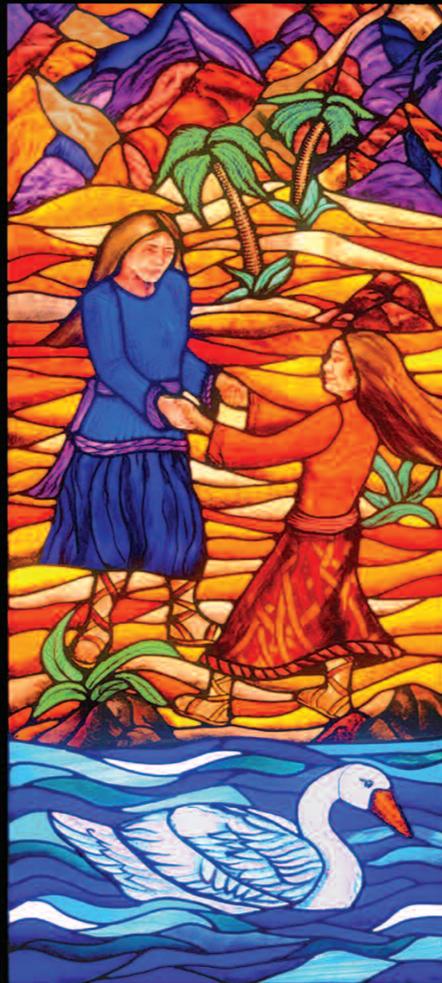


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Cover art by Bruce David (see About the Cover, p.2).

Editorial

First of all, Happy Birthday to Anne Kodicek of Delray Beach, Florida. She will be 103 on March 15 and has been reading this publication for more than 70 years. I know that she is still with it because I spoke to her on the phone recently and she wanted to know why there was no column from my brother, Rabbi Benzion Cohen in our January issue. Biz hundert un tsvantsik! (You should live until 120!).

For this Passover issue I am reprinting my editorial from March 18, 2009:

This editorial is dedicated to Jessie Bernstein of Indianapolis who turned 96 in December. It is a story about a Passover Seder that she organized in 1944 in Naples, Italy. She was a dietitian for the United States Army and she served six station hospitals at that location starting in 1943 for a year and a half.

In the beginning of 1944 there had been a lot of artillery and airplanes dropping bombs. After the fighting subsided and a couple of months before Passover, she asked permission to hold a Seder for the Jewish soldiers who were hospitalized in her area. The army issued her cans of beef which she immediately exchanged for canned chicken.

Naples is a port and when she heard the Navy was in town, she got a driver and a jeep to take her to talk to the Navy captain so she could see about getting more food items for the Seder. He was not Jewish but was very supportive of her mission. He took her canned chicken and exchanged it for what turned out to be much tastier frozen chicken on the bone. She also was able to get a half grate of fresh eggs. They had dehydrated eggs which were no comparison to fresh eggs which no one had seen for more than a year.

The officers were already being favored with fresh fruit and vegetables so she was able to get those fresh greens for the Seder plates along with the fresh eggs. The Jewish Federation saw that they got all of the matza and Mogen David wine they needed for the Seder. She used white sheets on the tables for tablecloths.

There was only one Jewish cook but all the cooks pitched in. There was one little hand grinder that was used to make matza meal for the matza balls for the soup. About two weeks before the Seder, Bernstein put notices about the date and time on the bulletin boards of all six hospitals.

She didn't want the hospitalized soldiers to have to stand in line for a Seder so she hired 45 extra waiters who were friends of the wait staff who worked in the officer's mess hall. At the last minute, all of the 45 waiters got scared and were going to leave.

About the Cover

On the Shores of Freedom

By Bruce David

I designed this stained glass window as a celebration of the heart. It depicts a time of spiritual ecstasy, a time when the soul overflows with boundless joy. After all, how often do people have the opportunity to truly know God's love, to recognize without a doubt the reality of the Divine presence in their lives? This was one of those times.



Bruce David

This creation depicts Miriam leading the Jewish people in singing and dancing on the shores of the Red Sea. To me, it illustrates the consummate moment when Jews realized that God had freed them from the bonds of slavery.

"When the people saw such tremendous power, they were amazed, and believed in God. Miriam led the women in singing and dancing." ~ Exodus 14

Miriam, so moved by what has just happened and recognizing its implications, picked up her tambourine and led the people in songs of thanks as they danced on the shores of the sea.

In the lower right side of the design, Miriam may be seen with her eyes closed in prayerful reflection of the magnitude of this event. Surrounding her, as depicted in the center panel and in the form of the girl playing maracas alongside her, several of the other women and children are also shown dancing and celebrating.

In the panel on the left, Moses and two other children may be found looking on, enjoying and participating in the celebration. The look on Moses' face is

(see About the Cover, page 19)



At that time the Catholic Church ruled with an iron hand. They had instructed their members not to listen to the religious services of any other religion. Bernstein ran and found their Catholic chaplain who knew some Italian. She asked him to tell the waiters that half of the service would be in Hebrew which they would not be able to comprehend and the other half would be in English, also not understandable to them without a translator. He convinced them that they would not be violating any rules.

There was a Jewish chaplain from Caserta Army Headquarters who had about 300 of the Maxwell House Coffee Haggadahs that he brought for the men to use. On the night of the Seder about that many soldiers showed up in their hospital robes. Probably less than half were Jewish but the men had heard there was going to be a great meal! There was no way to tell which ones were Jewish so they accepted

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The Jewish
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all of them. All sat down and participated in the Seder. None of the other hospitals had a Passover Seder that year because none had a Jewish dietitian. It turned out to be a wonderful evening for all in attendance.
Jennie Cohen, March 13, 2013 ☆

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Pesach

We wish all of our readers and all of Israel a *Kosher* and a Happy *Pesach*. *Pesach* is always a special time for me. *Pesach* is the holiday of redemption. Our ancestors were slaves in Egypt. *Hashem* sent Moses to take them out of Egypt and show them how to find real freedom.

I, too, grew up as a slave. Not in Egypt, but in America. Not physical slavery, spiritual slavery. I was taught "Look out for number one". Take care of yourself. Nothing else, nobody else, matters. Learn a good profession, make a lot of money. Then you can buy a beautiful house and a fancy car and find real happiness.

My life was a misery. We had a nice house and a Chevrolet station wagon, but so what? Other people had nicer houses in better neighborhoods, and drove Cadillacs. *Baruch Hashem*, I was healthy, but so what? I wasn't on the football or basketball team, and I wasn't very popular at all. I had very few friends. True friendship comes when you really love and care for others. I was taught to love and care only for myself.

I suffered for many years. Finally, *Hashem* had mercy on me. He sent Moses to take me out of Egypt, to help me find real freedom. In every generation there is a Moses. The Moses of our generation is the *Lubavitcher* Rebbe. We believe that he is the long awaited *Moshiach*, who will bring complete and final redemption to each and every one of us and all of the world.

The Rebbe and his followers showed me the way to freedom and happiness. Live a life of *Torah* and *Mitzvos*.

What is the difference, for example, between football and *Torah*? At the end of a football game, one team and their fans are happy. They won. But the other team and their fans lost. They are sad. And the poor boys who wanted to join the team but weren't good enough are even sadder.

When we live a life of *Torah*, everyone wins, everyone is happy. If I give charity, I am happy. I just did a big *mitzvah*. The person who receives the charity is also happy. Now he can buy himself some lunch, and he won't be hungry.

Love your fellow man. Don't be selfish. Do you want to be happy? Easy enough! Go out and make someone else happy! Try it! It really works! Five days a week I visit the geriatric ward at our local hospital. I know some of the patients there for years. We have come to love each other a lot. In

Take care of each other, expand Medicaid

BY RABBI DENNIS C. SASSO



The Indiana General Assembly is engaged in one of the most important policy discussions to come before it in some time: whether or not the state should expand its Medicaid program. In 2012 when the Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, it decided that each state could determine for itself whether it would expand its program.

Currently, Indiana's Medicaid program covers only families and single parents with children. Childless adults are not eligible. Indiana has some of the most restrictive financial eligibility requirements in the nation. A family of three cannot have a gross yearly income of more than \$4,500 in order to qualify. An expansion of the program as prescribed by the Affordable Care Act would increase that threshold to close to \$30,000 per year and open the program to all low-income Hoosiers, including childless adults.

Expanding the Medicaid program is good for Indiana. It will cover more than half of the 800,000 Hoosiers who are living



the beginning, I would smile at them and give them a blessing and some love, and they would smile back. Now, whenever they see me they already smile. It warms my heart and soul.

We are living now in a very special time. The Rebbe told us that our generation is the last generation of the exile, and will be the first generation of the final redemption. If we only open our eyes, we can see that this is really happening, right now.

I, personally, found freedom and redemption, and so have many millions like me. Dictators are falling left and right. For thousands of years the nations of the world made war with each other. Now they are making big efforts to help each other and bring peace to the world.

The Rebbe also told us that this is also dependent on each of us. It is up to us to complete this process. We ourselves have to work to bring freedom and redemption to ourselves and to all of the world. How? By living a life of *Torah* and *Mitzvos*, by learning and following the teachings of the Rebbe, we can find personal freedom and happiness. Then we can be a good influence on our family and friends, and all of those who come in contact with us.

(see Benzion, page 5)

without health insurance, allowing them access to regular preventive health care and not force them into hospital emergency rooms. Given such coverage, charity care would not be passed off by hospitals and doctors to insurance companies who then charge higher premiums. The Medicaid expansion will create \$3 billion in economic activity in the state and 30,000 more jobs. The federal government will pay 100 percent of the costs for the first three years and no less than 90 percent thereafter.

But the issue is not simply a matter of dollars and cents. We must acknowledge the moral responsibility we have as a state to ensure that all of our neighbors have access to quality health care.

Our faith traditions affirm the obligation to heal, to care for the sick, and to protect and enhance human life, in keeping with the biblical teaching that all human beings are created in the image of God. In Jewish liturgy, God is often referred to as a *Rofeh Holim*, the Healing Physician. To turn our backs on someone in need is to turn our backs on God.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all teach that human life is of infinite value and that the care of the whole person is a supreme consideration. Human skill and capability to heal make us God's agents in creating a better world.

Providing health care is not just the obligation of the patient and the doctor. The moral duty to care and to heal is the hallmark of a civilized society. It is for this reason that Maimonides, a revered medieval Jewish scholar whose teachings influenced Christianity and Islam listed health care first on his list of the 10 most important communal services that a city offers to its residents. Throughout history, self-governing Jewish communities set up systems ensuring communal access to health care. Doctors were required to reduce rates for poor patients and communal subsidies were established for the care of the sick. The creation of these funds was regarded a higher priority than any other communal obligation, including the construction of synagogues.

We have an opportunity and a responsibility that must not be ignored. Let's encourage Gov. Mike Pence to join the growing numbers of Republican governors who are supporting the Medicaid expansion program. It is good for the economy and good for the residents of Indiana. Is there a better prescription for the health of the state than that?

Rabbi Sasso and his wife Rabbi Sandy E. Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis since 1977. Reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star, March 5, 2013. ✨



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Another Passover thought

As Passover begins our holiday cycle of fulfillment and completion, perhaps we should take a closer look at the most significant event in human history. It is no accident that Passover follows *Purim* by just four weeks. *Purim* deals with self-determination and Passover, the ultimate expression of how that steadfastness and faith can lead to redemption. God cannot be found anywhere in the celebration of *Purim*. However, God is the dominant figure in the ultimate liberation.

We learn in a *Midrash* about the episode of Moses holding up his hands to part the sea so that the people could travel to safety. Nevertheless, it continues that this alone was insufficient. It took the first person to take the first step to ensure that faith in God and in ourselves allowed the safe continuation on the road to salvation.

The great sage Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote that God is in search of man, as man is in search of God. We all desire to know God, to feel God's presence in our lives and, of course, to seek the help of God in times of trouble. The truth is that God searches for us as strongly and as curiously as we search for God. And, this *Midrash* is a perfect example of the concept of connection.

To understand this even better we need to recount the episode in Exodus, 33:18 where Moses asks to see God's glory. In reality, Moses wants to see God. Even though Moses has an intimate relationship with God, the most intimate any human has experienced, still it is not enough. Think about it. To talk to someone we cannot see certainly makes the conversation a bit bizarre. And Moses wants more – to see, to touch, to feel. Perhaps he wanted to be sure that he wasn't losing his mind or that his imagination wasn't playing tricks on him.

In the final analysis God says this is not possible and yet God offers an alternative. Moses can witness God passing him, feel the nearness. All of us can experience God's nearness and the difference God makes in our lives. This alone is an achievement because it helps us realize that we can only attempt to reach for the unreachable but we never stop trying.

Passover can and should have the same affect on us. We relive the history of our



Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Stereotyping: Wounding with Words

My friend Karen told me about an incident that happened to her recently that really hurt her. It started out as a harmless Sunday morning junket to some local yards sales with a friend, who, after some serious haggling, purchased a table and chairs for less than a hundred dollars.

