meant to symbolize. That is, grasping the ideal only has value when we use it as a yardstick with which to measure how far from it we really are. But also, being depressed over our actual shortcomings only serves God's purposes when it becomes the base on which we elevate ourselves up to that ideal. Yet even more important, our life inside this sanctuary, here and now, including all the rituals that are performed in it, only get their true meaning and value if they are realized in the rest of our life outside the sanctuary.

And that is also the case with the ritual of our two goats. Here we have a picture of two creatures, originally completely

identical, that at the threshold of the sanctuary part company and proceed on two entirely different paths. One dies as an offering and is gathered into the space that represents the ideal of a life based on Torah. And the other, the one for *azazel*, remains untouched. It does not die in the sanctuary. It is sent out, away from human habitation, out into the wilderness. And there, turning its back on the sanctuary, it ends its life in desolation, carrying our sins on its head.

And yet, can we really believe that a goat could magically carry off our sins?

The word "atonement" or *kaparah* literally means a "covering over" or "burying" of the past. It is the highest act of the power of God, an act of interference with the natural laws of cause and effect. For the sake of *kaparah*, God can do away with these natural laws, because God is the one who created them in the first place.

And the point of *kaparah* is to make it possible for us to regain our moral freedom, our mastery over ourselves, which is dulled by every wrong that we commit. For every sin has a double effect, external and internal. Every sin makes us more likely to continue doing wrong. But God is not only the creator of the laws of nature; God is also the one who, out of love for us, is ready at any moment to allow a new and fresh future to begin. Whatever our past may have been, however and wherever we may have done wrong, before God we can and we are to rise with a new spirit and a new heart to a new future.

Of course, it doesn't happen by magic. We have to do our part. And the ironic thing about it is, that the more a bad past is to be buried by God, the more necessary it is that we keep that past clear in our own minds. That is the meaning of Jewish confession, *vidui*, which is not a confession to another person, and not even to God, but rather to us – a confession that silences every excuse. For every true self-judgment includes self-knowledge, not only that we should have behaved otherwise, but that we *could* have behaved otherwise. It is only when we have the courage to look at our wrongdoings with God's eyes, only then will our resolutions for the future be realized.

And no goat, of course, has any ability to realize such a future. Obviously it is the priest that confesses over the goat and not the goat over the priest. But to the extent that the two goats are identical, it is because they really symbolize only one personality – us. And to the extent that they end up differently, that's because they represent two different destinies – ours. For each of us has the power to be obstinate, the power to resist. In fact, Israel is said to have acquired the Torah partly because of that obstinacy.

The question is: What will we do with that power?

We could use it to attach ourselves to God. We could use it to resist all the things that lure us away from God's will.



Fun Coach

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Delight in it, completely

Hello there FUNcoach,

Okay, so, just for fun, what do you think G-d really wants from us? I mean, do you think that our just having fun is really enough? Doesn't G-d want more than that?

Sam Haredi

Dear Sam,

Thanks for the question. I'm afraid I'd have to be a lot better informed, and divinely inspired, to come up with anything like an authoritative response. But I can tell you this. If I were the One and/or the One were Me, what I'd want from My creations – especially the conscious ones:

(A) Appreciating. Not of Me, per se, but of the world I make for them. I don't think I'd be the kind of One who'd need thanks. I'd be the kind who'd want to see My creatures enjoying My creation. As much of it as they can possibly enjoy. As many moments and movements of it they can perceive. I'd want My creatures to be more and more intelligent so they could perceive more and more of My creation, and delight in it, completely.

(B) Enjoying themselves. As deeply, as thoroughly as they can possibly perceive My creation, I'd want my creatures to enjoy it. I'd want even more for them to enjoy themselves. That, for me, would be all the praise I'd require, all the prayer I'd



We could become like the goat that enters the sanctuary, that is, for God.

Does it mean that we have to die?

Literally, no, but in a way, yes, because God does not desire that we die, but rather that we live, that is, truly live. And that means giving up a certain kind of life. A life of being mastered by our senses, or living our lives on the basis of what "feels" good. In any case it does not mean giving up our sensuality, but rather living it within certain boundaries.

On the other hand, we can turn the power of resistance that God has given us against God. We can give ourselves up without a fight to a life of the senses and all of its allurements. And this sinking into the power of our own senses is called *azazel*. For the simplest way of taking the meaning of this word is *az*, the character of obstinacy, which is *azal*, without a future – that which digs its own grave.

In the world of the nonhuman forces of nature, the creator has granted only one possible direction, from which the animals cannot turn aside. They obey their creator when they follow their

want to hear. Not sacrifice. Not ceremony. Not even thanks. Just enjoyment.

(C) Enjoying each other. In the same way that they enjoy themselves, I'd want them to enjoy each other. As many and much of each other as they can embrace. In fact, the wider their embrace, the more they'd be fulfilling My purpose. Embracing family, friends, neighborhood, community, strangers, people of different abilities and languages, cultures, traditions, values, status.

(D) Enjoying the other. As much of else that is not their selves as humanly possible. All My creation. My clouds and lightning bugs. My mountains and mud puddles. My wildness. My tameness. Appreciating. Enjoying. As much as they possibly can.

No, of course not, I don't expect all of them to enjoy all of it, or all of themselves, even. But the more they do, the closer they'd be to being the beings I made them to be.

(E) Loving. At least loving themselves. Loving the intricacy, the harmony between the parts and the whole, the mind and the body. Loving even the selves they find themselves with. The selves of animals, of trees, grass, even. Enough to keep themselves healthy, make themselves healthier. Enough to heal themselves. To heal the others.

So, all right. Maybe that's expecting too much. So maybe if they were just having fun, being fun, creating fun – it would be enough for Me. Better than gratitude or sacrifice or prayer.

I'm not saying. I'm just saying.

Bernie DeKoven is a Fun Coach. He works with individuals and groups, institutions, organizations, by phone, email, chat, Skype and in person to help them recover the fun of life. Online at <http://deepfun.com>. ★

senses. That is what the organic world is all about. It has no moral free will of its own. And if everything that is good in the eyes of God were sweet to us and everything bad were bitter, the laws of nature would work in us, too, just the way they do in all the other creatures.

But we have been given something different and higher. In fact, it's only when we practice this other, higher calling that we really are worthy of being called human beings. For God breathed free will into only one creature in the midst of the countless unfree ones. God has said to only one creature: Be like Me! Be a god in miniature, in and over the little world that I have appointed for you. That refers to us, and the little world appointed to each of us is our own body. Within our bodies, powerful urges and forces work in the same way as they do in the rest of the creation. But we have the power to master them. We have the spirit to understand God's will.

Of course, possessing free will means that we have the ability to choose wrongly. But without that ability we would not be
(see bat Sarah, page NAT 13)

100 Voices: A Journey Home

By JENNIE COHEN

In 2009, the Cantor's Assembly organized a pilgrimage of cantors to return to Poland and pay homage to the birthplace of Cantorial music. This 90-minute documentary produced and directed by Matthew Asner and Danny Gold is shot on location during a historic visit in June. Among other places, it includes performances in Warsaw at the National Opera House, at the site of the Warsaw Ghetto, and at the Nozyk Synagogue, the only Warsaw synagogue to have survived World War II intact.



It is an emotional experience for such well-known cantors as Alberto Mizrahi of the historic Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago, Ivor Lichterman of Congregation Anshei Israel in Tuscon, Joel Lichterman of the BMH-BJ congregation in Denver, Nathan Lam of Los Angeles' Stephen S. Wise Temple, and others who lost most of their extended families during the Holocaust. Hearing about the cantors' family histories is not only educational but fascinating.

If it was only the performances by the cantors and choirs – Dayenu – it would have been well worth seeing. However there was more. The movie included a performance of original music by acclaimed composer Charles Fox and moving scenes from the concentrations camps in Poland. Watching the movie was like traveling to Poland to see the country and the places where our ancestors lived but without having to pack bags and wait in line at the airport.

Another interesting part of the documentary was about a non-Jewish Polish man who started a Jewish Cultural Festival in 1988 with only a few hundred participants. He repeated it every year until the movie was filmed when the number of people in attendance was 15,000. His said his purpose for his efforts in this endeavor was because the Polish people felt some important part of their lives was missing, and they wanted to learn about the Jewish culture that once flourished there but was now gone.

