

The Jewish Post & Opinion • National Edition

Presenting a broad spectrum of Jewish News and Opinions since 1935.

Volume 87, Number 2 • March 17, 2021 • 4 Nissan 5781

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Cover Art by Ann D. Koffsky
(see About the Cover on p. 2)

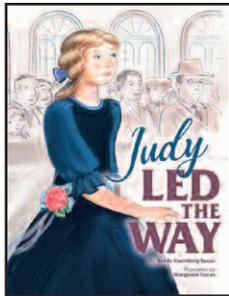
Editorial

On Jan. 26, 2021, I watched a Zoom program where Rabbi Sandy Sasso, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck (BEZ) in Indianapolis (co-senior rabbi with her husband, Dennis, from 1977–2013), read and discussed the writing of her new children’s book, *Judy Led the Way: The Story of the First Bat Mitzvah*. Published Sept. 1, 2020, by Apples and Honey Press, an imprint of Behrman House, this is her 20th book, several of which are award-winning children’s books.



Rabbi S. Sasso

Judy Kaplan Eisenstein, daughter of Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, was the brave young woman to become the first *bat mitzvah* in the United States. Much to the chagrin of her two grandmothers, the ceremony was held on March 18, 1922 – woman achieved the right to vote in



1920 – at the Society for the Advancement of Judaism in New York City, the synagogue Rabbi Kaplan led. Judy was the eldest of four daughters of Rabbi and Lena (Rubin) Kaplan. The book is about empowerment, overcoming fears, having courage and curiosity, and challenging the status quo.

The *bat mitzvah* ceremony took place in the sanctuary where they had separate seating and the women were in the back. Judy was not allowed to be on the *bimah*, so she read from below it. Also she could not read from the *Torah* so she read from a *chumash*. After the *Torah* Service was completed and the *Haftorah* was chanted, they called her up. Rabbi Sandy said that it took 30 years on the east coast before ritual equality for young women became commonplace.

Usually events happen on the East and West coasts before the Midwest, so I checked with my older siblings, the oldest who became a *bar mitzvah* at BEZ in Indianapolis in 1952. They said their female peers were not encouraged to become a *bat mitzvah* to the same degree as boys were, but when they chose to, they were performing the same rituals, equal to their male counterparts.

Attempting to find out more, I spoke to Carole Tavel, the first young woman to become a *bat mitzvah* at BEZ in 1950. She concurred with my siblings and said she

About the Cover

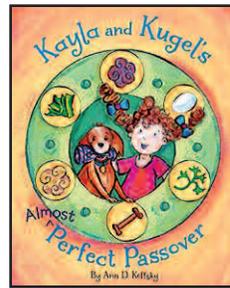
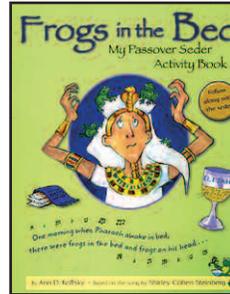
Goblets of Freedom
By Ann Koffsky



Ann Koffsky

In this illustration, the artist chose to focus on the theme of freedom that is emblemized at the seder with the four cups, and surrounded it with the four Hebrew words for freedom.

She is the author and illustrator of more than 30 Jewish books for kids, including *Kayla and Kugel’s Almost Perfect Passover* and *Frogs in the Bed*. You can see more of her work at www.annkoffsky.com and on Instagram at JewishArtbyAnn. Her books are available on Amazon. Happy Passover! ✨



had done everything the boys were doing. She said at that time women in the United States were starting to participate in more leadership roles because they had had to assume some of the men’s jobs who were away fighting in World War II.

Tavel’s parents, Manuel and Diana Leve were very active in the congregation and were friends with then Rabbi William P. Greenfield who served BEZ from 1946–1960. He wanted a *bat mitzvah* and felt she would be a good candidate because she was a good student and had attended years of Hebrew school, so he asked her to do it. She said some of the more observant members of the congregation made a fuss and said it was not appropriate for women to be on the *bimah*. However, once they saw that she did a good job and everything went smoothly, they became more accepting of the idea. This “opened up the faucet” for other girls to follow suit.

This is one my favorite of Rabbi Sandy’s children’s books because it flowed smoothly, is beautifully illustrated by Margeaux Lucas, and the details behind the story are fascinating. Rabbi Sandy spent two years researching and revising this book. She has greatly admired Judy as a mentor and friend since rabbinical school, for which Judy’s husband, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, was the founding president. The Sassos remained close with the Eisensteins through the years.

Who better to do this than another

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The Jewish Post & Opinion

Jewish News and Opinion since 1935.

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website: www.jewishpostopinion.com
publisher & editor: Jennie Cohen
graphic designer: Charlie Bunes

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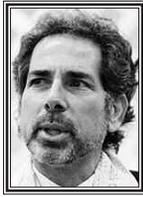
woman of Jewish firsts? She was the first woman ordained at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, the first woman rabbi to lead a Conservative Congregation, and with her husband Rabbi Dennis C. Sasso, the first ever rabbinical couple.

At the end of the program it was interesting to hear about some of her experiences when she first became a rabbi. The full program can be viewed at: <https://kaplancenter.org/recording-of-judy-led-the-way-1-26-21/>

Blessings for a healthy *Pesach!*
Jennie Cohen, March 17, 2021 ✨

God Said, "I can do better than that" and Created Woman

BY RABBI BARRY SILVER



Rabbi Sam, z"l, and Elaine Silver, Rabbi Barry's parents.