"Boy, I really 'Jewed' them down, didn't I?" her friend exclaimed proudly. Karen's reaction was immediate and visceral – she was horrified, stunned into silence as an ocean of emotions flooded over her. How



people and this affirms God's role in history and in our lives. Look at the holiday as a salute to God for giving us the ability to live, love, remember and continue. We should be grateful to God for all the blessings we receive, the most important of which, besides life, is freedom.

However, to me, the most important aspect of Passover is that our very existence is a compliment to God for the imprint on our lives as attested to by our ancestors and will remain a testament to our ability to persevere and prosper so that future generations will hear the same story and marvel as we do to the timeless message of emancipation.

Generation after generation retells this story because it fulfills the wishes and desires of all humankind. And as Moses exhorts Pharaoh to let the people go so that they may worship their God in peace and security, we are reminded that this is a clarion call for all people to be able to feel secure.

Yes, we search for God as God searches for us. This episode in history affirms that the search is not complete. The incident of the Golden Calf reminds us of this. We need to continue to probe so that we too will be able to appreciate the essence of God's love as we continue to taste freedom.

Rabbi Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. He welcomes comments at ravyitz@cox.net. His new book Living with Faith will be published in April 3, 2013. It can be obtained on Amazon. Pre-orders are available by typing his name in the space requesting author names. ★

should she react? Should she let it pass as an ignorant comment and assume her friend meant no harm? Would she make it worse if she said something? Could she afford not to?

I understood exactly how Karen felt because I encountered a similar situation with a non-Jewish friend who didn't have a clue that what she said totally offended me. When I told her how I felt, she was shocked at my reaction.

"But I thought 'Jewed' was a verb," my friend answered innocently. "It's just a saying anyway, and you shouldn't take it personally," she added.

"How could I *not* take it personally?" I thought to myself. Because words, like soldiers, march over us and damage our ability to trust.

Ethnic stereotyping often boils down to hateful or narrow-minded misconceptions about a culture, race, religion or group in society. Whether we realize it or not, it's a way to dehumanize others and the values they stand for or believe in. Whether rooted in ignorance or prejudice, it often serves as a scapegoat for problems in society and a vent for jealousy, frustration and anger. It can be overt, like Hitler's depiction of the Jews as big-nosed and cunning or covert, like many of the media images that denigrate women who are not "Sex in the City" types.

The primary way to fight stereotypes is to refrain from stereotyping ourselves. If we become aware of how we label others who come from different backgrounds and cultures, if we avoid making generalizations about ethnic groups or sexual orientations based on false assumptions or faulty reasoning, then we can begin to reduce the negative effect that stereotyping has on all of us.

As Jews, we should not only look at how we speak about those who are outside of the Jewish tradition, but those who are within it as well. We must take care not to disparage Orthodox Jews just because we follow different traditions or none at all. We shouldn't belittle politically conservative Jews because we are more liberal. Each time we make prejudicial comments about others, we say more about ourselves than about those whom we are stereotyping.

So what should Karen have done? What should any of us do when we encounter negative stereotyping?

We have to talk about it, loud and clear, because how we respond is critical for many reasons. First, it lets others know that their actions are offensive. Second, it provides us with an opportunity to explain more about Judaism and correct misconceptions that might exist. And third, it gives us a chance to engage in building meaningful

(see Lederman, page 18)



Jewish Spirituality

BY RABBI ELI MALLON

Loving G-d

My son is 23 these days. Of course, I love him.

But I remember what it was like for me when he was an infant. Whenever I held him with his head resting against the crook in my arm (they call it the “football hold”), I was filled with love. It made my mind and heart very peaceful and quiet. Nothing bothered me. Any concerns or feelings of pressure just melted away effortlessly. I couldn’t wait to get home each day and pick him up. Life seemed perfect.

During the day, when I thought of him, I would feel the same, but more briefly and not as deeply. I still do.

That’s the power of loving.

So – why didn’t I feel quite the same thing all the rest of the day as when we were at home?

I loved my son as much when I wasn’t with him as when I was. I love him as much now. Yet, there was something extraordinary about loving him when I was holding that tiny little being.

Could it suggest that there’s something about the sense of proximity – perhaps combined with an action that affirms and emphasizes the bond – that intensifies the feelings?

Maybe it’s also that in those moments when I was holding him, I wasn’t doing anything else. I wasn’t distracted even by the most mundane things, like crossing a street or opening a door. I was totally “his.”

I think we should feel the same thing (at least) when we’re loving G-d. We’re all different personalities, of course. I agree that we’d each experience this in our own way, but our best moments in life are the moments when we’re loving. Loving G-d – whether during formal or informal prayer, or just in private “moments” – should fill us with the peace and bliss that loving always does.

Yet, when we say the *v’ahavta* portion of the *Sh’ma*, in which the words mean, “Love G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might,” do we feel filled with that same deep peace? I confess: I don’t, although I often feel it during or after my private, personal, “inner” prayer. Of course, our loving of G-d can’t be measured by how we feel when saying a single word out of the entire *avodah* – the entire service. It’s more

WINE and KISSES

BY RABBI ELI MALLON

L-rd,
Your joy is wine to me;
It intoxicates me.
In troubles,
I smile, silent;
My heart quiet in me.

The joy is Yours, not mine;
You, not me.

Immersed in You,
fear and sorrow vanish:
Sea-spray on hot sand,
Shadow in light.

Y’shakeini min shikote pihu:
Let him kiss me with the kisses
of his mouth. [1]

Let Your kisses be kisses,
Not only covering my mouth,
So that I cannot speak my love.
How can I love You,
And not declare that You love me,
In all my heart,
In all my soul,
In all my life?

Elders say
Your love is Your law,
Your kiss: Your commandment.
Mine is an infant’s heart:
If I forget, even for a moment,
Only You are giving me my life and my world,
I cry, “Where are You? Where are You?”

Let this, then, be Your kiss:
That I know only You. [2]

[1] *Shir ha-Shirim/Song of Songs* 1:2

[2] © 2003 by Eli Mallon

likely to quietly permeate our entire experience of the service itself, after we become sufficiently familiar with the words and actions involved. Yet, there’s something more...

I must insert mention here of a book from Indian tradition, “The Bhakti Sutras” of Narada. “Bhakti” is the devotional love of G-d; parallel to *Hasidut* (especially *Breslaver Hasidut*) as opposed to other devotional pathways (e.g. philosophy; selfless action, etc.).[1] Without doing a long discourse about it, the book mentions that there can be many ways to love G-d: as our Parent, as our Child, as our Husband, as our Wife, as our Friend, and so on. So, my experience of loving my son is therefore only one of many possible

BENZION

(continued from page 3)

They will see that we are living a good and happy life and will be inspired to follow our example. Who wants to be miserable? Learn the secret of happiness and share it, until all of world will be free and happy.

Our rabbis taught us that in this month, the month of *Nissan*, our fathers were redeemed from Egypt, and in this month we too will be redeemed. Let us make a real effort that it should happen this year.

We want Moshiach now! Long live the King Moshiach!

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models of loving G-d.

“The Song of Songs,” read on *Pesach*, is another. Some have the custom of reciting it on *erev Shabbat*, too. I find reading it intoxicating. Especially, but not only, in the spring.

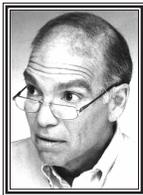
I believe that we could all be striving to make our love of G-d something more than words alone. It should be the greatest delight of our lives. Once we’ve begun to experience it, its absence will leave us feeling unsatisfied or incomplete.

Perhaps we can each begin to do this by looking at moments of loving in our own lives.

What have been your greatest moments of loving? What are your moments of loving as a parent like? Loving as a child? Loving as a lover? Loving as a friend? What can you bring from them to your loving of G-d?

[1] also called the *Narada Bhakti Sutra*: “...bhakti itself is defined as being ‘the most elevated, pure love for God,’ which is eternal by nature and through following which one obtains perfect peace and immortality (release from samsara). The symptoms of such devotion are that one no longer has any selfish desires, nor is affected by the dualities of loss or gain for himself being fully content with (and experiencing ecstasy through) the process of bhakti itself.” From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narada_Bhakti_Sutra

Rabbi Mallon first came as an adult to Jewish learning, after experience with Transcendental Meditation (TM), Yoga, and other growth-producing modalities. He also studied Jewish Science and Visualization at the Society of Jewish Science in New York. Over the years, he has taught people of all ages as a bar/bat mitzvah instructor, Hebrew school teacher, cantor, pastoral counselor and rabbi, in addition to his work in public education. He resides in New City, NY. View other works by him at: <http://rabbielimallon.wordpress.com>. ☆



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

Dreams, goals and realities

We all have dreams. There is the life we want to live when we grow up that we can visualize when we are about eight years old. This changes by twelve as puberty kicks in and then again as our frontal lobe develops and we begin to think maturely.

But something seems to happen as our life unfolds. If the dreams do not become reality. If life buffets us to the point where just getting out of bed in the morning is a chore, it is difficult to remember we were destined for great things, to make this fantastic contribution to the world.

If on the other hand, we hit the right buttons, make the right connections, go to the right schools, get that leg up however it occurs, very often we begin to think we were not only destined for that brass ring, but it always belonged to us.

Those bankers who tanked our economy feel that no one has the right to take away that brass ring of theirs even if they got it through trickery, chicanery and because the game is rigged in their favor.

They know they will never do the perp walk or even suffer economic pain. "I am right," they say. "I have always been right and do not show me facts that might change my mind about myself." They obviously never give a thought to those on the receiving end of the slings and arrows they have created.

Politicians and fanatics also believe that they are ordained. How do you beat an enemy that has God on his side? It is obvious that all of us cannot have God on our side. Not if we are on opposite sides of an argument.

But where zealots and fanatics rule, logic has no place. The United States is criticized for not taking up the Rebel cause in Syria. Is Assad a bad guy? No question. But when Iraq and Iran fought an eight year war, did you have a side you could root for? I doubt it. As I remember, we just wanted them to keep fighting.

Did anyone really believe that those with the muscle, money and arms to defeat Assad – a despot following in the footsteps of his father, would be fighters for a full democracy? They wanted him out. That was the goal. Many of the people of Syria might have hoped for a calm switch from Dictatorship to Democracy. But that does not happen in the Middle East. Those who took up arms against the Soviets in

Afghanistan did not want democracy. They wanted to exchange Soviet Communist domination for Islamic domination.

We, the United States of America, helped them beat the Soviets. Then we left them. So, we have had to go back and try to do the job all over again. My belief? "Gornisht Helfen" (in Yiddish: "It wouldn't help. Nothing will").

You see, the fighters – the ones who were in Libya and probably in Iraq before that are now in Syria. They are not Nationalists or Syrians. Their ambitions are on a world scale. Borders mean nothing, nationhood means nothing. The brass ring they covet is not in this world. To die as a martyr is more important than to live as a defender of freedom. Their brass ring is waiting on the other side. Like the bankers, they cannot be wrong.

When a people revolt against a system of government that they feel oppresses them, very often they become the oppressors. Look at Egypt. They get rid of over five thousand years of supreme rule. For what? Those who felt they could make a smooth changeover to democracy so splintered their movement that the Muslim Brotherhood – no lover of democracy – cruised to a victory in the first multi/party election in the history of the country.

So, let's put the best face on it: It is a work in progress. Okay. But when a group has achieved its Brass Ring – it does not give it up so easily. True of big banks, true of party rulers, certainly true of zealots and fanatics.

Which brings us to the next few months. Bibi's new world is going to involve some new players. Less aggressive, less Jingoistic. Obama has the wind at his back. He is never running for office again and his only goal now, as demonstrated in his State of The Union address, is history. To watch these two "titans" collide would be fun if it wasn't so serious.

Barak Obama found his goal after a long search (read his two books) – he got his brass ring. Bibi was born to be what he became. Never any doubt in his mind. When I met him 33 years ago, he wanted only to start an anti-terror foundation in the name of his slain brother. He has moved on.

We, all of us evolve. We change our goals, our directions. Problem is, the bankers, the zealots, Obama and Netanyahu – all those other strivers have a way of affecting our own dreams. Pray they do not turn into nightmares.

Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommunications. He began his working life in radio in Philadelphia. He has written his JP&O column for more than 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. Submitted 2-13-13. ★



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

National Service versus National Military Service

If we can change the conversation, remove the rhetoric, and avoid the politics, there is a way to change the religious-secular divide in Israel, in the very least to be able to have an adult conversation.

Realizing that he needs to move on in his life as a husband, father and Israeli, my *Haredi* grandson-in-law joined the National Service. For a whole variety of reasons the Israeli government does not need every man or woman of age to serve in the Army. What they can use, and what the "Army not suitable" citizens need to do is join a sensible effort to make the country one by responding to its needs.

You have a choice of jobs. You get paid. You get help with financing your future education. You are not away from home. You have time to continue your learning, at any level of intensity.