This movie is a must-see for cantors, Holocaust survivors and anyone close to them. It will be shown one day only on Sept. 21 in theaters nationwide. Go to www.FathomEvents.com to purchase tickets and for a complete list of theater locations and prices. ★



As I Heard It

By MORTON GOLD

Traditional cantorial music for High Holy Days

Since this issue of the *P & O* is devoted to the High Holidays, I will review the CD *Vintage Cantorials for the High Holy Days* performed by Hazzan Paul Zim. Joining him are an excellent but unidentified male choir and organist (who plays and sounds like a real pipe organ). There are eleven compositions on this CD and for many Jews who worship particularly in smaller synagogues or temples, these compositions with the possible exception of Kol Nidre will be unfamiliar. This is particularly unfortunate as performances of these compositions become rarer, the demand for hearing them will diminish even as the necessity for their revival increases. The reader should be advised that I actually listen to a CD prior to writing my review! What follows is the result of my listening as well as a few editorial comments. The titles as well as pronunciation in all of the pieces are Ashkenazic.



(1) **Hinneni** (arr. by Zim). Like most of the compositions on this disc, it calls for male choir and organ with the cantor. This is a prayer that is sung by the Hazzan as he (she) approaches the *bimah* for *Musaf*. The prayer is written only for the cantor and not for the congregation. The reason is that, at least in any traditional *shul*, the awesome responsibility for leading the service falls squarely on the voice of the cantor. This prayer expresses the hope that the cantor is worthy of this task and that his prayers will be accepted and his efforts will reflect his modesty and unworthiness for the task. For the traditional cantor, Yom Kippur is the equivalent of the Super Bowl.

There was a time not too many generations ago, when the congregation knew the service, knew the significance of the different prayers and hoped to have a religious as well as a musical experience

while in the synagogue. These were the awesome responsibilities of the cantor. Too often these days, this prayer has been eliminated either to save time (for what?), and it calls undue attention to the role of the cantor, or perhaps because the congregation does not "participate" or whatever. Pity. As I listened to this rendition, I immediately felt a connection with my forebears and imagined that I was in a Jewish house of worship. Perhaps some well-intentioned members of our tribe would question the use of the organ. As a Jew and also as a musician, one realizes, alas, that one cannot use reason to combat an ingrained and cultural bias here. I will not even try.

(2) **Veehee Rotzon** (Zim). This is another prayer that, while significant musically, is also frequently eliminated in many congregations. Zim composed a beautiful setting of this prayer and sung it beautifully as well.

(3) **Adoshem, Adoshem** (Sholom Secunda). Secunda is commonly remembered as the composer of the hit song "Bei Mir Bist du Schoen." Along with that son, however, he wrote the music for more Jewish Theater musicals than I can count. However, he was raised in the shadow of the synagogue and felt at home writing for cantor, choir and organ. His compositions are "modern" in the sense that he integrated the choir in the fabric of his music instead of merely having the choir echo a phrase or hold a chord which the organ could do more effectively. This moving *t'filah* is lovingly and beautifully performed.

(4) **Vaani S'fifilos** (Sucunda). This moving prayer would add luster to any High Holiday Service. There is no guitar, no juvenile quasi Hasidic type rhythms, and so forth. Instead one hears unmistakable Jewish synagogue music of the sort that most of us will no longer experience. We are all poorer for it.

(5) **Tehear Rabi Yishmael** (Kwartin). Zavel Kwartin was a superb *hazzan* who must have composed this recitative not only for his own use but for other *hazzanim* who possessed the voice and technique to sing. Zim did and does.

(6) **Uvyom Simchaschem** (Im). Im knows his *chazones*. The use of the harp is imaginative, and the lovely melodic episode he wrote gives his choir as well as his upper register a workout. Well done.

(7) **Havein Yakir Li** (Oscar Julius). Julius was a choir leader par excellence. To refer to him as merely a choir leader is akin to stating that Eli Manning is a football player. I do not know if he composed this now very well-known melody or "merely" arranged it. Either way this setting is given a superb performance.

(8, 9, 10) **Keil Melech Yosheiv** (Shapiro); **Misratze B'rachamim** (Kalish-Kraus); **Tomachi Y'saydosai** (Ganchoff). As is the case of the work by Kwartin, what we have in these works are settings by *hazzanim* that are intended to be sung by other *hazzanim* who have the voice, technique and musicianship to sing them. Zim does and gives full justice to each.

BAT SARAH

(continued from page NAT 12)

human beings. Our whole height and dignity and worth lie just in our ability to do wrong. In the animal, vegetable or mineral world, there can be no sin, but just because of that, no morality either.

So just like the two goats, all of us are, without exception, placed at the entrance to God's sanctuary to decide between God and the power of our senses. Facing the Torah, we make the decision. We can decide for God; we can use all of our power to resist everything that would tear us away from God; we can decide to be like God, doing good of our own free will. Or we can decide for *azazel*; we can decide to live a life based on what "feels" good. And respected or not, big or small, rich or poor, today or tomorrow, in any state of life and at every time, each of us can be for God or for *azazel*.

The point is to make us holy and keep ourselves morally free. And to get ourselves back to that place, if we aren't there now.

So we leave you with this poem called *Dissatisfy My Heart*.

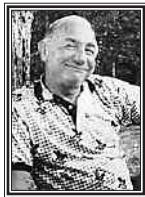
Dissatisfy my heart
For any goodness
But Yours.
Teach it to demand
Your Presence
In my every act.
And if I should
Go away from You,
Oh God,
Turn back my heart
Teach it to expect
Only You
To arrive
In my every
Moment.

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

(11) **Kol Nidre** (Secunda). This arrangement by Secunda is among the finest I have heard. The rendition by Zim (and company is) likewise worthy of his being accounted as one of the finest *hazzanim* of his generation.

If you know and love traditional Jewish cantorial music, or especially if you are not acquainted with this genre of Jewish music, you owe it to yourself to listen to this CD. The number is: 0 98865-5759-2 4.

Dr. Gold is a composer, conductor and music critic for the Post & Opinion. He is the 2010 recipient of the Kavod Award given to him by the Cantors Assembly of North America at their recent convention. He can be reached at: drmortongold@yahoo.com. ★



Spoonful of Humor

By TED ROBERTS

Prophets beat floods everytime

It was a beautiful day in heaven, as usual. (In fact, several of the senior angels that very morning had met with He who makes the weather that continually confounds TV meteorologists. An occasional gray day – to relieve the monotony? Why not, they suggested.) But like I say, the sky was as blue as angel's eyes and the temperature was 70, and a balmy wind softly stirred the air.

Sure, heaven was heavenly. But down below were storms – black skies and frigidity. Not weather-wise, but ethically. The human race that roiled, bubbled, and smoked like a stew that needed stirring on a hot burner was going through one of their typical explosive, volcanic cycles. Maybe, thought their Creator, He was too hasty after the flood. Sure, My rainbow was a beautiful ribbon to decorate My world. All the angels loved it. But My promise to never wash man and animal, forest and village away again was decidedly premature. Look at them now!

Look there! He had happened to focus on a New York bar where a gang of toughs was pouring down shooters one after the other and planning on plundering a couple at an adjoining table. At the next table, over a bottle of wine ("I told them in my Psalms, it would gladden, not madden, the hearts of men"), adulterous expectations were contemplated. And multiple uses of His name in vain, a crowning insult, rang through the bar like the Hallelujah Chorus and Hosannas rang through heaven as though to atone.

Then, using the power He had that condenses the world's behavior into a single scene, He focused. And to be overly anthropomorphic, He frowned a frown that had He not carefully looked away from Earth, would have frozen the equator into a girdle of ice. Behavior ranging from discourteous to murderous ranged out of control like a wilderness fire in a parched meadow.

He had about decided what the world needed was a good flushing. No doubt there, everywhere were pockets of corruptions – nests of sin. But on the other hand, a few bright spots of virtue spotted his world. Look, a mother gave her last crust of bread to her starving child. She, the total giver – the child, the total taker. And yet she loves. Goodness never thrives, but it always survives. And there in a corner of the wilderness one man risked his life for a friend.

And the animals. He hadn't blessed (or cursed) the butterfly with free will. He had programmed them; and a lot of feline mothers were even better at mothering

than human mothers. So, it would be wildly unfair to wash the felines or foxes or honeybees into a watery grave.

His intellect, which encompassed the infinity of flesh, plant, galactic creations – His intellect, which hummed to the music of the human heart – immediately identified the three corrupting culprits: wine gold, and lust.

That previous 40-day monsoon, many years ago, may have been a mistake, reflected He who saved only the breed of Noah. In the plant kingdom alone, 85,433 species of orchid plants designed to embellish the hair of the daughters of Eve were drowned. And how many melodious nightingales whose descendants would never serenade the evenings of Earth. Sure, human seed stock was preserved in the family of Noah, but who could be sure that Mrs. Noah – who had a mischievous glint in her eye – would maintain the uprightness of Rivka.

And Noah – dry as a bone – no sooner beaches his ark than he gets roaring drunk. How discouraging. He'd be right at home at the sliver of New York state, Manhattan, 57th Street that previously occupied the Lord's gaze. Wow, was that guy on bar stool 1 about ready to crown the occupant of bar stool 2 with the jagged edge of a beer bottle? This was Sodom and Gommorrah without the moral leavening of Lot and his morally upscale family. But divine intervention was so messy and such a visible intrusion into the world of humanity. He hated to show his face. Previously, that whole watery mess may have been a mistake. So much good human material consumed with the dross.