Raised by a rabbinical father who was a feminist before the word was invented, and was well *equipped* with a quip for every occasion, my dad said the Biblical account of Creation was not true; what really happened is God created man, then looked down and said "I can do better than that" and created woman.

My mother made the major decisions in our household, leaving my father free to do what he liked best; playing with the kids, writing books, appearing on radio, telling jokes and inspiring large crowds with his wit, intellect and love for Jewish ideals and people.

My parents formed a wonderful partnership as synagogue leaders and parents of five rambunctious boys and many quadrupeds. As choir director, my mother helped create a harmonious, welcoming, synagogue.

She prepared a festive meal each night of Passover, for friends, neighbors and dignitaries of all faiths who celebrated freedom and Jewish ideals in our home. A Juilliard graduate and athlete, my mother played Passover songs on the piano, and recited part of the Passover ritual while standing on her head. Thus, my self-confident mother and everyone else were in on the joke when my dad looked towards my mom and deadpanned, "Passover means the end of slavery, but don't you get any ideas." In our home, rote learning and conventional thinking were literally turned on their head, while Jewish ideals of freedom of thought, asking questions and family love filled the air.

I am so grateful for my mother teaching me tennis, supporting our athletic endeavors, coaching our basketball team, and being able to scream with the best of them. She made up for a father who called himself an anti-athlete and joked that if he felt the urge to exercise, he would lie down until it went away. Raised by east European parents who lacked exposure to sports, my dad learned ping pong in the Philippines while serving in World War II, but did not play other sports. As members of the greatest generation, my parents worked together to raise a family with love, wholesome values, joy and laughter. No one had to teach us to respect and admire women, we saw it every day in our parents.

Whereas Orthodox men give thanks each day that they were not born a woman, I give thanks that I was not raised by parents who take the *Torah* literally,

which asserts that women were created as an afterthought from Adam's rib, could be sold into slavery to make ends meet, and could be stoned to death if not a virgin on her wedding day.

Thank Goddess for Jewish reformers who rejected the traditional view that it is dangerous to educate a woman, and instituted *Bat Mitzvah* for girls. Once liberated from the shackles of the irrational notion that an infallible, misogynistic God wrote the *Torah*, modern Jews began to view the *Torah* as our first attempt at morality, not our last, thus inspiring us to help lead the way towards women's equality, truth and righteousness.

In February, we celebrated Black History Month on *Shabbat* with African-American singers and preachers who joined us in rejoicing over the revival of the Black/Jewish alliance that brought us civil rights in the 1960s and the recent election of the first black and Jewish senators in Georgia history, ending the reign of terror of a President who bragged about abusing women because he was rich, then denied it when his accusers came forward in an election year.

As we commemorate Woman's History Month, we rejoice that we now have a President who serves as a role model for young boys by treating women and people of every race, creed and sexual orientation with dignity and respect. We celebrate the first female Vice President and the first Jewish second husband who is happy in his own skin, and like Moses, with the skin of his black, non-Jewish wife. Like President Biden, my family roots are in Wilmington, Delaware, and I too am blessed with an intelligent, loving wife, who emulates *Moshe Rabbeynu* (Moses our teacher), as a skilled educator.

Let us remember this month and every month that the best way to create a better world is to empower women with dignity, equality and autonomy over their own body, mind and reproductive system. On that day, men, women and children will be blessed.

Rabbi Barry Silver can be reached at barryboca@aol.com and would be delighted to hear from you whether you agree or

One Year Later

BY RABBI DENNIS C. SASSO



A year of quarantine has passed. Since March, 2020, we have been bringing services and programs to the congregation and the community virtually.

Sacred times have been accompanied by difficult moments. Most painful have been the illnesses and losses, the anxiety and anguish of these unsettling months. Social distancing, personal stresses, and political upheaval have made this a year of unprecedented developments beyond the health crisis.

Despite challenges and turmoil, I am grateful for the support and partnership of my colleagues and coworkers at the synagogue, of dedicated lay leaders, devoted members, family and friends who have enabled our beloved congregation not merely to survive, but to retool, thrive, and transform itself to meet adversity and to keep the promise.

Last year, as the pandemic became entrenched, I quoted, in my first message to you, a passage from Anne Lamont about the art of quilt making. Admittedly, not a quilter myself, I proposed that we were living through "quilt-like times", getting through each day "stitch by stitch, patch by patch." A year has passed, and spring is almost upon us again. It is time to look at what we have created, the pieces we managed to salvage and the threads we used to sew the fragments together.

Our quilt, a patchwork of sorrow and loss, hope and faith, has been stitched together with heroism, altruism, and simple perseverance. May the blanket of beauty and warmth we have created embrace and enfold us as we move towards blessings of renewal, healing, and joy.

(This message will appear in the next issue of our congregational newsletter, *Besamim*).

(see Sasso, page 5)



disagree with his views. His father was Rabbi Samuel Silver, z"l, who wrote "Digest of the Yiddish Press", book reviews and more for this publication from 1948–2007. He is spiritual leader of Congregation L'Dor Va-Dor in Boynton Beach, Fla., and he is the only Rabbi to have served in the Florida Legislature. He is founder of the Interfaith Justice League and the Environmental Coalition and also founder of Cosmic Judaism, which merges Judaism and science. He is a civil rights attorney specializing in church/state separation and the environment and has been in Who's Who of American Law since 2000. ✨

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

B.H.