Meir works at a referral center for social services. He is bright, willing, and bi-lingual, English and Hebrew, and his initial work has been positive. He links needy people with service-giving agencies, public and private. With both parents working, after child care costs, rent and food, they have been able to buy a used car, a life changing event in the standard of living.

There must be a "rational" set of objections, but none of the ones I hear seemed worth following up on. The side that is holding out is simply exercising power. The argument sounds a great deal about the ongoing discussions in the United States about "gun control." If you let them restrict "Uzi type weapons," then they will want everything, and our constitutional rights well disappear. There are certainly far left liberals in the United States who might applaud the "no gun" idea, but not the growing center of American life.

After all these trips to Israel, I am amazed that columnists there believe there is anything that one can say about a "Nation of Prime Ministers", especially when the lack of a majority on any single issue seems to work there. Talk about everything and do nothing seems to be their motto, and Netanyahu can still be (see Karsh, page 7)



Opinion

BY RABBI BENJAMIN BLECH

The New Holocaust Discoveries

With more than 42,000 ghettos and concentration camps scattered throughout Europe, almost everyone had to know what was happening.

The latest revelation about the Holocaust stuns even the scholars who thought they already knew everything about the horrific details of Germany's program of genocide against the Jewish people.

It's taken more than 70 years to finally know the full facts. And what is almost beyond belief is that what really happened goes far beyond what anyone could ever have imagined.

For the longest time we have spoken of the tragedy of 6 million Jews. It was a number that represented the closest approximation we could come to the victims of Hitler's plan for a Final Solution. Those who sought to diminish the tragedy claimed 6 million was a gross exaggeration. Others went further and denied the historicity of the Holocaust itself, absurdly claiming the Jews fabricated their extermination to gain sympathy for the Zionist cause.

But now we know the truth.

The reality was much worse than whatever we imagined.

It wasn't just the huge killing centers whose very names – Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Majdanek, Belzec, Ravensbruck, Sobibar, Treblinka – bring to mind the ghastly images by now so familiar to us. It wasn't just the Warsaw ghetto. It wasn't just the famous sites we've all by now heard of that deservedly live on in everlasting infamy.

Researchers at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have just released documentation that astounds even the most informed scholars steeped in the previously known statistics of German atrocities. Here is some of what has now been conclusively discovered:

There were more than 42,500 Nazi ghettos and camps throughout Europe from 1933 to 1945.

There were 30,000 slave labor camps; 1,150 Jewish ghettos; 980 concentration camps; 1000 prisoner of war camps; 500 brothels filled with sex slaves; and thousands of other camps used for euthanizing the elderly and infirm, performing forced abortions, "Germanizing" prisoners or

transporting victims to killing centers.

The best estimate using current information available is 15 to 20 million people who died or were imprisoned in sites controlled by the Germans throughout the European continent.

Simply put, in the words of Hartmut Berghoff, Director of the German Historical Institute in Washington, "The numbers are so much higher than what we originally thought; we knew before how horrible life in the camps and ghettos was, but the actual numbers are unbelievable."

And what makes this revelation so important is that it forces us to acknowledge a crucial truth about the Holocaust that many people have tried to ignore or to minimize – a truth that has profound contemporary significance: The unspeakable crime of the 20th century, more than the triumph of evil, was the sin of the "innocent" bystander.

For years our efforts to understand the Holocaust focused on the perpetrators. We looked for explanations for the madness of Mengele, the obsessive hatred of Hitler, the impassive cruelty of Eichmann. We sought answers to how it was possible for the criminal elements, the sadists and the mentally unbalanced to achieve the kind of power that made the mass killings feasible.

That was because we had no idea of the real extent of the horror. With more than 42,000 ghettos and concentration camps scattered throughout the length and breadth of a supposedly civilized continent, there's no longer any way to avoid the obvious conclusion. The cultured, the educated, the enlightened, the liberal, the refined, the sophisticated, the urbane – all of them share in the shame of a world that lost its moral compass and willingly acceded to the victory of evil.

"We had no idea what was happening" needs to be clearly identified as "the great lie" of the years of Nazi power. The harsh truth is that almost everyone had to know. The numbers negate the possibility for collective ignorance. And still the killings did not stop, the torture did not cease, the concentration camps were not closed, the crematoria continued their barbaric task.

The "decent" people were somehow able to rationalize their silence.

Just last year Mary Fulbrook, a distinguished scholar of German history, in "A Small Town Near Auschwitz" wrote a richly and painfully detailed examination of those Germans who, after the war, successfully cast themselves in the role of innocent bystanders.

"These people have almost entirely escaped the familiar net of 'perpetrators, victims and bystanders'; yet they were functionally crucial to the eventual possibility of implementing policies of mass murder. They may not have intended

KARSH

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Prime Minister because while he can't form a government within his own party, he can put together a coalition that wants to look like they are running the country.

And by the way, I have become more comfortable with my children and grandchildren being called Haredi and ultra-Orthodox, because if you were to visit them, you would find that they are fully functioning families, raising children with values. In the end, it isn't what we are called by critics, but how we live our lives.

Sticks and stones can break our bones, and names can be limiting, but when we see the moral crisis growing in America, we are less concerned with the name calling.

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or wanted to contribute to this outcome; but, without their attitudes, mentalities, and actions, it would have been virtually impossible for murder on this scale to have taken place in the way that it did. The concepts of perpetrator and bystander need to be amended, expanded, rendered more complex, as our attention and focus shifts to those involved in upholding an ultimately murderous system."

Mary Fulbrook singled out for censure those who lived near Auschwitz. But that was before we learned that Auschwitz was replicated many thousands of times over throughout the continent in ways that could not have gone unnoticed by major parts of the populace. Millions of people were witnesses to small towns like Auschwitz in their own backyards.

And so Elie Wiesel of course was right. The insight that most powerfully needs to be grasped when we reflect upon the Holocaust's message must be that, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it's indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it's indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it's indifference."

That remains our greatest challenge today. If we dare to hope for the survival of civilization we had better pray that the pessimists are wrong when they claim that the only thing we learn from history is that mankind never learns from history.

Rabbi Benjamin Blech, a frequent contributor to Aish Hatorah Resources. He is a Professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University and an internationally recognized educator, religious leader, and (see Blech, page 8)

Gather the People



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

Freedom to make moral choices

One of the problems some of us have as modern Jews is that, if we can't believe in the validity of our people's history, we find it difficult to imagine that the tradition has any practical relevance for our day-to-day lives.

Consider the problem of miracles, which we're inclined to think about, one way or another, during the Passover week. *Parashat hashavua* (weekly Torah reading) *Beshalach* describes the events surrounding our liberation from Egypt and our salvation at the Reed Sea. (Exodus 13:17–15:21)

On the one hand, most of us find ourselves uplifted by the story and the Pass-over celebration of our liberation. On the other hand, many don't want to think too much about the details of the story for fear that its implausibility will be more than they can swallow.

So the posture for much of modern Jewry is one in which we find the tradition valuable for establishing our identity, celebrating our peoplehood, and even occasionally stimulating our intellects, but rarely do we adopt it as the practical guide for our active daily life.

The significant issue of the events at the Reed Sea obviously relates to their "miraculous" nature.

But was it a miracle or not?

In a way, it's unsatisfying to ask the question, because we have reliable reports of comparable phenomena in our own time. For example, a colleague posted the following report more than a dozen years ago:

"I wanted to share with you an extraordinary event I was fortunate enough to witness yesterday. On Monday night, the same storm that delivered the snow to New England made itself felt here on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Throughout the night there was a strong East wind. It blew throughout the night. When I awoke, the Chesapeake Bay had receded at least 30 feet, laying bare the dry land. The wind held back the wall of water as I watched my neighbor climb down a ladder walk around the docks that just hours ago had hovered over the water. The dry land extended as far north and

south as the eye can see, and it remained that way all day. Parts of it were so dry that the wind kicked up dust storms from what is usually thick black mud. The water that separates this island from the mainland a little further north was also blown back and one could truly walk across the channel to the next town. It truly was a wonder and I'm grateful to have been privileged to have this gift – especially so close to *Pesach*. I wish each of you could have been here to share it with me."

Were those events "miraculous"?

Certainly no more so than any other extraordinary phenomena of nature – earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, or volcanic eruptions – which we understand to be part of God's management of natural and human history.

Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi of Stretin (d. 1844) taught, "A man must believe in miracles which happen *b'derech ha-tevah* – not contrary to the laws of nature, and for everyone who believes that these miracles that happen in a natural way are truly miracles, the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He will perform supernatural miracles; for to the Holy-One-Blessed-be-He there is no difference between natural and supernatural miracles."

What makes such events extraordinary is not *that* they occur, but *when* they occur, who is present and why, and thus what their effects are on human life.

Rabbi Menahem Hacoen relates that, "A scientist once came to Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov [1698–1760], the founder of Hasidism, and told him: 'In my studies, I found that when the Jews crossed the Red Sea, the sea had to split, purely by natural means. What then is left of the famous miracle?'

"The Baal Shem Tov answered: 'Don't you know that God created nature? He created it so as to have the sea split just then, when the Children of Israel would cross it, and that is the great wonder.'" (*The Passover Haggadah – Legends and Customs*)

Thus in one respect, the so-called miraculous events at the Reed Sea divert us from the truly miraculous, which is that the people were *there*, at the sea at *that* moment, and *how* they got there.

We superficially treat as fact the Torah's reporting of a series of prior events, which explain how the Hebrews found themselves at the edge of the Reed Sea after centuries of slavery. But certainly there is little or no extra-biblical evidence of those events – nothing that independently substantiates the existence of Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Yocheved, Shifra, Puah, the plagues, and the liberation.

So we're left with a rather stark choice:

Either we believe that we were slaves in Egypt and that we were somehow liberated,

BLECH

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lecturer. Author of 14 highly acclaimed books with combined sales of over a half million copies, his newest, *The World From A Spiritual Perspective*, is a collection of over 100 of his best Aish articles. See his website at www.benjaminblech.com. ✪



whatever the variations of *midrash* and commentary on the details, which we are free to debate within the bounds of the tradition; or we believe that our history as a people, from its very inception, is not only a fiction, but a hoax perpetrated on later generations, including ourselves.

And, incidentally, to believe in the plausibility of the latter possibility, we have to believe that a people with a subsequently unbroken oral tradition of several thousand years was hoodwinked into believing facts not in the evidence of such a tradition. It presupposes that our *peoplehood* came centuries before our *purpose* as a people.

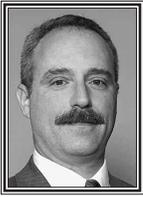
In effect, if we lived in the eighth or seventh centuries before the Common Era, knowing the supposed unremarkable oral tradition of our people, we would ignore that knowledge. Instead we would find credible a newly minted story about our miraculous redemption from slavery, an encounter with God at Mount Sinai, a 40-year sojourn in the desert, and successful settlement of the Promised Land – none of which was previously known to us orally. Gullible would barely begin to describe a whole people that would believe such things about their recent ancestors, with virtually none of it known to them beforehand, despite their oral tradition.

So let us assume that it's at least as likely to believe the essentials of the Torah narrative – that we were slaves in Egypt and we were liberated – as it is to believe in the denial of those events by those who reject the scripture. With this in mind, let's return to the question of the "miracle" – what, precisely, it was.

Certainly there is not any compelling argument that the "non-violent" liberation of a whole slave people can in any sense be described as a "normal course of events." Short of an armed insurrection or liberation by an invading army, there is no reason to believe that the Hebrew slaves would have ever attained their freedom in the ancient Egyptian world. By the overwhelming rights, resources, and realities of the time, the Hebrew slaves should not have gained their freedom.

Thus we have put our finger on the heart of the "miracle" – that *God* brought us out of Egypt – but can we believe it?

(see Ben Asher/Bat Sarah, page 9)



The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

Judgment Against the Gods of Egypt

“Upon all the ‘gods’ of Egypt, I will execute judgments – I – *Adonai*,” declares God in Exodus 12:12. The passage portends the destruction of the Egyptian pantheon, yet curiously, the Book of Exodus seems not to describe a single judgment against a god of Egypt. Some might dismiss the “broken promise” as a redacting error, or an intentional theological purging of a war between God and gods. But if we remember that the text was written for people steeped in Egyptian culture, we soon see that the promise is not broken. Our understanding of the context is deficient.

In that regard, Egyptians worshipped the forces of nature that were important to their well-being. The names and functions of the gods changed with each locale and era, but worshipping natural forces as gods was the bedrock of Egyptian theology. By contrast, the Hebrew name for God, YHWH, may be understood to mean “He Causes to Be,” that is to say, the Cause of natural forces. With that context, the events of the Book of Exodus are transformed from mere parlor tricks into demonstrations to the people of that era that a just God controls the forces the Egyptians ascribed to their gods. As events unfold, Egyptians see their gods fail and grow disheartened, while Israelites gain hope that God can free them. Three examples demonstrate this proposition.