Since then everything had changed except the human heart. BMWs instead of chariots, Macy's instead of the market stall, brick and polished stone mansions instead of wattled huts, prime rib instead of cornmeal. But the rhythm of the heart remained the same, and the streets of New York, Jerusalem, Paris, Beijing were spotted with Sauls, Jezebels, Bathshevas, and Judahs (relieved with a Joseph or two) still ready to sell their heavenly inheritance for a loaf of bread.

Definitely not the kind of milieu that prevailed in the garden when lions and lambs and the newlyweds cuddled side by side in the thick, green grass. Maybe it was time for another flushing. The *Moshiach*? No, far too early for that. They didn't deserve Him. But what about the prophets? Maybe it was time to send them again. Yes, His Prophet corps stood ready – onward Jewish soldiers! It had worked several millennia ago – it would work again. He'd send His total army: Amos, Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, even Habakkuk (poor Habakkuk, so ineffective he'd only given him five pages). But remember, if He saved one soul, it was like saving the whole human race. At this time, technology being what it was, His prophets would communicate with intense voices to

Letter to the Editor

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

Dear Editor,

In your Aug. 11 issue, you published a review of the play *The Merchant of Venice*. I had never seen a performance of that play or read it until a few weeks ago. I attended a performance at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and then read the play. I was completely taken aback.

Why an openly anti-Semitic, hate-filled play is still being performed is a mystery to me. If it's because "it's Shakespeare" and he's great," so what? Even great playwrights write plays that are better left in the trashcans of history.

The question isn't whether Shakespeare was anti-Semitic anymore than the question is whether Mel Gibson is anti-Semitic. Both Shakespeare and Gibson have written anti-Jewish material, and both deserve condemnation for what they have brought forth whether or not personal anti-Semitism motivated them.

We've all heard of *The Merchant of Venice*, of course, and we've all heard that it's "a little hard" on the Jews. Well, it's actually an anti-Semitic polemic wrapped up in what Shakespeare labeled "a comedy." Here is the "humor."

Shylock is never referred to by name unless one considers "the Jew" a name. He is a moneylender. One Antonio needs to borrow money from Shylock to help a friend (good Antonio). Antonio has spat on and cursed Shylock and Judaism in the past and assures us that he will do so again when he feels like it. Shylock therefore dislikes Antonio and wants revenge. There is nothing unusual there, but the Bard doesn't want to create sympathy for Shylock. The real reason Shylock wants revenge against Antonio is not the abuse he has suffered at Antonio's hands and



every needy soul with iPod, Internet, TV, sky writers, telephone even. No more street corners or mountaintop speeches.

And so He did. We should pray for His success. On the human disaster scale, prophets beat fire and flood every time.

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

mouth, per the Bard, it's that Antonio has lent money to Antonio's friends without charging any interest let alone usurious interest. Thus his kindness has cost Shylock money. We all know what Jews will do for money, don't we? Therefore, it's good Antonio versus bad Jew.

Shylock makes the loan on the condition that he be paid a pound of Antonio's flesh (from near the heart no less) if Antonio defaults. Shakespeare over and over again hammers home the point that Shylock wants revenge in the form of a pound of Antonio's flesh (as misguided as Shylock is) not because of the terrible treatment he has received from Antonio, but because Shylock is a Jew. This is the way Jews are, says the Bard.

Then there is the matter of Shylock's daughter who freely expresses her dislike for the Jew, her father, and leaves home and becomes a Christian. Shakespeare never gets around to telling us why she dislikes her Dad or wants to become a Christian, but what's to tell? He is a Jew, isn't he? Christianity is far preferable to Judaism isn't it?

In the trial scene "justice" as Shakespeare understands it prevails. Shylock receives neither repayment of the loan nor the pound of flesh. Moreover, he is forced to convert to Christianity.

Exit Shylock the forced convert. Enter the frivolity of the remainder of the play concerning spouses' failure to keep their wedding rings on their fingers as promised.

Some will say that Shakespeare tried to be fair by writing Shylock's "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" speech. Shakespeare's acknowledgement that Jews bleed like other human beings hardly balances the scales. Why is there a question about our humanity?

Hate sells theater and movie tickets, books, newspapers, Nazi memorabilia, organization memberships and everything else. What should we who oppose blind hatred in its various forms do about *The Merchant of Venice*?

What should be done in my view is to educate ourselves and our non-Jewish friends about the real meaning of this play, why it was written and why anti-Semitism and other hate speech are wrong. *The Merchant of Venice* should be utilized as a teaching opportunity.

Some Christian scholars and Christian people of good will have for years spoken out against the unjustified hatred against Judaism and Jews contained in the Christian Bible. Shakespeare, of course, has utilized those hate filled stereotypes in *The Merchant of Venice*.

The last thing we should do is review a performance of *The Merchant of Venice* as we would any other production. It should not be reviewed solely on the quality of the acting, the direction, the staging, the lighting and whatever else goes into making a play enjoyable. It should be reviewed for what it is: a vicious, unwarranted diatribe against the Jewish People, which fuels fires of anti-Semitism that have burned too long.

Sidney Mishkin, Indianapolis ★



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Greenberg and Krusty's Wedding on The Simpsons

Ben Stiller took on a serious role in Noah Baumbach's film, *Greenberg*, about a high-strung 40-year-old ex-band-member house sitting for his brother. Roger Greenberg has returned to the West Coast from a New York mental institution. His brother is a high-powered hotel mogul who takes his beautiful family to Vietnam for vacation and for business opportunities. Roger spends his time doing carpentry work and writing letters of complaint to newspapers and to political figures like Mayor Bloomberg, and to companies like Starbucks and various airlines. His job for the summer is to build a doghouse for his brother's sensitive pooch, and to look after the German Shepherd.

Roger's duties overlap with those of his family's assistant/nanny, Florence (Greta Gerwig), especially where that scene-stealing dog is concerned. Florence is a self-sufficient and ambitious but emotionally fragile 25-year-old who seeks a singing career and some stability (in that order). Gradually and not so willingly, they become a couple, and the youth of Florence and her friends reminds Roger that he is no longer young. Roger reunites with his former bandmate and best friend (Rhys Ifans), who reminds him of the selfish decisions of his (Roger's) youth that damaged not only his life but the band.

Early in the film, Roger attends a party where he sees old friends. While it is hard for them to remember him fondly, they do remember him as – Jewish. One of them describes another old friend as a “less Jewish version of you.” Roger protests, “I’m only half. Mom was Protestant. I’m not actually Jewish at all.” Still, Roger's brother must feel at least somewhat Jewish because he says “Oy” while they speak on the phone. But, then again, Roger might elicit an “Oy” from anyone.

In many ways Roger seeks to avoid participating in life, which, he laments, is “wasted on people.” He is, at first, hesitant to use the swimming pool. He seems to want to wade and wallow in his own misery and angst. Florence, for her part, pushes forward with life, even, or especially, in the face of her mistakes and errors in judgment. Yet she does not press forward blindly. She remembers good advice or wisdom that she has received, such as the admonition of her singing coach, “Hurt people hurt people.” Her sincerity and hopefulness

have some effect on Roger. As a result of knowing her, he wants to be responsible.

It seems that this film has Jews on the mind, if for only fleeting moments. In addition to the dialogue cited above, it does flash some shots of Hasidic Jews. It insists that one does not have to be a Jewish male to have huge neuroses, but that those neuroses are enhanced if someone with a Jewish name denies being Jewish, especially if that denial has grounds, and that healing comes with a love interest who is oblivious to one's hang-ups, Jewish or general.

Krusty's Wedding on The Simpsons

For some odd reason, or thanks to one strange staff meeting, *The Simpsons* decided to dedicate an episode to interfaith marriage between Krusty the Clown and a Long Island Christian princess. I suspect that writer Stephanie Gillis wanted to show that not every princess with a Long Island accent can be branded a “Jewish princess,” and that “princess” can be popular if done right. Does she suggest that Jewish women have not gotten it right, or that stereotypes about Jewish women have been unfair?

The half hour begins with Marge (Mrs. Simpson) complaining about old Krusty's sadistic humor, but everyone laughs, anyway, including Marge, because Krusty is all there is for children to watch, anyway, even if he is rather inappropriate and, well, cynical. After the show he lights a cigar in front of his audience of youngsters and orders them to hand back the toys and savings bonds that they received during the taping.

Some network executives corner him and tell him that his ratings are very low among young girls. Hence the need for the female co-star. Penelope the Princess, as she is called, is a big hit among the girls, but all the boys, including Bart Simpson and his friend, Milhouse, are alienated. Bart asks his dad, “Why are great things always ruined by women?”