My Story

Two years ago I was interviewed by JEM (Jewish Educational Media). Recently they published my story and I am sharing it with you. Check their websites to read many beautiful stories.

When I graduated high school, the members of the Jewish community in Indianapolis, my hometown, offered me a free trip to Israel. They thought that a kid like me – who received only a minimal Jewish education and whose parents were minimally observant – needed a boost to stay Jewish. And it so happened that I came to Israel, along with another 200 kids like me, right after the end of the Six Day War of 1967. We spent two months touring, and wherever we went, we saw happy people. This made an impression on me because, back home, I rarely saw people who looked so happy.

Why were these Israelis so happy? They told us that for six months they had lived in fear of their Arab neighbors who loudly declared that they planned to push every Jew into the sea. And then, in six short days, Israel overcame all of them and recaptured vast amounts of territory, all with minimal casualties.

As a result of this experience, I decided to remain in Israel and study at Hebrew University. During this time, I was also very strongly influenced by a foray into yoga as a religious practice. I liked the idea that one should lead a simple life, be a vegetarian, and not harm other living beings. This was an idea that ran counter to the American capitalist ideal – which seemed selfish in comparison – that one should make a lot of money and buy a lot of beautiful things.

I began to practice yoga meditation – to think about the soul, about the Creator, and about helping others. After a few months, I began feeling a new sensation, which I came to identify as happiness. I was happy because every day I was doing good things. Every day, I didn't feel the lacks and frustrations that come from craving possessions like money and fancy cars.

I also spent a lot of time wandering around the Judean desert near Jerusalem, where I would see the beauty of nature that G-d created. So my belief in G-d became very strong. Crediting all this to yoga, I considered going to India for more in-depth study.

My father became alarmed, and when I returned to the US for a short time,

he arranged for his business partner – Charles Roth, who was affiliated with *Chabad* – to speak to me. Charles tried to convince me that I could find the same benefits in *Chasidic* teachings. *Chasidim* also practiced meditation and had a strong connection to G-d, he said, recommending that I delve into a book called *Tanya*, the seminal work of the *Alter Rebbe*, the founder of the *Chabad* Movement.

To make a long story short, this led me to the study of other Jewish texts and to visiting Kfar Chabad, the Lubavitch village in Israel. As a result of that experience, I enrolled in the *yeshiva* on the premises, which welcomed people just like me who had little or no background in Judaism.

Once I started studying in this *yeshiva*, I noticed that some of the students would sit quietly for five or ten minutes before prayers started, and I guessed they were meditating. I approached one of them and he confirmed this, directing me to speak to the *yeshiva's* spiritual mentor, Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Kesselman to find out more. This is how I learned the meaning of *Chasidic* meditation and its foundation in the contemplation of Chapter 41 of the *Tanya*.

I started meditating on this chapter for five to ten minutes every day. And very soon I felt myself coming close to G-d, which is a very special, very wonderful feeling. I was also succeeding in my *Talmudic* studies with Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gafni and in my *Chasidic* studies with Rabbi Hershel Hecht.

After a few months, it was suggested to me that I reach out to the Rebbe for guidance, so I wrote a letter telling the Rebbe my life story. In due course came a reply – a beautiful letter – in which the Rebbe said that he was gratified that, after my spiritual wanderings, I found the right path at last:

“In as much as you are fortunate to arrive at your destination, namely the *Torah*, the *Torah* of Truth...you will now enjoy the relief that comes after such a journey, and you will utilize all your capacities in the “four cubits” of *Torah* and *mitzvot*. And although the [*Talmudic*] expression speaks of “four cubits,” these are the “four cubits” that embrace the whole world.

“I have already had occasion many times to emphasize that, precisely in our day and age, we can clearly see how a small quantity can produce extraordinary results which are completely out of proportion. We have seen the destructive forces that can be realized from a very small quantity of several pounds of atomic material. If this is so in the negative and destructive aspect, how much more is it in the good and constructive aspect... This is why the “four cubits” of *Torah* and *mitzvot*,

even of one single individual, can have a tremendous effect on the whole world.”

The *Rebbe* went on to point out that there are those who think it is necessary to bring about change in the world through violent revolutions and loud propaganda, but this is not the way of *Torah*, which teaches us that great things can be accomplished even by small good deeds. In this context, the *Rebbe* quoted Maimonides, the great 12th century Jewish philosopher, who said, “A person should always consider himself and all the world equally balanced. Thus, at any time, when a person does a good deed, he tips the scale in favor of himself as well as the whole world.”

His letter inspired me greatly. During my second year in *yeshiva*, my mother came to visit and gave me some extra money. A short time later, we were escorting Rabbi Kesselman to the airport for a visit to the *Rebbe*. In the heat of the moment, I decided to send the money along as a contribution toward the *Rebbe's* outreach campaigns. Rabbi Kesselman later told me that, when given the donation, the *Rebbe* inquired about my progress. And when Rabbi Kesselman responded that I was succeeding in my studies and meditating before prayers, the *Rebbe* was very happy. He actually stood up and exclaimed, “Ben Zion contemplates *Chasidus* before praying! It would be great if all of the students did the same!”