In Pharaoh’s presence, Aaron throws his staff to the floor, and it becomes a *tannin*, a crocodile. (*Tannin* is sometimes mistranslated as “serpent.”) Pharaoh’s courtiers did so, too, with their staffs. Now, Egyptians and Israelites knew that the crocodile-god Sobek symbolized Pharaoh’s power of life and death over his subjects. Transforming Aaron’s staff into a crocodile that swallowed the courtiers’ staffs, eerily demonstrated that Pharaoh’s days were numbered; Sobek could not help. He had been judged.

The Egyptian fertility goddess Heqat, whose name means “frog,” was depicted as a frog with a woman’s body. With the second plague, frogs proliferated, became an unbearable nuisance, died, and stank until the Egyptians begged Moses to remove “Heqat” – goddess and frog. She could not control fertility or help Pharaoh.

BEN ASHER/BAT SARAH

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We certainly don’t know how the Mastermind of all Creation masterminded those events – we never definitively understand such things, which is why



Heqat had been judged.

The meaning of the fourth plague, *arov*, became obscure centuries ago. Some commentators translated *arov* as “insects,” others as “a mixture of wild beasts.” In early Hebrew, *arov* was pronounced “*gharab*,” a cognate of the Egyptian word “*khpr*” (and its variant “*khprb*”), which meant “scarab beetle” and Scarab-god. A scarab lays eggs in dung, which it forms into a ball that it rolls into a hole in the riverbank. When the eggs hatch, scarabs emerge from the hole. Analogizing, Egyptians believed that Scarab-god rolled the sun across the sky by day like a dung ball, pushed it into a hole in the west at sunset, rolled it inside the earth at night, and pushed it out in the east at dawn to repeat the cycle. Unlike other gods, Scarab dwelt in the interior of the earth, not on or above it. And Exodus alludes to Scarab-god’s dwelling, stating: “Egypt’s buildings and even the ground they are on will fill up with scarabs...so that [Pharaoh] will know that I, God, *am in the interior of the Earth.*” (Exodus 12:17–19.)

As discussed in *The Exodus Haggadah*, Israelites and Egyptians readily understood each plague – as well as the killing and eating of lambs and the drowning in the sea – as judgments against the gods of Egypt, demonstrations that God controls the forces ascribed to those gods, who are nothing and control nothing. Yet uttering the gods’ names would honor them (cf., obliterating Haman’s name at Purim.) Thus, the Book of Exodus alludes to the gods indirectly, by mentioning the natural forces or creatures they control. Yet, scarabs do not occur in Canaan, where Hebrew originated, so the Israelites lacked a Hebrew word for that creature. Thus, the Book of Exodus refers to Scarab-god by his Egyptian name, properly modified to fit Hebrew phonology, and gives his address, “the interior of the earth,” to make sure the message is delivered.

An attorney and Semitic linguist with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford and Univ. of Calif., Seth Watkins (pen name, Ben-Mordecai) merges linguistic analysis with legal sleuthing to uncover lost meanings of ancient texts. His Exodus Haggadah uniquely includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. When not lawyering or writing, he enjoys feeding “his” raccoon Ranger, and Ranger’s two cubs. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com. ★

our tradition has generated so many interpretations. What we do know, however, is that neither our oppressors nor us is to be credited with our liberation. Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) teaches that, when Moses first went to Pharaoh, the “community of Israel [was] not yet in existence.” We didn’t remotely have the power and Pharaoh didn’t remotely have the reason to bring about our liberation without the intervention of a “third party.”

And to add another irony to the picture, the tradition teaches that the plagues had as their real purpose, the spiritual education of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people. Certainly if we accept God as our liberator, it’s not unreasonable to assume He could have liberated us equally without the plagues as with them. But the plagues were necessary to liberate the Egyptian leaders and people – all of whom, including Pharaoh, were completely bound in their own form of slavery – to fix God in their consciousness. In effect, the means of our physical and spiritual liberation were to serve simultaneously as the means of the spiritual elevation and physical liberation of the Egyptians.

Under the circumstances, the Hebrews went out of Egypt *b’yad ramah*, with a “high hand.” We didn’t go out as beggars but as free human beings, no longer slaves in our own minds, neither dependent on nor answerable to anyone. Our emergence from Egypt as a free people meant that we were free to make moral choices, which is the only purpose of our freedom.

Afterwards we subjected ourselves to divine authority of our own free will. Whether this happened at Mount Sinai or, according to the skeptics, centuries later, we’ll leave for another *devar Torah*. But what’s obviously inescapable is that we traded our status as “slaves” of Pharaoh to become “servants” of God – both words have the same Hebrew root, *ayin-vet-dalet*, meaning “to work subject to another’s will,” first Pharaoh’s, then God’s. We consciously chose the *ol malchut shamayim* (Numbers Rabbah 14:6), the yoke of heaven, over the heathenism of the ancient world.

And we prefer to believe it was in anticipation of that yoke that we were taken across the Reed Sea, which would not have been possible without the *miracle* of our liberation from physical and spiritual slavery in Egypt.

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Rabbi Moshe ben Asher and Magidat Khulda bat Sarah 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). ★



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Jerusalem silversmith par excellence

Imagine the patience to cut and put together 108 thin leaves of silver in a pod to contain spices so the shape is formed by one's hands, cupped to hold a delicate object. This is the work of Iris Tutnauer, Jerusalem silversmith, and a finalist in the 1998 Spertus Museum competition for a spice box. The sterling silver piece is now part of the Israel Museum collection and the New York Jewish Museum collection and sells for \$3500.

Jerusalem-born Iris Tutnauer looks much younger than her 48 years as she sits in her studio showroom and talks about herself and her work. She and her parents were born in Jerusalem – "I'm so *Yerushalmit*," she exclaims; her grandparents came from Iraq.

She attended the Alice Seligsberg high school, forerunner of the Hadassah College, then went into the Israel Air Force.

After graduation, she went to the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design and studied to be a silversmith. Upon graduation, she and a few friends worked in the House of Quality, a nonprofit foundation, museum and gallery dedicated to the promotion of Jerusalem artists and artisans.

She met and married Ronne, the son of an American rabbi, and worked at home while raising their three children, 16-year-old Ido who studies film; 14-year-old Yuval who studies piano; and 10-year-old Noah, who is very artistic.

In 2009, she opened her studio shop at 24 Agron, a few doors down from the American Consulate, near Mamilla Mall, the King David Residence and the Waldorf Astoria hotel apartments.

"I very much like the genre of Judaica," she says. "I like the connection between tradition and my point of view, according to *halachah* (Jewish law) in design."

In the small showroom, one can see *Chanukiyot*, *mezuzot* (she made 100 for the nearby King David Residence on King David Street), Torah pointers, candlesticks, *kiddush* cups, *seder* plates and the unique *Havdalah* spice holder.

For Passover her collection of three *seder* plates are extraordinary, one-of-a-kind works of art. On the wall is one made of aluminum (\$950); in a class case is one



Iris with two of her seder plate creations. All photos by Barry A. Kaplan, Jerusalem.

of sterling silver with glass dishes (part of the Jewish Museum of New York collection), which sells for \$6750. A new work, made of Jerusalem stone with removable sterling silver dishes, sells for \$3,400.

Her customers are religious people, Israelis, "people looking for something special," she says. Since 1997, she has shown her works at a small show in White Plains, New York three times.

Looking around her shop, she reflects that "I feel connection to Jerusalem. When you live in a place, it becomes routine, but I see different experiences day by day, and these are the things which inspire me in my work."

Iris's works can be seen in the photograph above; at her shop from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and Friday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and on her website, www.iritutnauer.com.

Ah, Jerusalem premieres for tourists

Going to Jerusalem soon? Especially if you're from Indianapolis, you'll get an extra laugh because that's the home town of a family starring in a brand-new musical geared for tourists.

Ah, *Jerusalem* is the brainchild of 77-year-old, Brooklyn-raised Bernie Kukoff. His name may not mean much to you, but he produced five Broadway and off-Broadway shows (including *All Shook Up*, the Elvis Presley musical; *The Thing About Men*, and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*; he created the Gary Coleman show, *Diff'rent Strokes*; and he produced some of *The Cosby Show*).

Ah, *Jerusalem* is an original time-traveling musical from the script by Bernie Kukoff, Lucile Lichtblau and Alan Gelb with lyrics and music by an American from Cleveland, Danny Paller, who moved to Israel in 1985.

We attended one of the previews, before the world premiere February 21, at the

Hirsch Auditorium of Bet Shmuel, 6 Shama Street, down the street from the David Citadel Hotel.

Walking around in the lobby before the performance, Kukoff told me, "I feel their energy, anxiety [the actors and actresses]. We've worked hard and they are a great cast. This is a very positive thing."

The story is centered on Charlie Axelrod, a 46-year-old psychiatrist, his wife, Madeline and their 17-year-old daughter, Robin, from Indianapolis, who are leaving the next morning to go to Cancun, Mexico.

Charlie is awakened by his Great Uncle Mordecai, from the 1700s, imploring him to go to Jerusalem and retrieve a family scroll, but he has to find it in three days.

The family is soon joined in their adventure by Shmulik, the Israeli guide, who takes them back in time to meet King Solomon, to visit the Temple, to see the Crusades and meet Philip the Mean, to a 1922 Israel bus station and a surprise visitor, and for an encounter with the angel, Gedalia.

The all-Jerusalem cast, who have been rehearsing for the past two months, are great at acting, dancing and singing the 10 catchy songs. The plan is to have performances every Sunday and Thursday, from March through July, geared for tourists.

If you are planning a trip to Jerusalem and want to order tickets, go on to the website, www.ahjerusalem.com or the ticket agency's website, www.bimot.co.il and order for \$25 each with a credit card. If you are bringing this article to Jerusalem with you and plan to order tickets after you arrive in Israel, you can order through your hotel Concierge or by phoning Bimot, 02-623-7000 or you can buy tickets at the box office for 100 NIS each.

Getting to Know Thai Culture

My daughter, Shara, introduced us to Thai food which we and my daughter, Elissa, really love. But since none of us have been to Thailand, an invitation to "The Magic of Thai Culture" in Jerusalem was most intriguing.

The Thai Ambassador to Israel – who has been here just ten months – initiated this production and introduced the evening. He remarked that many Israelis come to Israel, and this presentation was for the 60th anniversary of Thai-Israeli diplomatic relations and in appreciation by the Thai people.

The overture of traditional songs was performed by an orchestra of eight playing wooden xylophones, drums and a flute.

The 16 dancers wear very elaborate costumes (each weighing as much as 44 pounds), which is truly amazing given the

(see Kaplan/Israel, page 11)





Interfaith Relations

By RABBI MARVIN HIER

Pope Benedict's contribution to Catholic-Jewish relations

The election or the demise of a Pope is always an event of enormous public interest that resonates well beyond the Catholic world. This was certainly the case when the newswires flashed their bulletin that Pope Benedict XVI had taken the unprecedented step of resigning because of age and ill health becoming the first Pope in more than six centuries to do so.

Jewish people have a particular interest in the election of a new pope, because their two thousand year tumultuous relationship with the Church has caused much pain and suffering and who know from experience what an impact a Pope can have on our future.

In April 2005, I remember vividly being glued to my television as the white smoke went up from the Sistine Chapel on the fourth ballot soon followed by the stunning announcement that the new supreme pontiff of the Church would be the German cardinal who had once worn the uniform of the Hitler Youth. I remember thinking 'here we go again'.

It was only after some research that I discovered a different story, that in fact Cardinal Ratzinger now Benedict XVI was born in Bavaria into a home that opposed Hitler's policies, but like all teenagers he was forced to join the Hitler Youth and later assigned to the anti-aircraft corps responsible for protecting German industry from allied attacks. When the War ended, he and his brother Georg decided to enroll in a Catholic seminary where he quickly rose through the ranks.

Within two decades, he rose to become one of the Catholic Church's preeminent theologians, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Although very much a staunch conservative, on the major issues facing the Jewish people, Pope Benedict XVI relied on what he wrote in 1985, "The church marches forward to the fulfillment of history. One does not go back, nor can one."

For more than two decades, he played a major role as a key advisor to John Paul II in the historic change of the Church policy toward the Jewish people and the

State of Israel. Ratzinger agreed with Pope John Paul II that the fact that Jews still did not recognize the divinity of Christ should not stand in the way of fostering better relations in the 'temporal world' with them or the State of Israel. Ultimately Ratzinger believed that answer would have to await the 'end of days' for a final judgment. There is no question that had he been opposed to such a major shift in church policy, then Pope John Paul II's decision to recognize the State of Israel, may never have happened.

Although, Benedict lacked the exuberance of a John Paul II or John XXIII, he looked very good indeed when compared to most of the Popes who sat on the throne of Saint Peter for the last 20 centuries and treated Jews with utter disdain and contempt.