Krusty finds that his entire audience is now female, and that he has become second fiddle to Penelope (voice of Anne Hathaway), who happens to be a wonderful singer as well as a raving beauty (even if she does some of her own raving). Just as Krusty is about to confront her, she confesses her love for him, saying that she has adored him since she was a 12-year-old growing up in Mineola, Long Island. It is here that we suspect that Krusty may have found himself a nice Jewish girl, or that a nice Jewish girl may have found him. But writer Gillis (and the staff?) had other ideas.

We are then shown an “entertainment news” clip announcing the wedding of 15-time-married Krusty to first-timer Princess Penelope. We also note that the more lovey-dovey Krusty and Penelope become on TV, the more Bart and Milhouse, representing the boys in Krusty's audience, hope to stop the marriage. Next we see the *bimah* in the synagogue, complete with a *chupah*. The

SHAFRAN

(continued from page NAT 3)

actually took place then. Thus, the Talmudic rabbis applied the verse “the honor of G-d is the concealment of the thing” (Proverbs, 25:2) to the days of creation. Honest scientists admit the same. E.A. Milne, a celebrated British astronomer, wrote “In the divine act of creation, G-d is unobserved and unobserved.”

Despite our inability, however, to truly know anything about the happenings of the creation week, to think of those days as a gestational time is enlightening. It may even help explain the apparent discrepancy between what we know from the Torah is the true age of the earth and what the geological and paleontological evidence seem to say.

Consider: What would happen if the age of an adult human since his conception were being inferred by a scientist from Alpha Centauri, using only knowledge he has of the human's present rate of growth and development? In other words, if our alien professor knew only that the individual standing before it developed from a single cell, and saw only the relatively plodding rate of growth currently evident in his subject, he would have no choice but to conclude that the 30-year-old human was, in truth, fantastically old. What the Alpha Centurion is missing, of course, is an awareness of the specialized nature of the gestational stage of life, the powerful, pregnant period before birth, with its rapid, astounding and unparalleled rate of development.

Jackie Mason voice of Krusty's father-the-rabbi declares, “We are gathered here today to marry the Jew and the Congregationalist. Is that even a thing? Now let's continue with this mockery.”

Apparently, the “mockery” was to have included a monkey in the procession, but Bart and friend, in an effort to sabotage the ceremony, locked the monkey in the “Torah Room,” where the primate is busy unfurling a Torah scroll onto the floor. Is that funny to writer Gillis?

The boys then introduce the testimony of ex-wives to Krusty's vileness as a husband, but Penelope loves him so unconditionally that she wants to marry him, anyway. Moved by her true love, Krusty declares that Penelope is the only woman he cares about “enough to ditch at the altar,” and he leaves, much to the joy of the rabbis who dance because they didn't want to perform an interfaith marriage, anyway. Of course we are not supposed to ask why they were in the midst of doing so.

We next see the princess, a broken woman, though barely 30, singing sad ballads in Paris, or rather, singing ballads, like “Moon River,” sadly. Much to her surprise, Krusty pursues her to Paris, and she embraces “my Borsht Belt baby.”

(see Gertel, page NAT 19)

If we recognize that a similar gestational stage existed for the universe as a whole at its creation – and the Torah tells us to do precisely that – then it is only reasonable to expect that formative stage to evidence a similarly accelerated rate of development, with the results on the first Sabbath seeming in every detectable way to reflect millions of years of development, eons that occurred entirely within the six days of the world's explosive, embryonic growth.

Rosh Hashana is called “the birthday of the world.” But the Hebrew word there translated as “birth” – *haras* – really means the process of conception/gestation. And so, annually, at the start of the Jewish year, it seems in some way we relive the gestational days of creation. But more: those days are formative ones, the development period for the year that is to follow. Beginning with the “conception-day” of Rosh Hashana itself, and continuing to Yom Kippur, the period of the early new Jewish year is to each year what the creation-week was to the world of our experience: a formative stage.

All of which may well lend some insight into a puzzling Jewish religious law.

We are instructed by *halacha* to conduct ourselves in a particularly exemplary manner at the start of a new Jewish year. We are cautioned to avoid anger on Rosh Hashana itself. And for each year's first ten days, we are encouraged to avoid eating even technically kosher foods that present other, less serious, problems (like kosher bread baked by a non*-Jewish manufacturer), and to generally conduct ourselves, especially interpersonally, in a more careful manner than during the rest of the year.

It is a strange law. What is the point of pretending to a higher level of observance or refinement of personality when one may have no intention at all of maintaining those things beyond the week?

Might it be, though, that things not greatly significant under normal circumstances suddenly take on pointed importance during the year's first week, because those days have their analogue in the concept of gestation?

Might those days, in other words, be particularly sensitive to minor influences because they are the *days from which the coming year will develop*?

Observance and good conduct are always in season, but our tradition teaches us that they have particular power during Rosh Hashana and the “Ten Days of Repentance” – that we should regard these days with the very same vigilance and care an expectant mother has for the rapidly developing, exquisitely sensitive being within her.

Let us seize the days and cherish them; they are conceptual butterfly-wings, the first unfoldings of a new Jewish year.

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Holocaust Educator

By MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN

SF Jewish Film Festival celebrates 30th anniversary

The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival (<http://sfjff.org/>) is like any other Jewish Film Festival, only more so. To this writer, the SFJFF is always more original, more intense, more diverse, more interesting, and more controversial than any other Jewish Film Festival. Celebrating its 30th anniversary, the 2010 Festival boasted 41 feature films, 16 shorts, and 2 TV series from 14 different countries. For 30 years, the SFJFF has presented the very best Jewish cinema from all over the world.

This year, the Slingshot Fund named the SFJFF "one of the 50 most innovative Jewish organizations in the U.S.," and IndieWire declared it to be one of the top 50 film festivals in the world. Films were screened in five venues throughout the San Francisco Bay Area: Castro Theatre in San Francisco, the San Francisco Jewish Community Center, and locations in Berkeley, Palo Alto, and San Rafael. It is the oldest and largest film festival of its kind in the U.S.

Saviors in the Night (*Unter Bauern*) opened the festivities at San Francisco's Castro Theatre on July 24. I cannot remember the last time the Festival used a Holocaust-themed film on opening night. Indeed, the "Holocaust and World War II" category grew from nine films in 2009 to this year's full dozen. I remember year after year when only two or three Holocaust films screened at the Festival under the category of "history," not enough films to command a separate heading.

It seemed to me that for years, the Festival was interested more in depicting marginalized peoples, such as gays and lesbians, than in looking back at the Holocaust. In this year's listing by subject, there is no gay/lesbian/transgender category. Was there a conscious decision to inflate one category at the expense of the other? Why can't the Festival programmers include films in both important categories?

Directed by Ludi Boeken, himself a child of Holocaust survivors, *Saviors* is based on the memories of Marga Spiegel, published in the 1960s. Her memoir "describes how courageous farmers in southern Münsterland (Westphalia area of Germany) hid her, her husband Siegfried, and their little daughter Karin from 1943 until 1945, thus saving them from deportation to the extermination camps in the East," according to the press kit distributed at a prescreening of this wonderful film.

Since this film is on the "hold review" list pending its distribution in the United States, I am limited to generalities such as, "It is extremely well done." A gripping "docudrama" as much about the rescuers as about the rescued, the film "pays attention to small details needed for survival." *Saviors in the Night* is the antithesis of *Defiance* (see P&O Sept. 9, 2009 for review), a big-budget Hollywood film starring Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber. These A-list Hollywood actors portray two of the Bielski brothers, Jewish Partisans who hid fellow Jews in the forests of Eastern Europe, with flamboyance and in some cases, with blazing guns. In contrast, Boeken "tells this story of survival with a sense for the absurd in daily life and not without the typical Westphalian humor."

Perhaps because my father, of blessed memory, hailed from Westphalia, I felt drawn to this film. Perhaps because like Marga, Boeken's parents were hidden by farmers in his native Holland, Boeken was drawn to her story. Marga along with director Boeken and actress Lia Hoensbroech, who plays Anni Aschoff, were present on opening night and available to answer questions from the audience.

In his moving "Director's Statement," Boeken explains his affinity for Marga's rescuers. "As a child of survivors who were saved by peasants and factory workers who risked their lives and the lives of their families, I have always loved the farmers of *Saviors in the Night*, and I have seen it as an honor to try and portray them in a simple, straightforward way, thus preserving and honoring their memory. Marga Spiegel, the woman who was saved by the Aschoffs and their friends, built them a monument in her memoirs of the almost three years she spent on their farms in the German heartland. Marga has never ceased to sing their praise and the film we made, based on her book, is but a little stone of this monument.