Subsequently, I had the occasion to meet with the *Rebbe* in person and I asked him about my prayer practice. He answered that I should continue meditating on Chapter 41 of the *Tanya*, as well as occasionally studying the first chapter of the section of the *Tanya* entitled, “The Gate of Oneness and Faith.” This chapter talks about how G-d constantly re-creates the world, and if He would not be re-creating the world every second, then the world would cease to exist.

So now, 49 years later, I think about this every day before I pray – that G-d gives everything in the world its existence – all the time, at every moment. Realizing this helps me live a happy life, and when tests and challenges intervene, it helps me remember that G-d is everything.

This is the message that I got from the *Rebbe* and from *Chasidic* teachings. And I've been trying my whole life to give over this message to other people, wherever I go and whomever I meet.

Rabbi Ben Zion Cohen resides in Kfar Chabad, Israel where he teaches at Yeshivat Ohr Temimim. This interview was done October 2018 and published December 2020. It can be found here: <http://myencounterblog.com/?p=3924> ✨



Jewish Educator



BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Purim and Passover: A Tale of Two Tables

The experience of celebrating Jewish holidays has been dramatically altered since the onset of the pandemic over a year ago. From solitary Passover *Seders* to attending High Holiday services in our pajamas on Zoom, we have tried our best to stay connected to tradition despite the precautions and restrictions COVID has required.

On February 26th, we celebrated *Purim*, with many of us sitting at our kitchen tables zooming a *Megillah* reading while nibbling on *hamantaschen* and sipping *schnapps*.

The *Megillah*, Book of Esther 1:1–5, opens with King Ahashveros making an outlandishly lavish feast (*mishteh*, in Hebrew) for all of his officials, nobles, armies and servants, from the 127 provinces over which he reigned. It wasn't just a one night affair, either, but a huge, elaborate and decadent festival which continued for 180 days!

The story goes on to tell us that the drunken King demanded his Queen, Vashti, to appear before him to show off her beauty (and who knows what else), but she refused. Her punishment was irrevocable banishment and the replacement by Esther, the most beautiful of all the maidens to come before the King.

The King then made Esther's banquet – a "great feast" called the *mishteh gadol* – for his officers and servants. Rather than the *mishteh* described in the *Megillah's* opening passages, Esther's feast, by contrast, was much smaller and less opulent. (Esther 2:18)

This seeming contradiction was beautifully interpreted by a family friend, the late Dr. Arnold Schonfeld. Perhaps the *Megillah* is suggesting that it is not the number of people or the elaborate nature of how we entertain that defines the significance of an event, but the merit and value of those in attendance that give the event meaning.

This interpretation offers a lovely way to approach the holiday of Passover during the continuing challenges of this pandemic. While we may be cautiously optimistic about the future now that the vaccine is more readily available, we must still remain vigilant to protect the safety and health of those dear to us as well as the

SASSO

(continued from page 3)

Helpful Tips for the Seder and Passover March 2021 / Nisan 5781

As we prepare to observe our second Passover festival during the pandemic, I'm pleased to share with you an updated version of last year's "Helpful Hints for the Seder" Even as our biblical ancestors observed the first Pesach in "lock down" as protection from the raging plagues, and then were freed, so may we experience healing, liberation, and reunion in the near future.

Even though, because of the unfolding vaccination program, many will feel freer



general public. The net result will mean that many, if not most, of our *Seders* will still be extremely limited in terms of size, grandeur and numbers of guests.

But, as the *Megillah* points out, we need not feel that less is less; rather, we can strive to create a *Seder* table where less is actually more. More time to prepare, more conversation with meaning, and yes, an even more inclusive *Seder* with people who under other circumstances would not ordinarily be inclined to attend.

We read in the *Haggadah* about the four sons (although today we speak of the four children): the wise, the rebellious, the simple, and the one who is unable to ask. Over 60 years ago, the late *Chasidic Rebbe*, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, wrote a seminal Passover letter that expanded the core purpose of the *Seder*: to find and invite the "fifth son" – any man or woman who is conspicuous by his or her absence from the *Seder* table.

This notion can inform us today by creating an awareness of who is not at the table. It can also inspire us to invite to our *Seder* any person – be it a stranger, friend, co-worker of a family member – who, for whatever reason, has left the tradition or never felt a part of it. And oddly enough, COVID has made that not only easier but more natural.

Many of us will have Zoom *Seders* for the second year in a row. But this year, let us not focus on what we may have to forgo – the joy of serving our *matzah* ball soup in person or *kvelling* up close when the youngest child recites the four questions or finds the *afikomen*.

This year, let us instead focus on expanding our *Seders* to include a "fifth child." Let us employ the frustration, disappointment and fear that COVID has caused as an impetus to bring others out of isolation and into our homes to be a part of the *Seder* experience.

Because, if COVID has taught us any-
(see Lederman, page 7)

to gather for celebration, we urge caution and observance of appropriate PPE and social distancing guidance. The first Passover is referred to in the *Torah* as *Leil Shimurim*, a "Night of Vigil." Let us celebrate with hopeful vigilance.

May these Guidelines help you find meaning and joyous satisfaction in this year's Passover observance. Next year, redeemed.

Preparations:

1. Do what you can. Don't feel badly or guilty about not doing or keeping everything in your customary way. Adjustments to the observance of Passover have been considered (allowed) through Jewish history. Keep it familiar, but feel free to improvise.