In the 4th Century, Pope Augustine said, "The Jew...will bear the guilt for the death of Jesus, because their fathers killed the Savior." The 13th Century Pope Innocent III decreed, "The Jews' guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus consigned them to perpetual servitude and like Cain, they are to be wanderers and fugitives..."

Even 20th Century Popes like Leo X told Theodor Herzl, "Jews have not recognized our Lord, therefore we cannot recognize the Jewish people." And Paul VI went to Jerusalem for a day and refused to mention Israel by name. His subsequent thank you note to Zalman Shazar, the then-President of Israel, was sent to Tel Aviv, lest he be accused of acknowledging Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem.

Pope Benedict on the other hand went to the Cologne Synagogue to reaffirm that, "I intend to continue with great vigor on the path towards improved relations and friendship with the Jewish people..." He went to Israel and told hundreds at Yad Veshem, including survivors of the Holocaust, "I have come... to honor the memory of the millions of Jews killed in the horrific tragedy of the Shoah. They lost their lives, but they will never lose their names... may the names of these victims never perish! May their suffering never be denied, belittled or forgotten! And may people of goodwill remain vigilant in rooting out from the heart of man anything that could lead to tragedies like this!"

Then in 2011, he did something no other Pope had done before. He wrote a book about the life of Jesus that clearly exonerated the Jews from responsibility for his death. "Now we must ask," Benedict writes, "who exactly were Jesus' accusers? Who insisted that he be condemned to death... according to John it was simply 'the Jews.' But John's use of this expression does not in any way indicate – as the modern reader might suppose – the people of Israel in general... after all John himself was ethnically a Jew, as were Jesus, and all his followers. The entire early Christian

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page 10)

style of dancing. They use very small movements and minced steps, and the hand movements (often wearing very long finger nails) dominate in a very graceful style. All of the dances are known as classical dance, and they are part of the Thai heritage, not newly created. In fact, they are an integral part of Thai life at weddings, birthday parties, funerals and are performed at other forms of entertainment and rituals.



Thai performers during the overture dance.

The overture dance, with off-stage smoke blowing on the stage, is one initiated almost 200 years ago under the supervision of the king for court dancers.

The next dance was one of a genre of Thai dance drama, based upon a classical epic with four men using swords. In the next dance, the story tells of Ramakien, heir to the throne, exiled by his stepmother. His wife and brother accompany him into a forest where his wife is abducted by a demon king with ensuing battles following.

The Lopburi dance draws its inspiration from the 11th to 14th centuries and is inspired by a stone bas-relief and a court dance. The next is a duet of the demon king who is impassioned with the wife of the heir to the throne and uses trickery to convince the heir that his wife is dead. The beating drum dance, performed before battles, is accompanied by a cymbal and a gong.

(see Kaplan/Israel, page 20)



community was made up of Jews..." Pope Benedict goes on to say that those responsible were the aristocracy and that the mob, "Does not refer to the Jewish people."

As a new Pope is about to be elected, there is an important lesson that can be learned from the dramatic changes that have occurred over the past eight decades in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

The Catholic Church understands that the founders of their faith were Jews, who (see Hier, page 15)



Book Excerpt

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Batya, mother of Moses

Meet Batya: The Courage to Translate Vision into Reality.

“Batya, the first born and adopted daughter of Amenhotep III, Pharaoh of Egypt, was acknowledged as the mother of Moses, the redeemer of the Jewish people. Though Moses was not her biological son, Batya named him and raised him as her own. Batya was one of only nine people recorded to have entered into Paradise, the Garden of Eden, with full consciousness. Indicating that her soul had reached total perfection, capable of basking in the full radiance of the Divine Presence, she was considered free of the necessity of reincarnation.”

Below are two excerpts from the interview from my new book:

Question: What is your message to our readers?

Batya: It is my prayer and my blessing that every woman and man discover within themselves the unique role that each may play in revealing the Divine in their lives and that of others. When a man and woman choose to live purposefully and meaningfully, he or she will be protected and supported in the most miraculous ways. I encourage all to live wisely. Live courageously. Live outrageously, and dedicate your life to the noble purpose your Creator instilled within you.

Question: How did you have the courage to rescue a Hebrew male child when your father ordered them to be murdered?

Batya: I always prayed to live a life of truth, purity, and integrity, even if it was in conflict with everything I had known before. Living a meaningful and purposeful life was always my greatest goal. I knew that such a life offered to me the greatest riches, more than all the gold that I had in the palace. All external riches were temporary in my eyes, only valuable to the extent that they served this greater truth. When my consciousness was finally awakened to behold the majesty of the One God, the Creator of all life, I was wholehearted

dedicated to living from this deeper truth and transmitting it to others. That depth of commitment brought me courage along with faith and trust in God.

When my father became so obsessed with fear that he was willing to murder innocent male children to protect himself, I hated him for being so self-serving. He was unworthy of being Pharaoh, ruler of the greatest land in the world. If he was a god, why did he fear a child? Once again, all too clearly, I saw the emptiness of idolatry for it surely did not provide my father with the courage needed to rule and care beneficently for his people as a leader must. My father was not necessarily an evil man, but a fearful pathetic one. His advisors had knowledge but lacked truth. I vowed that I would not follow in the path of my father. I would change Egyptian society from within, slowly and gently. I could not be part of the perpetuation of evil that I witnessed all around me.”

Question: How did you plan to effect change in Egypt?

Batya: As a woman, it was not my way to fight, but to wait to be guided by the Holy One for whom all life emanates and all change comes. I prayed deeply and I trusted that my life be used as an instrument for the greater divine plan. Much before I discovered Moses, it was revealed to me in meditation that I would raise as my own son the Hebrew child designated to be the redeemer. Together we would redeem both the Jewish people from slavery and cleanse Egypt of idolatry, making it a holy kingdom in the eyes of the Creator. I would educate and train this child for this role that he was designated to perform by the Holy One. As his mother, I would transmit to him the secrets to the deepest mysteries and knowledge that I had been privileged to receive. I trained all my children in the belief of the One God. My other son, Ikhanaton who succeeded my father as Pharaoh established the religion of Aton, the belief in One God for all of Egypt. During his reign Egypt was purified and became more spiritually refined until the reign of my beloved son was overthrown by an evil man who sought power for himself.”

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 more than 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). Her new book, *The Secret Legacy of Biblical Women* is available on amazon.com. She can be reached by email at Beitmiriam@msn.com or Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com. ✨



Laugh with Big Al

BY AL MUSKOVITZ

40-year schlepp

Passover is fast approaching. The holiday commences on March 25th, which on the Jewish calendar is the 14th day of the month of *Nisan*; not to be confused with Nissan, which was a major manufacturer of luxury chariots back in 1445 B.C.

As we celebrate our Exodus, we should be thankful that so much has changed over the centuries and that we are now BFF's, Best Friends Forever, with Egypt! Anyway, I got to thinking, what would it be like if God had delayed our freedom out of slavery until today?

First of all, the Exodus would've been so much easier on Moses. That 40-year schlepp through the desert would be reduced by decades with the advent of On-Star and Google Maps providing better directions. Both services now available in Jewish versions called On-Star of David and Kugel Maps.

If our Exodus occurred today, we would never know from *matzo*, not with today's microwaves. Here's how I see it. Moses gets a text from the Pharaoh which reads: “Mo, I'm lettin' your People go, like, right now! Moses replies: “Yeah right P, LOL”. Pharaoh: “Seriously, get out of town!” Moses: OMG! We are so like out of here!” Moses informs the People, they throw some instant dough in the microwave on high for three minutes, it rises beautifully; they pack a small wheelie carry-on, and off to the Red Sea they go!

Yes, the Red Sea. That part, you'll excuse the expression, of our history, would remain intact even today. The big difference is, we wouldn't walk through the parted sea, we would book a cruise. Only we would book our People on a Royal Caribbean Cruise, and we would make sure the Egyptian Army chasing us would be on a Carnival Cruise. Yep, as if getting swallowed up by the sea wasn't bad enough, our oppressors would be without food and working toilets!

On to that defining moment when Moses came down from the mountain top, having just received the Ten Commandments from God. If that happened today, Moses would observe a “slightly” different scene. Instead of baring witness to the scandal of Israelites worshipping idols, he would be equally traumatized by our People trying-out for American Idol. But fear not, today God would no doubt be added as a

(see Muskovitz, page 15)



Opinion

BY PROFESSOR ARNOLD AGES

The soft bigotry of low expectations

The above expression in the title of this column originated with an American columnist more than two decades ago during the struggle, undeniably justified, on the part of Black Americans to gain access to university professional schools, banks and major corporations.

The argument advanced frequently during that tumultuous period held that given the persecution, discrimination and violence which Blacks had endured during the slave experience and thereafter for more than 100 years, they deserved special positive consideration when seeking access to the institutions described above. This was called affirmative action.

Critics of this argument insisted that this was simply a new variant of the bigotry which had animated the discourse about Blacks and was all the more heinous because it classified Blacks as a race that was incapable of fulfilling the normal performance expectations for entry into prestige programs in law, medicine and commerce.

While there may still be more to say on this issue, one thing appears certain – that the phrase itself – “the soft bigotry of low expectations” – is more than relevant when applied to the current situation in the Middle East.

There, through the prism of most western media coverage and the speeches at the UN it has become painfully obvious that bigotry displays itself regularly in the reportage over the “Arab Spring,” Syria’s casualty count, the massacres in Mali, Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, and the Palestinian triangle.

The shocking aspect of the reportage in question is its racist bigotry against Arabs – who are depicted unconsciously but inferentially, by the major news outlets as being incapable of measuring up to the high expectations of international morality.

In the last three years almost 100,000 Arabs have lost their lives in the brutal Syrian civil war, the internecine strife in Iraq, the Egyptian quagmire, the Lebanese imbroglio and the Yemenite insurgency. The list goes on to include the hapless victims of homicidal violence in the North African Maghreb and parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

One looks in vain in the international press for outrage, indignation and lament for the victims of the conflicts listed above.



Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

Pirke Avot 4:20 – Rabbi Matyah ben Cheresh used to say: Be first in greeting every man. Be a tail among lions rather than a head to foxes.

Mar. 8, Vayakhel-Pekudeh/Hachodesh, Exodus 35:1–40:38 & 12:1–20, 26 Adar

The *Shabbat* (of March 8) was *Shabbat Hachodesh* or the *Shabbat* that announces the coming of the month of *Nisan* meaning that *Pesach* is only a bit more than two weeks away. Though we always bless the coming of the new moon on the *Shabbat* that precedes it, this is the only one that has a special name. If nothing else, it says to all of us who change our home around for *Pesach* that it is time to get things in gear and do the cleaning, dish changing, food buying, and all the other prep that goes into this holy day and week.

The additional reading from *Exodus* contains commandments on how the observance was to occur. Though most of us don’t slaughter our own lamb (v. 6) or put blood on our doorposts (v. 7) or gird our loins, put sandals on our feet and hold a staff, or eat hurriedly (v. 11), we do dine with special ceremony and retell the story.

This chapter does tell us to observe this festival as a seven-day holy day and it does command us not to eat *chametz*, but nowhere in the *Torah* is *chametz* described or detailed. The rabbis in the *Mishnah* list the five grains as wheat, oat, barley, spelt, and rye, but those are later European



Here and there one can find occasional words of sympathy but condemnation of the perpetrators is rare.

This absence of judgment can only be explained by the perception, in the western media, that one cannot really expect Arab nations to embrace the idea of the sanctity of life. This is a deplorable indictment about a civilization that has contributed so much to humankind. This soft bigotry must stop.

The reluctance to expose and condemn unequivocally the savage murder of Arab innocents victimized by Arab governments is not the only anomaly in the Middle East. Another is the invidious double standard of the indecent and unreasonable rush to judgment practiced by too much of the western media when Israel is required to defend itself against rockets from Gaza and internal terrorism within Israel.

(see Ages, page 15)

translations of words that were unfamiliar. Oat, spelt, and rye did not grow in the Biblical Land of Israel. Spelt and rye closely resemble wheat and may have led to the confusion. For those who are curious, here are the five grains and how they are best understood today from what we know that actually grew in Israel:

Shippon (*shifon*) – einkorn (*Triticum monococcum*), **Kusmin** – emmer (*Triticum dicoccon*), **Hittim** – durum wheat (*Triticum durum*) and bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), **Se’orim** – six row barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), and **Shibbolet shual** – two row barley (*Hordeum vulgare*).

Though there are dozens upon dozens of *Haggadot* that can be used at the *Seder* and we could argue which is better or even best, most of us don’t argue about this. What we do spend time conversing about is the food. We have done our best over the last 1,000 years to make *Pesach* more complicated in its observance instead of the simplicity once found in *Exodus 12* and qualified by the *Mishnaic* rabbis. The bottom line is the food should be kept simple to help remind us of what our slave ancestors experienced on their flight to freedom and the story should be told in full so that we will never forget our slave experience in order to embrace our redemption fully.