"German farmers whose German sons fought and died in Hitler's armies had the extreme courage and humanity to save those whom they were told to consider unworthy, less than human, only good for slaughter. The exceptional did happen. It happened in Westphalia, on the farms of the Aschoffs, the Pentrops, the Silkenboemers. The exceptional happens in *Saviors in the Night* – and I have tried to portray the people, the events, the tensions and the moments of relief in all simplicity, without overdramatization – as if we happened to be there and witnessed some of what occurred on these farms at the time..."

In addition to director Ludi Boeken, the SFJFF hosted 18 other directors during the 17-day festival. As I read through the press packet, I marveled at the organization and dedication needed to produce such a many-faceted arts event.



L to R: Anni Aschoff, daughter of farmers who save Karin and Marga Spiegel in the 2009 film, *Saviors in the Night*, in German with English subtitles.

A program entitled, "Tough Guys: Images of Jewish Gangsters in Film," guest-curated by Nancy K. Fishman explored this "darker aspect of American Jewish history." Fishman moderated the panel and in her words connected the themes with the Jewish actors: "The program includes cinematic images of Jewish gangsters, as well as 'ethnic' gangsters played by Jewish actors. *Scarface* (1932), starring Paul Muni as a thinly disguised Al Capone, is an excellent example of a gangster movie that would have had a Jewish subtext for the Jewish audience of its day because of Paul Muni's career in the Yiddish Theatre."

Fishman pointed out that gangsters were especially present in immigrant communities. New to me: Estimates that up to 50% of bootleggers during the Prohibition era were Jews. Fishman points out a dilemma for cinema historians: to determine "the extent to which Hollywood's mostly Jewish producers and studio owners avoided making films about Jewish gangsters for fear of creating negative images of Jews during a time of widespread anti-Semitism."

The film curator described the four gangster films screening in the festival: "*Bugsy* (1991), Barry Levinson's dramatic and romantic rendering of the rise and fall of Benjamin 'Bugsy' Siegel, featuring Warren Beatty and Annette Bening; *King of the Roaring 20s – The Story of Arnold Rothstein* (1961), Joseph M. Newman's tale of Rothstein's gambling exploits, featuring David Janssen as Rothstein and Mickey Rooney as his partner in crime; *Lepke* (1975), Menahem Golan's sweeping saga about Brooklyn-born Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, starring Tony Curtis; and *Scarface* (1932), Howard Hawks' classic film about a Chicago gangster, starring Paul Muni." You can find all of these films on DVD.

The panel discussion addressed the following questions: "How did portrayals of Jewish gangsters in film (or iconic Jewish actors in non-Jewish gangster roles) play in the Jewish community and

outside of it? How does the Jewish gangster experience parallel that of the Italian-American gangster experience and its representation in cinema? What role does the Jewish gangster play in the spectrum of Jewish masculinity?"

The question that intrigued this writer the most, "Are Jewish gangsters or Jewish gangster films 'good for the Jews'?" Fishman concluded that Jewish gangster films provide "a unique window into the Jewish immigrant experience." The series will continue in the fall with four more films, thus extending this thought-provoking topic.

An "earthquake" erupted at last year's SFJFF with the showing of *Rachel*, a documentary about Rachel Corrie, the young American activist killed while protesting house demolitions in Gaza in 2003. Last year, an outburst from the Jewish community astonished Festival organizers, who hastily organized a counterpoint to the appearance of Rachel Corrie's mother, Cindy, at the Festival. The protest was less about showing a documentary from the point of view of the protestors who were hostile to Israel and more about the perception of Cindy Corrie as an "Israel basher" without anyone representing the Israeli perspective for balance.

In light of SFJFF's 2009 screening of the documentary *Rachel* and the subsequent controversy over how Jewish community organizations should contend with controversial issues, especially regarding Israel, SFJFF invited filmmakers, writers, and experts in civic engagement to join in a conversation about the role (and perhaps limits) of film to foster constructive dialogue about potentially difficult topics.

The panel was entitled, "*Is Dialogue Possible? How Films Help Us Talk About Israel (...or Not)*." Invited participants included Ronit Avni, producer of the documentary feature *Budrus*, depicting a nonviolent Palestinian community protesting the security fence that will bisect the village and necessitate the

(see Zimmerman, page NAT 19)

Book Reviews

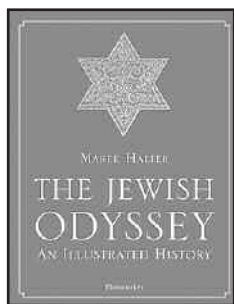
REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Pictures make this history book

The Jewish Odyssey. By Marek Halter. Paris: Flammarion, 2010. Distributed by Rizzoli International Publications, New York. 240 Pages. \$49.

This over-sized book with 150 illustrations, many in brilliant color, will make a useful gift for selected recipients. However, it is not meant simply to grace a coffee table; it is designed to be read and be savored. Jewish history is presented and made vivid by beautiful pictures drawn by famous painters who specialized in art of the Bible. Among the featured artists are: Fra Angelico, Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Blake, Doré, Poussin, Fragonard, Brueghel, and Tissot. Since Marek Halter is himself a painter who had several international exhibitions, he brings an informed eye to his selections. Halter is also an author who has written both fiction and nonfiction; he uses his writing talents in this book. Finally, Halter is a political activist who organized the International Committee for a Negotiated Peace Agreement in the Near East, and his views are clearly manifest in the last section of the book that deals with the contemporary scene.

Before he reaches the concluding chapter, which he calls "Israel and the Diaspora: A Subversive People," he offers two less polemical discussions: "From Sumer to Jerusalem: The Origins of a People," and "Next Year in Jerusalem: Enlightenment, Destruction, Renaissance." Halter begins his history with Terah, an idol-maker in the Sumerian city of Ur, whose youngest son, Abram, smashed the idols and followed the voice of God who ordered him to travel with his wife, Sarai, to Canaan. His name was changed to Abraham, which means father of many nations, and his wife's name was changed to Sarah. Thus began a "new epoch" and the "birth of a new people, the Hebrews." Halter goes on to discuss Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. He describes how the Hebrews settled in the land of Canaan, and follows this with a brief description of what happened when Saul, David, and Solomon ruled as kings. The period of the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, is quickly mentioned as is the Hellenization of the Jews, victory of the Maccabees, the rule of Herod, the Roman conquest, and the rise of Christianity and Islam. Thus, thousands of years of Jewish history are rapidly



covered in 74 pages, many of which are filled with pictures.

Before reaching the contemporary scene, Halter devotes the second section of his narrative to an overview of Jewish history, beginning with the Jews of France, where Halter has made his home since 1950. He begins with the beginning of the Common Era and then breathlessly moves to Charlemagne before mentioning Rashi. This brings him to the Crusades; the Jews of Spain and the Ottoman Empire; early Jewish settlements in what is now Israel; Polish Jewry; kabbalah; the false messiah, Shabbatai Zeve; the Haskala; the French Revolution; return of the Jews to England in 1656; Theodor Herzl; Zionism; Nazi persecution; the Jews of Russia; World War II; establishment of Israel; the War of Independence; the airlifts of Yemenite and Ethiopian Jews; the Six-Day War; and, the Refuseniks. Books have been written about each of these subjects, but Halter covers them all superficially in 92 pages.

Finally, he comes to the contemporary scene, mentioning the Jews of the United States, France, Russia, India, Japan, and China. This shallow review brings Halter back to Israel and the Yom Kippur War and then to a discussion of the Lubavitcher movement. Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism are disposed of on one page. Contemporary anti-Semitism and the assassination of Rabin are given short shrift, followed by a discussion of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. Halter concludes by emphasizing the importance of remembering and transmitting the Bible from one generation to the next. He says that this is the task of the Jews who are "keeper of the book."

Marek Halter took on an impossible task – to tell the saga of Jewish history in just a few pages. His ambition is commendable, but the result is inevitably thin and meager. However, the pictures he provides alone justify the publication. Those readers who may be interested in a once-over-lightly account of Jewish history will find this to be a useful contribution.

Introduces readers to important part of Jewish history

Kings of the Jews. By Norman Gelb. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society. 2010. 246 Pages. \$22.

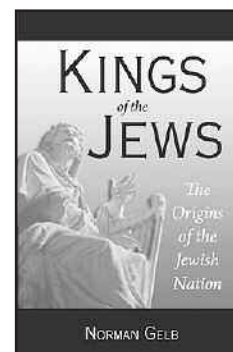
The names commonly associated with Jewish kings are David and Solomon. Norman Gelb's research has led him to move beyond these well-known individuals and to identify a total of 52 men and two women as Jewish monarchs. He has dug through the biblical sources: *Kings*, *Chronicles*, and *Prophets*. Also, he took into account information gleaned from the two Talmuds. However, modern archaeological

findings and Judaic scholarship contribute little to the narrative. Gelb's intent is to present a popular, easy-to-read story without the complications presented by the contradictions and different views presented in the Bible and the Talmuds. He has succeeded fully in achieving his objective. Readers with limited knowledge about Jewish history will learn a great deal and will enjoy this pleasing presentation.