2. Remember, Passover is the "Festival of Liberation," not of bondage or oppression. We are living through (hopefully the end stages of) a certain experience of bondage. Let us find liberating ways of coping with and responding to it.

3. While we have been doing a lot of cleaning and disinfecting this past year, do what works for you in doing away with *Hametz*. Make a contribution to the needy or a food local Bank: here in Indianapolis, like Popsie's, Gleaners, Maurer Feed the Hungry Fund.

4. Search and *Biur* – Because, this year, Passover (first *Seder*) begins on Saturday night, it is customary to perform the "search" for *Hametz* on Thursday evening, and do the "*Biur*" or "burning of the left-over *Hametz*" on Friday morning (you set aside the *Hametz* that you will still use for *Shabbat*). Consult a *Haggadah* for this lovely and memorable opportunity for children. Whether or not you perform the ritual, you may want to consider: What is it of last year's accumulation of events, experiences, memories that you want to give up as we enter this festival of spring and freedom? What do you carry with you as you seek "to rise" to a new level of possibilities and opportunities?

5. Keep your *Seder* EASY and ENJOY-ABLE. Remember, legumes (*kitniot*), which *Sephardi* Jews have always eaten during the festival, are now considered *kosher* for Passover for *Ashkenazim* as well. Follow your most comfortable practice.

Hopefully, this will be our last social distance *Seder*. If you want to connect with family and don't have Facebook, Zoom or other social media skills, you may consider just putting a phone on the table. Wish each other love and *Gut Yomtov*, *Chag Samech*, Happy Passover! Raise your first cup of wine, and move on, on line or separately.

And remember, **Wash hands!!!** It's an old Jewish practice! *Gotta hand it to us!*

Rabbi Dennis Sasso has been senior rabbi at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis for more than 40 years. ✨

Conflict Manager



BY MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN, ED.D.

Staying Married – For Better or Worse

“He filed for divorce.” Anxiety and fear suffused her voice, compelling me to listen attentively. She is a “bestie” of one of my daughters, ever since they were in middle school. She called me, knowing that I was a retired divorce mediator. Unfortunately, I am too late to help this couple, already well along a trajectory to a complete dissolution of their marriage. “Dissolution” is the California term for “divorce.”



my role was to ensure that the decision-making process moved forward constructively. “There are two divorces here,” I routinely told clients, “the emotional divorce and the financial divorce. Your goal is to keep me quiet by staying calm and letting him (pointing to Richard) do the talking. It is his skills you want to be paying for, not mine.” If the emotional divorce dominated, I referred them to counseling.

Unfortunately, the volatile nature of divorce issues often resulted in one or the other getting emotionally triggered. The emerging science of the brain has proven what your grandmother might have told you: you cannot reason when you get mad. Neuroscience has clinically established that when the amygdala, the emotional control structure of the brain, takes over, the neocortex shuts down. The neocortex controls the reasoning capacity of the brain. The two structures, amygdala and neocortex, cannot “fire” or operate at the same time.

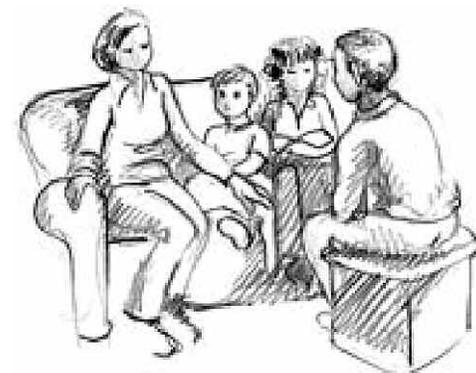
Angry couples, acting out their frustration and pain in the mediation room, became their own worst enemies. Reasoning and decision-making became impossible. It sometimes seemed that the couple would rather waste time arguing than getting down to business. As a mediator, it was my role to shut down such acting-out behavior.

To preempt such behavior, early in the mediation I would point out, “You still have more in common than you have differences: the need to conserve resources for yourselves and your children. After mediation, you need to be able to work together for their wellbeing.” Most of our clients got it; even those without children understood that working together avoided undue erosion of their resources.

Many times, couples sadly told us, “If we could have had this conversation a year ago, we would not be getting a divorce.” Usually, the issue was finances: how to pay debts or how much to save, or what they needed to buy and what was an extravagance. In addition to money, difficult conversations involved children, substance abuse, intimacy, infidelity, or other topics the couple avoided, sometimes for decades.

Perhaps as a penance for midwifing so many divorces, I would like to use my experience to help couples stay married. The recent phone call from my daughter’s friend jolted me into realizing, one year after our retirement, that I have not yet written my planned treatise on how to avoid divorce. Her call prodded me into thinking about how to get started, even though it was too late for her.

I have concluded it is far too easy to get married and much too difficult to get divorced. It should be the other way around. Priests, rabbis, and other wedding officiants should require a cooling-off period of three to 12 months, from the time the couple approaches the officiant until the wedding. During this time, a mandatory six-week “preparation for marriage” curriculum should be required. Coincidentally, three to 12 months is often the amount of time needed for a mediated, cooperative divorce.



The officiant distributes a bibliography of self-help books on topics like “effective communication for engaged couples” or “trust building exercises for couples” or “how to prevent divorce” or “how to build love that lasts.” They should require that the couple jointly choose at least two such books, to be read and discussed together during their waiting period.