I say this with full fear and trepidation – *Pesach* and the *Seder* aren’t about the *matzah* balls and chicken soup, but about the story. We retell the story, not for us alone, but for the children to learn and understand and the guests we include at our *Seder*. We already know the story, but it is a story that shouldn’t be forgotten. We were once slaves and now we are free. Freedom has its responsibilities and should never be taken for granted. We recount and recall the events leading up to our redemption. Though it was a long time ago, we retell the story as if we, too, were slaves and it is our redemption we are experiencing. The next few weeks of preparation are exciting as we get set to experience this amazing holiday, but let us not forget what it is about and why we dine with special ceremony and symbols, rituals and songs.

When you light your *Shabbat* candles, light one to remind us of how precious freedom is and how we as Jews have longed to experience it in generation after generation. Light the other candle and let it remind us that we were once strangers in a strange land and what it means to be a stranger today.

Rabbi Adland has been a Reform rabbi for more than 25 years with pulpits in Lexington, Ky., Indianapolis, Ind., and currently at Temple Israel in Canton, Ohio. He may be reached at j.adland@gmail.com. ✪



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Twist of Faith

Twist of Faith, a TV movie for the Lifetime Network, tells the heartbreaking story of Jacob Fisher (David Julian Hirsh), an Orthodox cantor and *yeshiva* teacher in Brooklyn who is also a master carpenter/furniture maker. “One job feeds my heart,” he says. “The other feeds my belly.” But does the cantor or the film have heart for Judaism or any religion, or faith that religion can bring solace to the heart?

Jacob is blessed with a beautiful, devoted wife, a basketball-loving son, and two bright and sweet young daughters. We experience a *Shabbat* dinner in their home and the warmth of the marriage and of parent-child relationships. Looking forward to a playoff game, Jacob sees off his wife and children, on their way to visit relatives, only to witness them shot and killed by a deranged individual who has barged into their bus.

Jacob is devastated, unable to speak. An elder with a beard (his rabbi?) offers him trite condolences and the assurance that only time and God can take away his pain. This character should have read, should certainly have been admonished in the script to read, the admonition in *Pirke Avot* not to try to comfort someone whose grief is fresh. (2:5) Understandably, Jacob wants to withdraw, even to run away, and he does just that, leaving behind yarmulke, watch and wallet, taking the first bus he can find, staying at men’s shelters and subsisting on (ostensibly non-kosher) soups, abandoning his mother and sister and the community to their pain and worry, leaving behind, as we learn later, *bar mitzva* boys in the months before their ceremonies. After some weeks go by he will be “considerate” enough to send his mother and sister a note that says simply, “I’m all right. Please don’t look for me.”

The first impression given by *Twist of Faith* is that the Orthodox Jewish community and its rituals cannot provide comfort for one of their own – indeed, for one who leads them in prayer and ritual. An earlier impression is that even nice and beloved Orthodox people, like Jacob’s wife, Ruth, come across as rather accusatory and disparaging. Before she sees a gun, Ruth rebuffs the shooter as soon as he offers candy to her daughter. Immediately and right to his face, she complains about him to the bus driver, who is the first one shot. The writers do ascribe some responsibility for the mayhem to her attitude.



Scene from the Lifetime Original Movie *Twist of Faith*. Photo credit: Ed Araquel.

Jacob ends up in a small Alabama town, sleeping by the side of a picturesque country church which houses an African American congregation. He is noticed by a precocious and good-hearted twelve-year-old, Asher, the son of Nina Yarber, the lead singer in the church’s gospel choir. Nina and Asher live right next door to the church because their Uncle Moe is the caretaker. Toni Braxton and Nathaniel J. Potvin are most affecting in their roles, as is Mykelti Williamson as Uncle Moe.

Nina is suspicious of the stranger, but is not outright rude to him. At Asher’s urging, Moe searches for him and offers him the custodian’s room in the church. Jacob, now called “Sam,” straightens up and repairs the church. Jacob does not speak for quite a while; he says nothing of his background or of his loss and agony.

Nina begins to admire Jacob when she overhears him playing the piano. He keyboards the Yiddish children’s song that he would play with his daughter, *Of’n Pripichik*, which, with the *Kol Nidre* melody and Bratislav song, *Gesher Tzar Me’od*, comprises the film’s limited breadth of stereotypical Jewish background music. Nina catches Jacob composing a hymn about seeking God. Given the predictable script and all the fuss made about an upcoming competition of Gospel choirs, it is easy to guess that the local church, which is looking for a novel song, will sing Jacob’s song, and that Nina and Jacob will bond romantically during the rehearsals.

There is a sweetness to this film, but writers Joyce Gittlin, Janet Fattal and Stephen Tolkin make decisions, in plot and in dialogue, that prevent *Twist of Faith* from doing any justice to religious faith.

First, there is the way that Gittlin, Fattal and Tolkin chose to kill off the cantor’s family. I have already noted that the death by shooting approach opened the question of attitude and provocation. There is a suggestion that Ruth’s manner or at least lack of prudent silence set off the gunman.

The subject of attitude comes up again when Nina, offended by Jacob’s questioning, says to him: “Wherever this great secret place is you come from, they didn’t teach you the beginning of manners there...”

The message is that the Orthodox Jews from Brooklyn are forward or brash in their language. Had there been no gun in the picture, had the bus crashed, the issue of attitude would not have come up. Obviously, there was a decision to have it come up with regard to the Orthodox community – at least twice.

The Orthodox community aside, the writers cannot let go of guns. Uncle Moe insists on taking Jacob hunting. Moe makes a strong case for gun ownership, “A black person who does not own a gun is kidding himself.” Later, Jacob will overcome his awkwardness with guns to use one effectively. But given what Jacob witnessed of his family’s death, why don’t the writers give him a stronger reaction to Moe’s rabbit-shooting? Or did Hirsh as Jacob under-act here? Jacob reacts more to the skinning of the rabbit than to the sound of a gun-shot. The writers multiply gun use so thoughtlessly that it is not clear whether or what they are editorializing, if anything.

In addition to the gun problem, there is the dismaying depiction of the Orthodox Jewish community as devoid of spiritual bonds, another choice of the writers. For whatever reason, Jacob’s mom comes across as indifferent to Judaism. Does she equate “Judaism” only with her neighborhood where the street market is? She demonstrates no concern for her faith and for its continuity, even after losing her grandchildren. After Jacob’s return, his mother asks, “Where did you go, Yaakov? Wherever it was, did you leave your heart there?” Jacob tells her about Nina and about his feelings for Nina. His mother encourages him to return to her, “What you felt you felt. Life makes those decisions, not us.” She asks him, “Were you happy? Were you in less pain? Why is that something to feel ashamed of?” She goes so far as to tell him that returning home to the Orthodox community may be running away from what he should be doing. “Ask a rabbi or cardiologist,” she exhorts. “They’ll tell you the same thing. It is not right for a man to have his heart in two separate places.”

We could, I suppose, give the writers the benefit of a doubt and conclude that they took the passion for Judaism out of Jacob’s mother in order to underscore her grief. But they betray their preference for a trite formula. A Jewish mother or grandmother encouraging interfaith romance in TV or film is not new. It was already old when *Beverly Hills 90210* had a “very Jewish” grandmother and Holocaust survivor doing that. If a filmmaker wants to encourage

such romance, there will always be a “very Jewish” relative doing the encouraging.

Our writers go further. They do not stop with the grandmother. They exploit the words, or at least have Jacob’s mother exploit the words, of Jacob’s all-time spiritual hero, Rabbi Nachman of Bratislav. Remember, she reminds, what “that rabbi” said to his disciples: “Always be happy.” Here we have the wholesale exploitation of the words of a rabbi who famously urged his disciples to overcome sadness and grief with spiritual joy in God and in the Torah, words now hijacked in service of the Hollywood doctrine that romantic love must be pursued at every opportunity to cure every problem.

The writers go further than urging Hollywood romance, though they choose to have Jacob’s mother, along with Moe and Asher and Nina herself (who are not so happy in their own church) hoping that Jacob’s romance with Nina will blossom. The writers have an agenda for religion itself. They exploit Christianity and the African American church even as they insult Orthodox Judaism. True, there is never any suggestion that Moe and Asher and Nina would rather be anywhere but next door to the church, or that Jacob’s mother will leave the Jewish neighborhood. But the latter pushes her son to return South, even as Nina and her family decide to visit Jacob after discovering his identity and story.

The writers choose to have the film end with Jacob embracing Nina in front of the church. But what has become of the church? The winning “Gospel” hymn by Cantor Jacob Fisher is decidedly New Age (despite a nod to Psalm 130). In the Hollywood tradition of *Keeping the Faith* and *The Prince of Egypt*, the “faith” that is preached is a belief in oneself and in other people, particularly romantic partners, as at least as important as belief in God. There is no reference in it to Christian theology.

New Age spirituality touts “belief” in a spirituality that is superior to the “narrow” beliefs and practices of particular religions. But it cannot provide the faithfulness (Hebrew: *emunah*) to bind its adherents together. It therefore posits that the “enlightened” or “evolved” individuals who subscribe to its open spirituality will somehow find the wisdom, through mixing and matching the “older” religions, to refine their “belief.” Lacking a sense of religious covenant and the love or *chesed* among those loyal to it, New Age spirituality fuels, or is fuelled by, “interfaith” romance.

From the standpoint of classical Judaism and Christianity, *Twist of Faith* twists the very notion of religious covenant. It suggests that the “old” covenant of the Orthodox Jewish community, as that of

MUSKOVITZ

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judge, ensuring that the very best of the “Chosen” people would be voted through to Hollywood.

Finally, one big question remains. If our People were not freed from Egypt until today, would God still forbid Moses from entering the Promised Land? I’m sorry, but I’m afraid the answer is still yes, but it would be handled a little differently in a modern age. Today Moses’ fate would be determined by his participation in a reality show called: “Survivor Egypt”, with God dragging Moses’ destiny out over several weeks for better ratings.

And that concludes my version of what Passover would look like if our Exodus out of Egypt would’ve been delayed until present day. I wish you and yours a peaceful Passover and...sorry, pardon the interruption, I’m getting a tweet. Wow, I don’t believe it! I’m actually getting a tweet from Modern Day Moses. It reads: MosesOnThe Move @Moses... “Desert trip not so bad, *nisht gefehrlach*, it’s a #dry heat”. Oy, thank God! The man’s been through enough. Happy Passover.

Alan Muskovitz is a writer, voice-over/acting talent, speaker and emcee. Visit his website at laughwithbigal.com and “Like” Al on Facebook. ★



the African American church, is spiritually and emotionally wanting. The cantor has no qualms about giving up his religious community (read: covenant); his main regret is falling in love again while his wife is “barely cold” (though in traditional Jewish circles, he would be encouraged to marry again soon). He cannot find fulfillment and comfort in Brooklyn, despite the centrality in Jewish life of the Covenant (*b’rit*) between God and the Jewish People, through which one finds happiness and purpose (what Rabbi Nachman really taught), the Covenant that sustains and sanctions love and loyalty, including romantic love and concern for Jews and non-Jews alike.

Had the writers given Jacob and Nina a friendship that brought them comfort and meaning in their respective faiths, this film would have been respectful to those faiths and to its characters as people of faith. Instead it makes its cantor the New Age Jazz Singer.

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek in Chicago since 1988. 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 since 1979. ★

AGES

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A particularly painful example of the double standard occurred in the first moments of Israel’s recent battle against Gazan rockets when one of its drones took out the leading architect of Hamas’s terrorist planning against Israel. The response was a salvo of hyper criticism from Arab sources (expected) but almost equal measures of condemnation from western sources as if the life of a terrorist was inviolate.

Yet American drones have been actively pursuing terrorists and their enclaves in Iraq, Yemen and Pakistan for the past decade including one as recent as December 2012. The American press while ready to dump on Israel for this brand of warfare has been remarkably mute on drone strikes.

News organizations in the West, with rare exception, have devoted concentrated, one might say, obsessive attention to the loss of life resulting from Israel’s two incursions into Gaza in the last decade while granting only a nodding recognition of the human disaster in Syria and other parts of the Levant.

It’s time for soft bigotry and double standards to disappear in the Middle East and everywhere.

Arnold Ages is “Distinguished Emeritus Professor,” University of Waterloo, Ontario Canada. ★



HIER

(continued from page 11)

not only lived in, but also loved the land of Israel. They also know that there are few churches in the Arab world, and that the State of Israel remains eternally committed to the principle of freedom of religion. We Jews on the other hand also need to remember that in a global society we need friends to survive, since there are only 14 million of us left in the world.

Naturally, Jews will continue to have their differences with the Church. When Popes offend us we should not hesitate to speak up. If the Vatican wants Jerusalem to be divided or internationalized, we should bluntly tell them, nonsense, look at what happened when we tried doing that in Berlin or Vienna! But most importantly, we must continue to engage their leaders so that future Popes will not revert back to the Church’s infamous past, but will build upon the legacies of Popes John XXIII, John Paul II and Benedict XVI in the 21st Century and beyond.