Gelb begins with a helpful introductory overview and then proceeds to tell the story of Saul, the first king of the Jews. He sets the tone for the rest of the book by clearly describing Saul with all his achievements and limitations. Each of the rulers that follow, beginning with David and Solomon, is described with straightforward recognition of their cruelty and their contributions.

After Solomon's death in 931 B.C.E., the kingdom was split into two parts: the southern realm of Judah, which included the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the separate kingdom of Israel that had ten tribes. The Kingdom of Israel lasted until 722 B.C.E. when it was conquered by the Assyrians. During that time, it had 19 kings who sometimes succeeded each other by killing their predecessors. These ten tribes were dispersed and became the "lost tribes." Through the years, there have been many claims to have discovered one or more of the lost tribes but these assertions have little credence. One such flimsy assertion that has special contemporary relevance is that the people of Afghanistan are descendants of the lost tribe of Asher.

The Kingdom of Judah, which lasted until 587 B.C.E., had 20 rulers until it was driven into exile in Babylonia. Again, Gelb describes the intrigues and the assassinations that took place during the three centuries of this Kingdom's existence. The seventh monarch of Judah was the first female to hold this office. She was Athalia who sat on the throne from 840 to 835 B.C.E. Athalia was not descended from King David as her predecessors had been, so that many people did not consider her to be a legitimate ruler. Demonstrating that she could be just as ruthless as the kings, she ordered that all of David's male descendants be executed in order to eliminate any competition. This action incurred considerable hostility, and she was killed by her enemies who had hidden her grandson, Joash, King David's only surviving descendant. He was anointed king at the age of seven. A regent ruled until Joash was old enough to take over, at which point he was impotent in the face of invaders and marauders, eventually leading to his



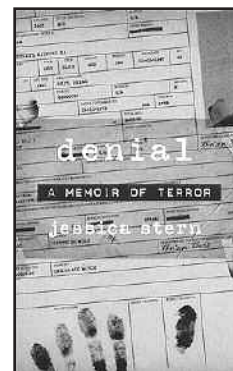
assassination. The other female ruler was Queen Alexandra Salome of the post-biblical Hasmonean dynasty. She reigned for nine years from 76 C.E. to 67 C.E.

Gelb goes on to discuss the return of the Jews from Babylonia, the Persian and Greek rule, followed by the Maccabean revolt. He provides an extensive discussion of the Jews under the Romans, which culminated in the conquest by Titus and the exile of the Jews to Rome. Gelb's rapid review of Jewish history is extremely useful, providing an overview of a complicated story in brief and readily accessible fashion. The book fully fulfills its objective of introducing readers to an important part of Jewish history. Those critics who complain that Gelb is insufficiently scholarly miss the point of his presentation. He set out to offer contemporary readers an instructive and readable account of what happened to the Jews during the 1,000 years before the Common Era and the first 70 years of the Common Era. He has fully succeeded in meeting this laudable objective.

Insightful portrait of Israeli life

Denial. By Jessica Stern. New York: Ecco, 2010. 317 Pages. \$24.99.

Some books are hard to read because they are poorly written. That can hardly be said of *Denial*; it is extremely well-written. Some books are hard to read because they are dull. Again, that doesn't apply to *Denial*; it rivets



the reader's attention and is hard to put down. Nevertheless, the painful subject, the raw feelings, and the emotional subject make it necessary to warn readers that this is not an easy book to read.

Jessica Stern is an expert on terrorism on the faculty of Harvard University. She has written scholarly articles and two well-received books on her area of expertise. For two years, during the Clinton administration, she served on the National Security Council, making use of her knowledge about terrorism. Stern is a graduate of Barnard, MIT, and Harvard.

While her academic background helps to inform her overall presentation, the basic subject of the book is the brutal rape that Stern experienced at the age of 15. She and her 14-year-old sister were alone in their Concord, Mass. home on Oct. 1, 1973 when they were raped at gunpoint by a strange man who threatened to kill them unless they followed his orders. What happened is described in harrowing detail. One especially traumatic aspect of this terrible experience is that their father was in Norway at the time and did

(see Teicher, page NAT 19)



My Kosher Kitchen

By SYBIL KAPLAN

Cold soups for Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah

From breaking the fast to eating in the Sukkah and celebrating Simchat Torah, cold soups are good for family and company. Here are some of my favorites.

Gazpacho (8 servings)

1 cup tomatoes
1/2 cup cucumbers
3/8 cup red peppers
3/8 cup green peppers
3/4 cup scallions
1/2 tsp. minced garlic
4 cups tomato juice
salt and pepper to taste
1/4 tsp. Worcestershire Sauce
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
chives or tops of green onions

Chop by hand or in food processor in batches, tomatoes, cucumbers, red peppers, green peppers, scallions and garlic with some of the tomato juice. Add salt and pepper, Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice to batches. Place in container and refrigerate.

Serve in chilled bowls. Garnish with chopped chives or tops of scallions

Zucchini Vichyssoise (8 servings)

3 Tbsp. butter or margarine
2 1/2 cups white and pale green parts of leeks
8 chopped garlic cloves
1 1/2 lbs. potatoes cut into 2-inch pieces
1 lb. zucchini, cut into 1-inch rounds
4 1/2 cups pareve chicken soup
2 cups pareve unsweetened whipping cream
salt and pepper to taste
chopped chives

Melt butter or margarine in a pot. Sauté leeks and garlic 5 minutes. Add potatoes and zucchini and sauté 5 minutes more. Add soup and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are tender. Puree soup in blender and transfer to a container. Add whipping cream, salt and pepper. Refrigerate. To serve, ladle soup into bowls and garnish with chives.

Pumpkin Soup (8 servings)

6 cups pareve chicken soup
1 1/2 minced onions
white part of 6 scallions
3 cups pumpkin
1 1/2 cup pareve whipping cream
salt to taste
minced scallions

Jewish Calendars: Esthetic Encounter with Past & Present

By ROSE KLEINER

The pairing of Jewish calendars with striking images of Judaica treasures makes for an exciting combination. With each weekly, or monthly, calendar page, we encounter an illustration of a historical or contemporary Judaic precious object that can brighten our surroundings, lift our spirits, and enlighten us about some aspect of our rich traditions. All the calendars reviewed here give candle lighting times, Torah readings, and the dates for major and minor holidays.

The Jewish Calendar 2011, from Universe Publishing, is decorated with art treasures from the collection of the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam. The first page of this wall calendar has an illustration of a stunning silver etrog basket, dating from 1851 to 1878 (Amsterdam). Among the textile works illustrated, is a beautifully embroidered tallis from 1923–24 (Amsterdam). A page of the De Leipnik Haggadah, on lambskin parchment and leather, comes from Darmstadt, Germany, 1734. An oil painting by Isidor Kaufman, depicts a touching Portrait of a Jewish Little Boy, 1900. A Torah Shield by Piet Isak Cohen, of silver and rubber (Amsterdam, 2001) is a fine example of an ultra-modern ceremonial object.

The Universe desk calendar comes with illustrations of objects from the collection of the Jewish Museum of New York. The large, diverse selection of works illustrated in this calendar spans many centuries, mediums and themes. It will make a most welcome gift for the busy household, because of the excellent guide it contains to all the holiday dates on the Jewish calendar.

This guide, in the form of a chart, lists every major, and minor, holiday and fast day, along with such observances as Rosh Chodesh (the New Month), Israel Independence Day, Holocaust Remembrance Day, and others. The chart provides information such as the Biblical/Historical significance of the holiday listed, its seasonal significance, its theme, its mood, and its selected customs, along with the appropriate Biblical readings.

Leafing through this calendar is like taking a walk through a great museum exhibit, because of the large number of illustrations, and their astonishing variety of subjects. Most striking are some of



Heat soup, onions and scallions in a pot, bringing to a boil. Add pumpkin and stir. Puree in food processor and transfer to a container. Let cool. Stir in whipping cream and salt and chill. To serve, pour soup into bowls and garnish with scallions.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, lecturer, food writer and author of nine kosher cookbooks. She lives in Jerusalem. ★

the contemporary silver pieces, such as the mezuzah (2004), by Israeli artist, Adam Tihany, produced by Orfeverie Christofle. Two silver works by Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, a menorah and torah finials, date from several decades before the Christofle mezuzah, but foreshadow the modern style of the 21st century.