Rabbis should put up the same barriers to getting married that they do for potential converts to Judaism. “You want to be a Jew? Forget about it – it’s too difficult. Do you really want to give up Christmas? There are so many other ways to live a fulfilled, happy life, without being Jewish.”

“You want to get married? Forget about it – it’s too difficult. Do you really want to spend the next 60 or 70 years with the same person?” Give up your independence as a single? There are so many other ways to live a fulfilled, happy life, without marriage. Come back in a year and we’ll talk.”

Marital counseling should be a required component of any wedding officiant’s licensure. To renew the license, the officiant must verify s/he has accumulated the required hours of continuing education in couples counseling. Even a justice

(see Zimmerman, page 7)



At the start of the new millennium, I joined my attorney-CPA husband in establishing Divorce Mediation Group. We provided team mediation for divorcing couples. As a neutral attorney, Richard clarified the often-complex California divorce law, without provoking defensive legal responses in either party.

His CPA skills translated pages, occasionally boxes, of clients’ financial information into a single spreadsheet, including three columns: his, hers, ours. Only the “ours” or “community property” column gets divided equally in California. Stock options required a separate spreadsheet analysis. When couples saw all their assets and debts on one or two pages, organized accordingly, they could easily figure out how to share their resources and pay their debts. Empowered by this approach, the couple was able to make decisions together, without undue conflict. A spreadsheet as a conflict resolution tool? Who knew!

If, per agreement, the allocation to one party was greater than that of the other, then the party with more net assets owed the other an “equalizing distribution.” This payment nullified the effect of one getting the beat-up SUV and the other getting the Ferrari. In this manner, each could walk away with half the total net value of the community property.

As a retired professor of communication,

ZIMMERMAN*(continued from page 6)*

of the peace can require a waiting period and meet with the couple in advance.

In addition to pre-marital instruction, there should be required post-marital workshops. Health officials encourage annual check-ups for our physical health; similarly, why can't officiants require periodic post-nuptial check-ups to ensure marital health?

Married couples promise to stay married "for better or for worse." Officiants need to make "for worse" clear and understandable, complete with concrete examples. Included in a couple's pre-nuptial curriculum should be tools to identify and cope with "for worse."

One pattern we recognized early in our practice was how easy it is for couples to grow apart, especially after the birth of the first child. The mom becomes immersed in childcare, the all-consuming demands of a newborn infant. She never lets go of the intensity of this role, even when the children are no longer newborns. Boundary issues? She often chooses to remain a stay-at-home mom, sometimes a unilateral decision with adverse financial repercussions. The husband becomes irrelevant, intimacy decreases, infidelity might ensue. Identity crisis? If so, whose? Perhaps both, as the parties cease to function as a marital unit.

Understanding the stressors of child-rearing can be included in the prenuptial toolkit. Since there is no "one size fits all," couples should agree, before the first child arrives, how to cope with any stressors and strategies to retain the "coupleness" of their marriage.

It is normal for a relationship to evolve not only as the children arrive, but also as the parties grow and mature in their love. As the honeymoon feelings of passion and fervor abate, the trick is to replace them with feelings of respect and ongoing demonstrations of appreciation. They should applaud each other's growth, not impede it. It helps if the couple can consciously create common interests. Couples should still enjoy each other's company, even if they cannot enjoy each other's new pursuits (or friends).

Strangely, some younger couples seemed to know in the beginning that the marriage was doomed to fail. They would tell us, "We knew that if it didn't work out, we could always get a divorce." I have concluded two societal factors are at work today. Young couples are accustomed to the instant gratification our technology-saturated society provides. In addition, the stigma of divorce has been so reduced that it is easy for young couples to think, "If I hit a roadblock, I'm out of there." It seems

to me that old-fashioned commitment needs to be revived and redefined.

As someone in a 52-year marriage, I believe commitment works best when taken for granted by both parties. Recently, we zoomed with old friends, both retired university professors. "Now that you've retired from your divorce mediation practice," David asked, "from your experience, what would you say is the single biggest cause of divorce?"



"When one spouse can no longer stand the other," I answered, with a straight face. All four of us laughed. This couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last year, during the pandemic, on Zoom. We have known one another since we carpooled our now adult children to religious school, in the 1980's and 1990's.

I compared the two couples in my mind – long term marriage vs. an early divorce for my daughter's friend. Both couples have two children. All four were highly educated. Our friends each have a PhD; the younger couple has a law degree and at least two masters' degrees between them. Education in and of itself is not a predictor of whether or not a couple will stay married. That said, I remember cases in which one party had an advanced degree and the other a high school diploma. During those mediations, I often found myself silently wondering of the more educated person, "What were you thinking?"

Over the years, we often heard David's question in different words: what is the common denominator of divorce? There is no single answer to this question. In our experience, there are too many "external," unique environmental factors; and too many "internal" factors, unique to each couple, to come up with a single, overriding cause of divorce.

That said, I cannot stress enough the need for couples to deal with problems as they arise. Ignoring them until they erupt into an uncontrolled torrent of anger and overpowering emotion can propel the hapless couple to an unnecessary divorce. The easy-going spouse who sucks it up for

LEDERMAN*(continued from page 5)*

thing, it is this: none of us should be forced to be alone, especially when we long to be a part of something meaningful and share our stories with others. As the *Haggadah* itself proclaims: "Let all who are hungry, come and eat; all who are in need, come and celebrate the Passover with us."