Rabbi Marvin Hier is the Founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and its Museum of Tolerance. ★



As I Heard It

REVIEWED BY MORTON GOLD

Clarinet music by Ronn Yedidia

Some folk think that the clarinet is a Jewish sounding instrument, fit only for the playing of Klezmer music. (Tell that to Mozart, Brahms or Rachmaninoff!) That the unknowing believe this to be the case is purely a byproduct of their lack of the breadth of music.

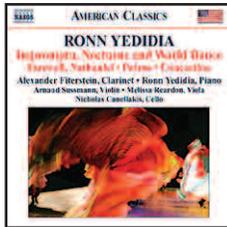
Yes, that the clarinet *can* be used to good advantage to perform music in the Klezmer tradition is true. However it is also capable of a wide range of expression and has been used by composers in more than 200 years of musical creation. (I have composed a clarinet concerto and several chamber pieces which use the clarinet!)

A disc released in 2012 features the music of Ronn Yedidia which shows the many facets of style and technique possible for the clarinet. The disc was produced by Naxos (8.559699) and has a total playing time of 60:43. Mr. Yedidia was born in Tel Aviv in 1960 and his music has been performed in concert halls, on radio and TV and in film scores. In 2007 he was selected as the Seattle Chamber Society's first ever commissioned composer.

He is an accomplished pianist as well as accordionist. The clarinet soloist is Alexander Fiterstein "recognized for playing which combines flawless technique and consummate musicianship". (M. Silverstein) I could not agree more strongly; it surely does just that and more! He is the winner of the Carl Nielson Instrumental Clarinet competition and often performs with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He is clarinet professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

There are six compositions by Yedidia on this CD which show many sides of his musical personality. He is a talented composer whose music shows an understanding of the clarinet but also of the piano as well. His music is expressive, romantic and in many places exemplifies the Jewish ethos in music. I would like to hear more of his music.

Musically speaking, I think of him as a kindred soul. For those of my readers who love instrumental music, especially music



Yiddish for Everyday

BY HENYA CHAIET

Meineh Shayneh Gehdanke Fun Pesach

(My good memories of Pesach)

Ich gehdenk ahz glych nach Purim flegen mir aun hayben ramen tzu machen dee hoyz Pesachdik. Mir hauben nisht gehhat kein dindzt flegen mir alleh helfen der mahme.

(I remember as soon as Purim was over, we started cleaning to ready the house for Passover. We did not have maids so all of

that features the clarinet, this CD is for you. I am happy to recommend it. There are six compositions on this CD.

The first written in 2010 is called "Impromptu." This work is really clever and in turns lively, charming and (to me) unmistakably Jewish sounding. This is meant to be taken as a compliment. The second part is called "Nocturne" and is really an extended and reflective cadenza that leads to the third section "World Dance." This part is emphatically dance-like pulsating with odd accents both in the clarinet and piano. This music is the product of a knowledgeable and creative individual.

The second composition on the CD is called "Farewell, Nathaniel." It is an elegy in the best sense of the word. Composed in 2007, it is a musical tribute to a close friend of the composer. This is a beautiful work of art in the medium of music. Mr. Yedidia has a *Yiddische Neshoma* and this composition is an apt illustration through the medium of music of that soul.

The third composition "Poeme" composed in 1995 has an impressive and significant piano part against which the clarinet is set. It is the longest work on the CD and is in three sections each with its own style. The fourth composition is called "Nocturne" and was composed in 2010. It is an expressive, meditative, contemplative piece. I wish that I had written it!

The fifth piece, composed in 2007 is called "Concertino." This work also calls for a string trio in addition to the clarinet and piano. The strings are shown to good advantage especially at the end of the second movement. An extended cadenza which explores the upper regions of that instrument leads into the last movement, one that is in turns spirited and reflective and brings the piece to a powerful conclusion.

(see Gold, page 19)

us helped mother.)

Erev Yom Tov, zaire free fleckt mein mutter un ich aus pahcken dee teller, teplach un alleh farshaydeneh zachen far dos kauch tzimmer. Ich haub daus zayer gehglichen taun der ar vaus dee mahmeh fleckt der tzeylen ah myseh mit yeder zach vaus iz gevein un daus barrel.

(Very early the morning of the first seder night my mother and I would unpack the large wooden barrel that held all the Passover dishes, pots and other things used in the Passover kitchen. I loved doing this as my mother had a story about every item we unpacked. The barrels were very large and it took several hours to unpack. I still remember many things that we unpacked.)

Daus klayneh kestehleh vaus haut gehalten dee Swee-Touch-Nee tay. Ich haub nauch meineh. Ahz meh haut gehkayft ah funt tay flegen zey geben ah mahtahneh ehn yor hauben zehgehben ah grayseh teller un zex klayneh tellerlach far frucht. Ich haub daus nauch heint. Mein yerusheh fun der mahmeh.

(One was the little red and gold metal box that held the Swee-Touch-Nee tea. Every little girl I knew kept her special things in them. I still have mine. Ask your mother or *bubbe* [grandmother] if she remembers them. If you bought one pound of tea, you were given a gift. One year mother got a lovely bowl and six small bowls for fruit. We used these for compote every year. Before mother died she gave them to me.)

Dee shayneh gedanken zeinen mein yerusheh fun meineh elteren. Seh iz nisht tauh in der velt gehnoog gelt tzu kayfen meineh shayneh gedanken fun meineh yungeh yoren.

(These lovely memories are my inheritance from my parents. There is not enough money in the world for me to buy my lovely memories of my childhood.)

Haut ah Freylachen Pesach mit ayer mishpaucheh, un friend. Nempt ah bissel zeit tzu machen shayneh gedanken. Daus iz zayer ah gooteh un ah natahcheh zach.

(Have a very Happy Passover with family and friends. Take a little time to make good memories. This is a very good and important thing to do.)

Henya Chaiet is the Yiddish name for Mrs. A. Helen Feinn. Born in 1924 ten days before Passover, her parents had come to America one year prior. They spoke only Yiddish at home so that is all she spoke until age five when she started kindergarten. She then learned English, but has always loved Yiddish and speaks it whenever possible. Chaiet lived in La Porte and Michigan City, Ind., from 1952 to 1978 and currently resides in Walnut Creek, Calif. Email: afeinn87@gmail.com. ★

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

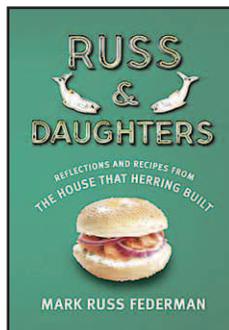
Four generations owning NY Lower East Side store

Russ & Daughters. By Mark Russ Federman. New York: Schocken Books, 2013. 220 Pages. \$25.95.

From 1880 to 1920, more than two million East European Jews came to the United States. Many of them settled in New York's Lower East Side. Some worked in the garment industry, often in their crowded apartments; others became pushcart entrepreneurs, selling such things as clothes, dishes, furniture and food. One of them was Joel Russ who arrived in 1907 at the age of 21. His sister, who had sponsored his immigration, set him up with a pushcart from which he sold herring. After earning enough to get married and to open a candy store in Brooklyn, he returned to the Lower East Side where, in 1914, he established an "appetizing" store on Orchard Street. He sold lox, cream cheese, bagels, whitefish, and sable, as well as smoked, cured and pickled herring. In 1923, he moved to Houston Street where the business remains today.

Russ's three daughters eventually took over from him. The youngest was Anne who married Herbert Federman and they ran the store after Anne's sisters retired. Their son, Mark, author of this book, succeeded his parents in 1978. He had worked in the business as a youngster and although he went on to become a lawyer, he gave up "Lex for lox." In 2009, his daughter and nephew, the fourth generation, bought the store from him. Their modernizations include the possibility of ordering the store's wares on the Internet.

This story is warmly and colorfully told against the background of remarkable changes in the Lower East Side "from pushcart to posh...from squalid ghetto to tenement chic." No longer a Jewish slum, the area is now home to writers, artists, musicians, up-scale restaurants, designer clothes shops, boutique hotels and art galleries. Once a place with many Jewish businesses, including 20 to 30 appetizing stores, all that remains on Houston Street in addition to Russ & Daughters, are



Katz's Delicatessen and Yonah Schimmel's Knish Bakery.

Fondly and affectionately, supplemented by photos, the book tells this story in nine chapters: history, family, employees, customers, neighborhood, products, holidays, business model and legacy. At the end of each chapter are recipes for the special dishes that can be made with ingredients bought at the store, many depicted in eight pages of colored pictures.

Calvin Trillin, food author, fan, and long-time customer of Russ & Daughters, provides a delightful introduction in which he tells about bringing his daughters and grandchildren to the store.

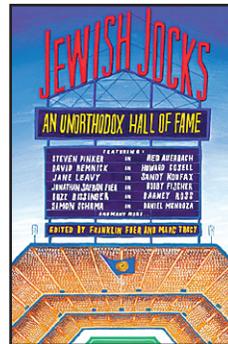
This gratifying, sincere, and amiable account of an "appetizing" store will make you want to visit the Lower East Side or, if it's too far, to place an order, using your computer. We are greatly indebted to Mark Russ Federman for telling the story of *Russ & Daughters* with such loving tenderness.

An unorthodox hall of fame

Jewish Jocks. Edited by Franklin Foer and Marc Tracy. New York: Twelve Books, 2012. 304 Pages. \$26.99.

Taking great liberty with the term "jock," the editors of this anthology have broadened its meaning beyond the conventional understanding of the term as referring to a male athlete who is not very bright. They add women, a chess player, announcers, writers, and others who are not actual competitors in sports. The result is a list of 50 people for each of whom there is an essay written by such talented individuals as Lawrence Summers, former secretary of treasury and president of Harvard, David Brooks, columnist for the *New York Times*, David Remnick, editor of the *New Yorker*, Deborah Lipstadt and Rebecca Goldstein, noted Jewish scholars. Foer's younger brother, best-selling author Jonathan Safran Foer, also contributes an essay. The editors of the book, Foer and Tracy, are associated with the *New Republic* as editor and staff member.

Inevitably, even with such talented authors, some of the essays are less interesting than others but this is a judgment to be made by individual readers who may or may not care to learn about gambler Arnold Rothstein who supposedly fixed the 1919 World Series.



The definition of "Jewish jock" has to be stretched widely to include Rothstein. On the other hand, the liberal description of the term enables Foer and Tracy to introduce us to Whitey Bimstein, a "cutman" in boxing who made the transition from fighter to cornerman, training others and acting as their second during a fight, using cut-mending techniques in between rounds. Bimstein, who lived from 1896 to 1969, not only had "the hands of a surgeon" but also imparted wisdom as to strategy while repairing injuries. Douglas Century, author of a biography of Barney Ross, wrote the essay about Bimstein, contrasting him with today's seconds who are "little more than profane cheerleaders." Readers will be grateful to Foer and Tracy for acquainting us with this little-known contributor to the history of boxing.

Far better known is what happened to the Israeli athletes in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Deborah Lipstadt adds to our knowledge of this tragic event, demonstrating once again that she is a foremost Jewish scholar.

Baseball is well represented by Hank Greenberg, Al Rosen, and Sandy Koufax. Again stretching the definition of "jock," Foer and Tracy include chapters on Marvin Miller, the recently deceased organizer of baseball players into a union that enabled them to earn high salaries and Bud Selig, who, in 2012, celebrated 20 years as commissioner.

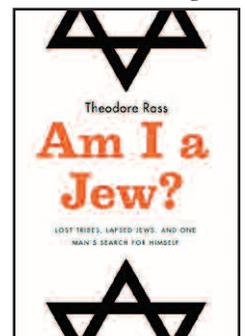
The book also includes essays on bull-fighter Sidney Franklin, ping-pong wizard Marty Reisman, fencer Helene Mayer, football player Sidney Luckman, chess champion Bobby Fisher, swimmer Mark Spitz, tennis player Renee Richards, basketball coach Red Auerbach, among others.

The combination of interesting subjects who constitute what the editors call "an unorthodox hall of fame" with a group of fine writers makes this a book that will be treasured and enjoyed by Jewish sports fans.

Question and answer represent a process

Am I a Jew? By Theodore Ross. New York: Hudson Street Press (Penguin Group), 2012. 275 Pages. \$25.95.

When he was 9 years old, Ross's mother divorced his father and moved from New York to a small town in Mississippi. She was a physician with "a failed



(see Teicher, page 19)



My Kosher Kitchen

REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

New Passover cookbook and recipes

Passover Made Easy. By Leah Schapira and Victoria Dwek. Mesorah Publications, \$15.99 paperback, February 2013.

I once made a list of all the Passover cookbooks that had been written in recent years and was amazed at the number.

Now two women, from very different backgrounds, have combined their expertise to write another one. Leah Schapira's family came from Hungary and Victoria Dwek's from Syria. Leah is author of *Fresh & Easy Kosher Cooking*. Victoria is managing editor of *Ami Magazine* and a food editor who lives in a New Jersey community of Jews from Syrian backgrounds.