Another magnificent, ultra-modern silver work is Moshe Zabari's torah crown (1969). Other Judaica illustrations in this calendar are a Limoges coffee pot with Hebrew writing on it; a multicolored ketubah with relief print letters, by Gregg A. Handorff (1989); along with paintings by Shahn, Oppenheim, Szyk and others.

Among this year's calendars from Pomegranate publishers **The Jewish Museum Calendar 2011**, for the wall, features Raphael Soyer's, oil on canvas, Dancing Lesson (1926) on its cover. The painting is so vibrant it begs to be framed after the calendar year is over. Another charming oil on canvas, from the late 1920s, is Flowers on Table, by Israeli artist Reuven Rubin.

A New Year Greeting card, from early 20th-century Germany, on embossed paper, surrounded by white doves, recalls a more gentle era in that part of the world. An elaborate cast silver menorah takes us back to the 1860s Lemberg, to a city that once was the Paris of Ukraine. Among the contemporary works illustrated is American artist, Toby Kahn's Omer Calendar (Saphyr, 2002), of acrylic and wood.

Bursting with color, Malca Zeldis' wall calendar, **Jewish Celebrations**, also by Pomegranate, contains a joyous series of images, drawn in the folk-art style. Looking at these detailed portraits of a family observing various traditions throughout the year, we are drawn into the pictures, and made to feel like participants in the celebrations. Zeldis portrays such rituals as the Seder, Havdala and Benchen Licht (lighting Shabbat, or holiday candles), along with such holidays as Purim, Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah. Each illustration comes with a short commentary, explaining the ritual's meaning and significance.

Pomegranate publishers also produce other Judaica items, such as an attractive box with 40 kosher recipes, titled **The New Jewish Family Kitchen**, for Jewish Holidays and Every Day. Prepared by Devorah Rosen Goldman with Miriam Lewitt, these family-friendly recipes are printed on durable laminated cards, with full-color photographs.

Another Pomegranate product is a boxed set of 20 cards, illustrated by Mayer Kirshenblatt of Toronto, who was born in Opatow (Apt), in Poland. Titled **Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood**, each of the 20 cards comes with a short commentary by the artist. The illustrations used for the cards were taken from Kirshenblatt's book, *They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust*.

It is always a delight, for adults, as for youngsters, to see what **My Very Own Jewish Calendar** contains this year in its monthly pages. This wall calendar is always filled with facts, customs, anecdotes, trivia and activities of all sorts. Their monthly recipes are always healthful, simple, easy to make and delicious. This year a fine, concise, description is included of the shofar, its origin, significance, and how it is produced and used by Ashkenazim and by Sephardim.

An overview of the history of Jewish calendars in the past 200 years notes that a Jewish calendar in Germany used to list market and fair days, and one printed in London included the times of high water at London Bridge.

Keeping up with modern technology the calendar informs us that wherever we live we now can twitter our prayers to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The prayers are printed out, and tucked between the 2,000 year old stones, and there is no charge for the service. But donations are invited.

Ever wonder what happens to these notes as time goes by? Every year, before Rosh Hashanah and Passover, the rabbi of the Wall collects the current messages, to make room for the new ones. The old messages are then honored with a burial at the Mount of Olives cemetery, where old books and religious objects are also buried.

Among the other sites in Israel that are mentioned in this calendar is Afrikef Park, between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Home to 250 monkeys from all over the world, the park offers guided tours, a petting zoo, pony rides, and a Tarzan's Tree House. This is probably the only park in the world where, on Hanukkah, you could see monkeys playing with dreidels.

Closer to home we are reminded that National Jewish Art Week, to encourage the creation of Jewish art work, takes place in February and is connected to the Torah portion read on Shabbat Vayakhel. The artists celebrated in this Torah portion were jewelers, weavers, sculptors and engravers.

We are informed that the Houston Holocaust Museum is collecting 1.5 million handmade butterflies, in memory of the 1.5 million children lost in the Shoah. The deadline for submissions is June 2011. Butterflies can be no larger than 8 x 10 inches. They will go on exhibit next year.

On the subject of blessings we are told that the great scholar, Maimonides, divided them into three types – those of enjoyment, those recited before doing a *mitzvah*, and those of praise and gratitude, like wearing new clothes, seeing a rainbow, or being in the presence of a king.

The latter blessing was recited by Israeli author, S.Y. Agnon (the Hebrew Shakespeare), when he received the Nobel Prize for literature, in 1966, and found himself in the presence of the King of Sweden. ★

GOUTTMAN

(continued from page NAT 7)

Palestinian cause. Some of those who lead these organizations are considered living Australian treasures. Popular support for these bodies is given on the back of their humanitarian work elsewhere. Hence, their advocacy of the Palestinian cause against Israel has the appearance of authenticity. That Israel also is active on the humanitarian front internationally, just doesn't seem to matter. Indignation is ever one-sided. The plight of Israeli men, women, and children having to suffer constant threat to their existence has no place in their discourse on human rights and responsibilities.

The Jewish State also suffers much heart burn from those fair-weather friends who proffer ideas that would lull it into a false sense of security. And they too still pour cash aid down and never-ending Palestinian black hole in the mistaken belief that it will win them power, influence, perhaps even respect, across the Arab Middle East. When Israel rebuffs their advances for sound security reasons, in high moral dudgeon they cry that all they want is to save the Jewish State from itself. Indeed, the theme of salvation of the Jewish soul has a long, eerie, and disastrous pedigree.

In this period of the *Yamim Noraim* when we are called to consider our relationship with the Almighty and our fellow Jews, the people of Israel should also have a prime place in our thoughts.

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WEINER

(continued from page NAT 8)

impulses that undermine our ability to love and be loved.

The Gate swings two ways – outward, allowing us to be part of a greater experience and fulfillment – and inward, allowing us to enter and be accepted by God as we attempt to accept God. This is why we listen to the prayers that have been recited from time immemorial: To enable us to reach a level of spiritual involvement that will give us the ability to be refreshed and complete. And we are compelled to keep the connection alive that has sustained us as for 4,000 years. This is no small accomplishment.

Yes, we all have choices in life. God is not waiting for us to make the choice that is already written but rather to erase the past and write a new chapter. God waits for us to make choices because that is what is pre-ordained – the ability to make choices. Adam and Eve had a

choice and they chose to be able to make choices. This is the beauty of not sitting back and waiting for things to happen – nothing is *besheirt*. Isn't it why pencils come with erasers?

What is our choice as we welcome in a New Year? To live!

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

KAUFMAN

(continued from page NAT 9)

Eva thinks she should use the trip to Auschwitz to help educate the Arab/Muslim world: "It might not help, but it couldn't hurt."

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

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page NAT 10)

In a bowl, mix egg, 3 Tbsp. flour, breadcrumbs, nutmeg and vegetable soup powder. Add cooled vegetables and mix together. Stuff each artichoke heart with the vegetable mixture and close. Place in a baking pan. Sprinkle some more breadcrumbs and olive oil on top. Bake for 35 minutes.

Chop sauce carrot, onion and celery. Heat oil in a frying pan and sauté vegetables. Add flour, 11 1/4 oz. water, 1/4 cup lemon juice, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Remove artichokes from the oven and pour lemon sauce on top. Return to oven and bake 10 minutes more. Serve hot.

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ★

GERTEL

(continued from page NAT 15)

Krusty declares his love: "I'd rather be a happy *shnook* than a noble *shlump*" (though it sounds like he says "*shlumpf*"). Here is the old Hollywood formula, "Love conquers all," the old *Jazz Singer* plot once or twice removed but handed to a new generation of children (Jewish and non-Jewish) as a permanent gift, unlike the toys and savings bonds that Krusty passes around to *his* audience.

Interestingly, in this case, it is not the Gentleness of the Gentile woman that is attractive, but the fact that she sounds like many Jewish women from New York. Is the suggestion being made that you don't have to be a Jewish woman to be a new kind of Jewish woman for an old kind of Jewish man?

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. A native of Springfield, Mass.,

he attended Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic for The National Jewish Post & Opinion since 1979. ★

ZIMMERMAN

(continued from page NAT 16)

elling of olive trees; and Lisa Gossels, director of the documentary feature *My So Called Enemy*.

With a slew of prizes in tow, *Budrus* captured the raw intensity of the Jewish-Palestinian conflict between ordinary people, the military who must harass them, and a few Israeli Jews who support the Palestinians. Although I saw *Budrus*, I did not see the second film.

One more Holocaust film that deserves special mention: *Gruber's Journey*, about an Italian war correspondent suffering from allergies who searches for a highly recommended Jewish physician. Along the way, he finds out what happened to all the Jews of "the German-occupied Romanian city of Iafla. But [Dr.] Gruber is nowhere to be found, and any attempt to locate him is met with Kafka-esque bureaucracy as Malaparte [the war correspondent] slowly discovers the heartbreaking truth." The program notes sum up this powerful movie best: "This is an extraordinary film where the horror takes place in what is not shown on the screen."