In this way, COVID can be a touchstone to inspire us to let all who are hungry for inclusion, partnership, sharing and relationship, whether near or far, be welcomed to join our *Seder* table.

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. ☆



five or ten years (sometimes even longer), unable to express any anger, hurt, or frustration experienced in the marriage, becomes too laden with the toxicity of "lava."

He or she eventually will blow up in rage and fury, with the predictable outcome, the demise of the marriage. We called it, "*Vesuvius eruptus*," the volcanic eruption describing such a spouse. It is a pattern we saw over and over again. That spouse was almost always conflict averse. Unfortunately, many, if not most of us, do not learn conflict resolution skills while growing up in our families or in school. Learning such skills in advance of the wedding could help couples avoid such a scenario.

Our work with divorcing couples has been rewarding, despite witnessing so much pain. We saw some of the best people during the worst moments of their lives. I accept our role in facilitating divorce for two decades. However, the alternative to a constructive, mediated divorce can be years of costly litigation, with high emotional costs to both parties, as well as to their children. We helped our couples get through the divorce experience and move on with their lives, with maximum dignity and self-esteem. I look forward to writing, in this space, insights that I learned during those twenty years. In this way, I hope to do penance for my many years of midwifing divorce.

Dr. Miriam Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) in Belmont, Calif., where she taught the Holocaust course for 25 years. She is changing hats for now and writing instead about her 20 years of mediation experience. She can be reached at mimzim@aol.com. ☆

Kabbalah of the Month



BY MELINDA RIBNER

Nissan – Greater Freedom, Love, Joy

Welcome to the month of *Nissan*, which began March 13, 2021 at sunset. *Nissan* is the month to leave your personal limitations and limiting beliefs, and move to greater freedom love and joy. This month the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, and it will be the month in the future when the final redemption will take place. In every *Nissan* there is the hope and expectation that something new and wonderful will happen within you and for you.

Nissan is also called *Chodesh Ha'Aviv*, the month of Spring. The scent of spring in the air makes us aware of new life emerging in nature and reminds us to pay attention to the new energies stirring within us as well. There is a heavenly influx of grace and compassion this month that enables us to go forward in our lives.

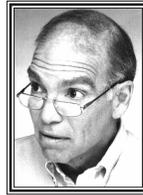
Nissan is all about being open to newness and not being bound to the past. As we experience more of our intrinsic attachment to the Infinite Light and Love of the Creator, we can more easily let go of limiting and reactive ego states of consciousness and behaviors that keep us limited and fearful. No longer stuck repeating old patterns of behavior, we are free to make new choices in our life. Freedom is discovered in the present moment, in our awareness and connection with the Divine.

This month is all about going forward in life, so do not hold yourself hostage to the past. Let go of feelings of regret, resentment, and disappointment. These feelings do not support your ability to go forward and keep you only tied to the past. By substituting faith for fear, we can let go of the need to control what is not in our power to control.

Faith is a higher level of knowing hard-wired into the core of our being. When we give ourselves time to meditate and pray each day, our consciousness is lifted upward to greater awareness of God and the love, peace and joy that is our birthright. And we can hear the gentle and loving guidance of our very own soul.

Prior to the holiday of Passover, many Jews search and clean their physical house of *chometz*. Ideally people also engage at the same time in the process of cleaning their inner home of their heart, soul and

Shibley Speaks



BY JIM SHIPLEY

Shesh Shesh Tesha

In 1968 Rachel and I made our very first trip to Israel. I have told the story of that trip and what it meant to us. On the flight back to the United States, we confirmed the promise we had made to Adi Ben Orr, our guide in Israel: That we would send our children (toddlers at the time) to meet their Israeli cousins.

And so, it came to pass. As each Shipley kid graduated from high school they spent at least the first six weeks of that summer vacation in Israel. And remember – this is a generation before the Gap Year concept was invented. The effect on each of the kids was different – as it should be.

Tracy was affected enough so that she has lived in Israel for the better part of 40 years. Tom went to college in Israel, joined the Israeli Army – Special Forces. Robin went to six weeks of college at the mountain top campus of a school set up specifically for American kids – and met



mind. *Chometz* is associated with pride, negativity and whatever does not allow one to be in the moment. As we remove and release our personal negativity symbolized by *chometz*, we become open to receive positive energy, allowing the flow of newness in our lives.

During the month of *Nissan*, let's spend more time in the awareness and gratitude that every moment is a Divine gift. God is sustaining and animating each of us and everything in creation moment by moment. No matter what is happening externally, the world is filled with the glory and presence of God. We each live in the midst of God, so God is always with us. We are not limited by our past, we are not victims. Life itself is a miracle and every day is filled with big and small miracles.

Melinda Ribner, L.C.S.W. is also the author of Everyday Kabbalah, Kabbalah Month by Month and New Age Judaism, and The Secret Legacy of Biblical Women: Revealing the Divine Feminine. Internationally known for her pioneering work in kabbalistic meditation and healing, she is also a spiritual psychotherapist and for more than 30 years has used kabbalistic wisdom as part of treatment. She offers a free newsletter on meditation, healing, kabbalistic energies of the months, holidays, and more. www.kabbalahoftheheart.com. Email: Beitmiriam@msn.com. ✨



her eventual husband there. The effect on Adam our youngest was less, but affirmed his Judaism.