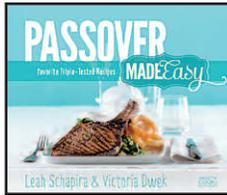
In the cute introduction are conversations between the two and the casual comments, hints and sketches with ideas continue throughout the cookbook on the recipe pages. In between, there are lots of color photographs, some of which show how to style and serve the dish.

They say there are 60 recipes, but if you count dressings and sauces, there are 70.

After the introduction, there is a food and wine pairing guide, an essay on *seder* wines and a *charoset* recipe from each of the authors, followed by recipes for mayonnaise, "bread" crumbs and crepes.

The book then moves forward with seven chapters – starters like crackers and mock *techineh* and brisket eggrolls; soups and salads like Russian cole slaw and turnip and beet pickles; main dishes such as brisket short ribs in duck sauce and honey pecan salmon; side dishes; brunch and dairy – I am excited to try banana French toast and matzaroni and cheese; desserts – how about espresso macaroons and chocolate nut biscotti? A couple of drinks are at the end and a replacement index plus a regular index.

The hints and chatty comments are really the most enjoyable part of the cookbook – beside the recipes which are all very creative and original. The recipes are triple tested, and all but four are gluten free (non-*gebrokts*), i.e., *matzah* is not put into any liquid.



I think this is going to be a wonderful addition to my collection of Passover cookbooks, and it would make a great gift before Passover to any hostess.

Eggplant-Wrapped Chicken (Servings: 4–6)

This original kosher recipe, from the cookbook Passover Made Easy, calls for stuffed chicken thighs wrapped in oven-fried eggplant. Serving 4 to 6 people makes it a great meal for families during Passover.

Eggplant:

- 1 tall eggplant
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- Pinch of coarse black pepper

Meat Mixture:

- 3 Tbsp. oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 lb. ground meat
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder

Chicken:

- 6 boneless skinless chicken thighs
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- Pinch of coarse black pepper

Preheat oven to broil. Grease a baking sheet. Cut eggplant lengthwise, 1/4-inch thick, to get 6 or 7 slices. Reserve remaining eggplant scraps. Place eggplant slices on prepared baking sheet. Brush slices with oil and season with salt and pepper. Broil 5 minutes per side, until second side is beginning to brown. The slices should appear as if they were fried. Remove and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Peel and finely dice remaining eggplant to obtain 1/2 cup diced eggplant. Heat oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, and diced eggplant and sauté until soft, about 5–7 minutes. In a small bowl, combine onion mixture with ground meat. Season with salt and garlic powder. Season chicken thighs with salt and pepper. Place a tablespoon of the meat mixture into each thigh and roll up to close. Roll an eggplant slice around each stuffed chicken thigh. Place, seam side down and close together, in a baking pan. Cover and bake for 2-1/2 hours.

Matzaroni and Cheese [*gebrokts*] (Servings: 6–8)

This kosher version of macaroni and cheese substitutes matzah for pasta, making it a great Passover meal. It gets a creamy boost from a combination of sour cream and cottage cheese in addition to shredded mozzarella or Muenster.

LEDERMAN

(continued from page 4)

and honest relationships, which is the best way to fight stereotypes. One by one, person to person, we can destroy misconceptions that have no basis in fact.

If, like Karen, we find ourselves on the receiving end of a Jewish stereotype, it is our duty to inform the speaker that what she is saying is hurtful and wrong, reflecting intolerance and discrimination rather than fact. But we also have to avoid making insensitive comments ourselves. Statements like "I was gypped" or that someone is an "Indian giver" are offensive to Gypsies and Native Americans no less than "being Jewed down" is offensive to Jews.

I'll admit that I have never quite felt the same about my friend who said she "Jewed" someone down. Even though I have tried to forgive and forget, there is something within me that holds back, and I have become more cautious with her. Perhaps it is because I know that behind her seemingly innocuous statement lies a kernel of what she believes is the truth.

Amy Hirshberg Lederman is an author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney who lives in Tucson. Her columns in the AJP have won awards from the American Jewish Press Association, the Arizona Newspapers Association and the Arizona Press Club for excellence in commentary. Visit her website at amyhirshberglederman.com. ★



What kids don't prefer mac 'n cheese over anything else? This is an easy dinner that will get all the troops running to the table when the hot, cheesy, and bubbling dish emerges from the oven.

- 5 matzahs, broken into small pieces
- 5 eggs
- 1 (16 oz.) container sour cream
- 1 (16 oz.) container cottage cheese
- 3 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella or Muenster cheese, divided

Preheat oven to 350°F. In an 8 x 8-inch baking dish, arrange 1/3 of the broken matzah pieces. In a medium bowl, beat eggs. Add sour cream, cottage cheese, butter, salt, and 1 cup shredded cheese. Pour 1/3 of the cheese mixture over the matzah. Repeat with two additional layers of matzah and cheese. Top with remaining 1 cup shredded cheese. Bake for 40 minutes. The cheese on top should be brown and bubbling.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food and feature writer, and author of nine kosher cookbooks. ★

ABOUT THE COVER*(continued from page 2)*

meant to portray the sense of fulfillment and thankfulness he must have felt at this time. In his first encounter with God at the burning bush, a timid Moses had requested that God send someone else rather than him to help the people. Moses did not see how, unarmed and alone, he could approach the great Pharaoh and convince him to let his slaves, the Jewish people, go free. God assured Moses that his mission would be successful, and now, Moses, after many trials and confrontations with the Pharaoh, was finally able to savor the satisfaction of having accomplished his mission.

The child on the shoulder of Moses is meant to symbolically represent the way that Moses found the courage to shoulder his burden, and by so doing, was able to help save the future generations of his people. This is a task that all good people, who care about the welfare of our Jewish community, also take upon themselves.

Although the Jews were now “physically” free from their slavery, they still had a long way to go on their journey. Having been slaves for more than a third of a millennium, they still possessed a slave mentality and had a distance to go before they could be mentally or emotionally free.

The desert behind the people in the design depicts the path they would have to follow now. Eventually, their travels would lead them to Mt. Sinai, portrayed in the distance as rising on the horizon behind them. Here, they would receive the Ten Commandments and the Torah, instructions to guide them on the next step of their life journey to total freedom.

Along the way, it would not always be smooth and easy. They would get sand in their shoes and stub their toes, symbolically depicted by the rock at Miriam’s right foot. Ultimately, the people would grow in their understandings from the experiences they would encounter on their way.

Even as the sea had opened to allow the Jews to continue on their journey, in the upper three panels of the design, the clouds may be seen parting to enable the Jews to now make a “heavenly connection,” the next step on their path to true freedom. As the Jews found out at Sinai, they still had a distance to go on their journey. Just as in life, after you climb one mountain, even one as great as Sinai, there is always another. So too, there is always more to learn and greater heights still to be achieved. Our entire life should be one of exploration and growth.

The plants and trees seen growing, flowering and blooming in the desert are a reflection of the human spirit. Like the

Jews, they too have found a way to survive and grow even under adverse and difficult conditions.

The doves seen carrying olive branches in the upper corners of the composition allude to the promise of a future time of peace. They are a glimpse of the main theme repeated throughout the Exodus story as to how God provides for all our needs. Although the birds, ducks and swan are winged creatures, there is a difference in the way they are depicted. The swan and ducks portrayed on the waters of the sea represent the way that the Jews at that time were grounded in their lives. Now, as free people, with the guidance of the Torah on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life, and with the hope of a better future, the doves reflect the ability of the people to take flight and allow their spirits to soar to new heights.

Like our Jewish ancestors, may we too learn from our journey and the lessons God teaches us along the way. As it is depicted in this composition, God’s vision of the people became reality shortly thereafter. Now, truly free at last, the Jewish people are seen singing and dancing as they wholeheartedly celebrate “On The Shores Of Freedom.”

Bruce David is a Judaic artist and Jewish educator from Bloomington, Ind. His art may be viewed at www.davidart.com. He also welcomes comments at that address. He is also president of Light of the Nations (lotnexperience.org) a contemporary Jewish educational outreach organization. ★

**GOLD***(continued from page 16)*

The last piece on the CD is called “Impromptu” and was composed in 2010. This is the most romantic work on the disc.

The music is a grateful work for both performers and listeners. While it may owe much of its inspiration to Rachmaninoff, it is essentially an original work by Yedidia and in the romantic tradition. (No wonder that it is not frequently performed!) Other talented performers include: Arnaud Sussmann, violin; Melissa Reardon, viola; and Nicholas Canellakis, cello.

Dr. Gold is a composer/conductor and music reviewer for The Jewish Post & Opinion. ★

**TEICHER***(continued from page 17)*

Manhattan medical practice” who was pleased to leave New York and to accept a local hospital’s invitation to establish a medical office. Neither she nor her former husband worked at being observant Jews

but she thought he might object to her enrolling Ross in the Christ Episcopal Day School and instructing him to identify himself as a Unitarian. Accordingly, when Ross went to New York to spend holidays with his father, he kept secret his new Christian identity.

As an adult, Ross decided to look into the question of whether or not he was a Jew and began by visiting the “Crypto-Jews” of New Mexico. He learned about their supposed descent from Spanish Jews who had fled the 15th century Spanish Inquisition and he describes his discussions with them. He also spent time with a rabbi in El Paso who specialized in converting “Crypto-Jews” to full Judaism. Ross wound up doubting the authenticity of the “Crypto-Jews” but, in any case, decided that they couldn’t help him to resolve his question.

He then turned to a *Sukkot* celebration in New York’s Union Square where sukkahs were erected in a competition partly sponsored by the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies. This led to his meeting officers of the Bronfman Philanthropies and learning more about their activities such as Birthright, the project that brings young Jews to Israel on free ten-day trips. It was stimulated in part by the findings of the 1991 National Jewish Population Survey which painted a bleak picture of the American Jewish community, including a high percentage of intermarriage; a low percentage of synagogue membership; and a low Jewish birth rate.

Ross goes on to describe his further explorations such as visits to Rockland County’s large Orthodox Jewish population; spending a *Sabbath* with an ultra-Orthodox family in Brooklyn; attending a *Shabbaton* in a Manhattan Orthodox synagogue and a wedding in Borough Park. He also makes trips to Kansas City where he spends time with the rabbi of a classical Reform Temple. Exploration of a genetic testing company takes him to Houston, Texas and, finally, he gets to Israel, where his “false expectations” were “dashed.”

Ross’s moving conclusion is best stated in his own words: “For me both question (Am I a Jew?) and answer represent a process of continual, conscious purposeful becoming...I have asked the question. I will continue to do so. That will have to be enough.”

The pithy, basic question that Ross poses and his determined efforts to find an answer are clearly and compassionately set forth, stimulating Jewish readers to figure out how they would respond.

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



Musings from Shiloh

BY BATYA MEDAD

Late winter, contrasting scenes

Living in Shiloh I'm very aware of the seasons. Now we're on the verge of spring. Rosh Chodesh Nissan is in two days. It's amazing how some plants look frighteningly dead and other plants, like the wild flowers and roses are blooming. I love my neighborhood!

Posted on her blog: <http://me-ander.blogspot.com> on Sun., March 10, 2013.



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KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page 11)

Sat Chatri dance comes from southern Thailand; the style is a forerunner of modern classical dance styles. The next dance is derived from an ethnic minority in Thailand and is part of a ceremony. This folk dance is traditionally performed at festivals and celebrations and is one of the very few fast-moving dances which are part of the program.

The last dance, Krapo, uses coconut shells as part of the choreography and is a very playful, interactive, folk-style dance. While some may find the accompanying music monotonous, in fact, it is an integral part of the dances.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food writer, lecturer and cookbook author. She also leads walks through Machaneh Yehudah, the Jewish produce market in English. ★



Grape vines in early March, late Adar.



Why Faith Matters

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Happiness may arise from fortunate events but true joy comes from growth and goodness. Self-involvement alone is fleeting and ultimately sad; deepening ourselves and touching others triggers spiritual endorphins. Joy is the gift of being of use. *Shabbat Shalom. ~ 1-18-13*

This Shabbat we read the Ten Commandments concluding with "Thou shalt not covet." One commentator writes that this is not a commandment but a promise: if you live according to these rules you will not covet – you won't spend your life wanting what others have. You will be fulfilled. *Shabbat Shalom. ~ 2-1-13*

Isaac Bashevis Singer wrote of his childhood home on the Sabbath: "Our house was filled with the odor of burning wax, blessed spices, and with an atmosphere of wonder and miracles." May we share the smell of spices and the atmosphere of miracles. *Shabbat Shalom. ~ 2-15-13*

On Shabbat the world seems to settle into place. The clamor fades, the pressure lifts and the generations join in prayer. As the Psalmist sang, "This is the day that God has made." *Shabbat Shalom. ~ 2-22-13*

From Facebook posts of Rabbi Wolpe. Wolpe is the senior rabbi of Temple Sinai in L.A., and author of Why Faith Matters. ★



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 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. ★