Although I highly recommend this film to anyone knowledgeable about the Holocaust, I would never show this film to my Holocaust class [at a Catholic university]. The film's exquisite subtlety requires that its viewers know *a priori* the variety of methods used by the Nazis to humiliate and crush the Jewish people and the many steps to extermination. Without this understanding, viewers cannot fully appreciate *Gruber's Journey*.

It is a Holocaust movie [spoiler alert] with only one shot of spattered blood, as workers clean up an execution site from the night before. Previously, advancing Wehrmacht soldiers carelessly trash a castle's 12,000-bottle wine cellar. The Nazi officers and Italian diplomat rue the loss of wine while ignoring the missing 12,000 Jewish inhabitants of the village. The power of the final scene, with the dignitaries and the recovering journalist swilling their fine wine and lamenting the loss of 12,000 bottles, transforms wine into a metaphor for blood.

For more information, please go to <http://www.sfjff.org/> to obtain ideas for films for your local Jewish film festival; for your synagogue, JCC, Chavurah; or for yourself.

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TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 17)

not return home immediately after being notified about what happened to his daughters. Toward the end of the book, the father, a Holocaust survivor, discusses this with Stern without coming to a satisfactory resolution, although she dedicates the book to him. Complicating their relationship was the fact that his first wife, Stern's mother, died at the age of 28. He married twice thereafter. Stern herself has been married twice.

An extensive discussion of Stern's maternal grandparents contributes to the reader's understanding of the author's personality. Her grandfather, a physician, insisted on treating her mother with radiation for an enlarged thymus. While this was not uncommon at the time, it contributed considerably to her early death and estranged him from Stern's father. Stern's grandmother was active in civil rights and in politics. With considerable equanimity, she told Stern about her husband's involvement with other women and about her own lover. Stern relates these discoveries to her capacity to ferret out secrets from terrorists. "I am blessed, or cursed, with curiosity, and as a result, I have learned a great deal." Her professional interest is also related to her having been subjected to terror by her rapist.

In 2006, the police in Concord re-opened Stern's rape case and asked for her cooperation. This entailed reading her case file and those of other rapes that had occurred at about the same time. Also, with the aid of a research assistant and that of the man who eventually became her second husband, she interviewed a number of people, discovering that the perpetrator was a serial rapist who was probably sexually abused by the priests in his school. Stern hypothesizes that the man who raped her, her sister, and others was re-asserting his manhood as a consequence of having been humiliated as a boy. She learned that he had been imprisoned for three of his 44 rapes; sentenced to 18 years in prison; was eventually released; and then committed suicide.

Stern concludes her book with a postscript in which she discusses posttraumatic stress disorder, explaining her choice of "Denial" as her title. Victims of rape and returning soldiers with psychological wounds, she claims, should not try to forget or deny what happened to them. That only results in imposing "a terrible cost." She has clearly avoided that cost by writing this searing account of what happened to her. The honesty of this book and the bravery it took to write it make it an unforgettable addition to our understanding of human behavior. We are deeply in her debt!

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



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

Gilad Shalit's Family, Barking Up the Wrong Tree

This morning the radio was on at the Shiloh Swimming Pool. Every little while I could hear the announcement by Aviva Shalit, Gilad's mother, reminding us that tomorrow will be Gilad's fifth birthday in captivity. She then invited us all to protest after Shabbat. So far, so good, but then she announced that the protest's slogan is that Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu must free Gilad.

Duh!?! Did I miss something here? Is Bibi Netanyahu holding Gilad prisoner? No, well, if that's the case how does she expect the prime minister to free her son?

Bibi wasn't even prime minister when Gilad Shalit was captured. There's something very *fokokt* in the Shalit family's tactics and logic.

Didn't Hamas kidnap Gilad Shalit? Yes, it did. So the focus of the demonstrations must be on the agencies, organizations, countries, and so on that represent Hamas. There should be a constant vigil against the International Red Cross, European Union and the United Nations for their laxity and hypocrisy in not demanding to visit and assist Gilad Shalit in returning home.

It's obvious that the Shalit family is mixing their own anti-Likud politics with their personal pain. They are wasting precious time by fudging the issues here. They should be working with the government to pressure those who support Hamas to return Gilad home.

For the Future

"... for the Future" is a phrase repeated by Jeff Bridges a number of times in one of my favorite movies, *Seabiscuit*.



For the future of the Jewish People, we need communities like Shiloh to grow and prosper.

Developing Shiloh is the antidote for the punishment of exile.

The Torah lives in New York, California, London, Paris, or any other *chutz l'aretz* out-of-the-Holyland location. And living the Torah there is certainly better than assimilation into non-Jewish society, but it's not the ideal Jewish Life. It's a reflection or like a "dress rehearsal" for the life to be lived here in the Land G-d has shown us.

We Jews have our own Land; we don't have to be guests in a different one. Remember how welcomed Jacob and his family, our forefathers, the twelve tribes were by Pharaoh in Egypt. The result was that we became slaves to pharaoh in Egypt.



Come home!

The New Improved Israel Museum



G-d forbid you should think that I only *kvetch* and complain about things here. Last week I managed to go twice to the newly expanded, renovated and refurbished Israel Museum. Years, no, decades ago I was a very frequent, regular visitor to the museum. We even had a membership. My daughters feel like they were raised there. The two elder ones went to arts & crafts classes in the Israel Museum. I knew every exhibit, the whole layout of the place. I was young and all the distances and levels didn't bother me.

Well, the museum and I have aged. I haven't had any face-lifts, botox or even dyed my hair, but the Israel Museum has been totally rejuvenated. It's a new museum, bionic, maybe....

Last week there were thousands and thousands of visitors each day, many escaping the heat, but the museum is large enough to handle even more!



The second day I was there, it was with family from abroad and a couple of my grandchildren. They were entranced by the Judaica and archeology exhibits. The kids even liked the snacks bought in the snack-bar. They got a kick out of watching the workers still painting and

fixing things in the museum. We didn't have enough time to let them join the workshops. If we had given them the chance, it would have had been harder to get them to leave.

And, no, I'm not tempted to get a face-lift. It's fine for the Israel Museum but not for me.

Tel Shiloh Digs, Again

When I was at Tel Shiloh for Rosh Chodesh Elul Prayers, I discovered that the young crew of archaeologist helpers were still busy digging.



And last week at the Israel Museum, I found one of the giant urns that had been discovered during an earlier dig. It's in the third section, the one about Biblical finds. Strangely, Shiloh doesn't seem to be mentioned in the museum's narrative, explanations. Shiloh was the capital for 369 years, quite a long time. Actually, the narrative is the worst thing about the exhibit, the archeology section. It's very antireligious.

Bar Mitzvah at The Kotel

Admittedly, I haven't been to any recent *bar mitzvah* at the *kotel*. I think that the last one was long enough ago, so the *bar mitzvah* boy is now a senior in high school, and it was before I bought a digital camera.

There weren't any of these umbrellas the last time I checked. By the time we finished, before 10 a.m., it didn't shade us. That's why my cousin and I wore hats.



My female relatives couldn't get over how pushy people were. We had to guard our chair and spot at the *mechitza* with our lives. I'm just so happy that they came to Israel for the *bar mitzvah*.

Sandal Searching for Owner

The Israeli, Jewish "Lost and Found" is the antithesis of "Losers Weepers, Finders Keepers."

In Hebrew it's called "Returning Lost Objects." According to Jewish Law, we have an obligation to find the owner and return the object. The responsibility



is on the finder. That's why someone unknown made the effort to hang this sandal on a pole, to catch the eye. Our local email list always has "found" announcements, usually before someone even realizes they've lost something.

As If Last Year Had Never Happened...

Lots of people ask me if my life feels much emptier since I took my father to my mother in Arizona. Honestly, although it was just a few weeks ago, it seems a lifetime ago, almost like the year with my father living with us had never happened.

The most "permanent" reminder is "his" room, which had been the bedroom of two of my daughters. Last October when I was in New York getting him, one of my sons and my son-in-law totally redid the room, painting it, changing furniture, etc. It's not the room it was. Otherwise it would be hard to remember that he had ever lived here. My neighbors miss him. He was a popular addition to the neighborhood.

I hadn't lived with my parents for decades. I'm married 40 years. As an adult I had rarely seen him. It was strange having him living with us and so dependent on me.

Now I'm back where I was a year ago. I must find a part-time job. I plan on helping with the grandkids once or twice a week. And I'd like to make some sort of business out of my photography, writing and diet coaching. There aren't enough English tutoring opportunities here in Shiloh, but I accept whatever students apply. I don't belong in a classroom; it's too stressful. And I plan on registering for some Matan classes. Yes, this does sound like where I was last year this time...

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