In Tom's case, as is normal in almost any Special Forces Veteran – in the U.S. as well as in Israel – you never really leave the service in your memory, your attitude and your thinking. Tom has been a loyal veteran of his service in the Division called *Shesh Shesh Tesha: Six Six Nine*.

Unit 669 is the Israeli Defense Force's elite combat, search and rescue unit, tasked with extraction, recovery and medical treatment of injured soldiers, combat pilots and civilians. Like most special force units in every nation, they never really leave the Unit. They stay in touch with each other and meet when they can to catch up and reminisce. The members of 669 are no different. Although in Tom's case it has been almost 40 years, the guys still stay in touch with each other.

Matter of fact, they have created a formal association that now holds a charity event on a yearly basis. The money they raise goes towards charities in Israel and especially for those veterans of the Israeli Army with PTSD and other ailments. At this annual "Gala" they see old friends and buddies, reminisce over times past, and pass on the tradition by contributing to worthy causes.

The "Alumni Event" this year was virtual and took place on January 31st. If you go to this link: (www.afu669.org) you can learn about the Unit. Contribute...it will make you part of the history of Israel – and a *mensch*.

On the website you will read about the members who have become involved in the work of the Unit after service. It is amazing yet predicable how many young men have gone on to become mature, outstanding leaders in their various after-service enterprises.

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. (Column submitted January 2021.) ✨



Media Watch



BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Two Lovers Depicts the Jewish Community as Redemptive

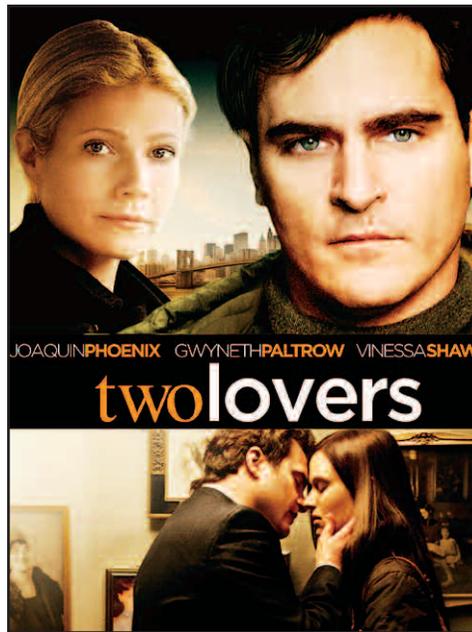
After pointing to challenges to Jewish education by Seth Rogen's film, *An American Pickle*, and by his comments while promoting it, (ejewishphilanthropy.com/seth-rogen-american-pickle-and-jewish-education), I pondered whether there was an inter-generational film that depicts the Jewish family and Jewish communal organizations and even the American Jewish-Israel connection as redemptive for troubled Jews of our time. I could think of only one, and a very offbeat one at that: *Two Lovers* (2008). Though it never has its principal characters visit a Jewish Family Service, it could provide some encouragement and inspiration to the personnel of such organizations, and to all Jewish families and organizations.

Two Lovers does not paint its Jewish families as perfect (far from it), but it may well be the most redemptive film with Jewish themes ever made. It suggests that the Jewish family and community have the resources to bring healing to, and by, its members, especially when those members are flawed.

Writer/director James Gray with Richard Menello introduces us to lead character Leonard (Lenny) Kraditor, unforgettably played by Joaquin Phoenix, as he jumps off a bridge into Sheepshead Bay, in an obvious suicide attempt, and then paddles up and denies that he jumped. Bystanders are riled by his actions and even more by his denials.

We soon learn that Leonard lives with his parents and works at his father's laundry business. His parents have managed to give him structure and freedom, and understand the possible consequences of trying to smother him, to boss him, or to overprotect him. His mother Ruth (Isabella Rossellini) suspects that he has "tried again" – that is, has attempted suicide as before. His parents live with the tension that their only child is vulnerable to breakdown at any moment.

One comes to admire Leonard's parents for their dignity, grace, and warmth under uncertainty. Sometimes those qualities are apparent in Leonard, as well. The film suggests that those qualities are grounded in a sense of tradition and of family. There



are generations of family pictures on the wall and references to the Yiddishist Workmen's Circle and to Israel. One of the mother's first acts in this movie is to light Shabbat candles.

Leonard's dad Reuben (Moni Moshonov) is in the process of selling his laundry business to a man named Michael Cohen (Bob Ari). The Cohens are invited to *Shabbat* dinner. Leonard's parents request that he join them at dinner, informing him that the Cohens are bringing their daughter.

The Cohen daughter, Sandra (Vinessa Shaw), is straightforward and beautiful and family-minded, bright, responsible and productive. She likes the way Lenny interacts with her younger brother who will be celebrating *bar mitzvah* soon. She tells him that she loved the way he once asked his mother to dance with him in the store. Comfortable in her presence, he shares his hope of becoming a professional, artisanal photographer. His father had already mentioned his talent, and her father suggested that she look at Leonard's photographs with the hope that Lenny might take classic black and white photos at the *bar mitzvah* ceremony.

From the start, Sandra makes an irresistible impression on Lenny, though he jilts her more than once. Upon first seeing his photographs, she comments that there are no people in them. She is definitely a people-oriented person, sensitive to the needs and the weaknesses – and strengths – of others. She comments that she likes the *Sound of Music* not so much for the film but because the family always watches it together. Soon after meeting, she connects with him in every way. If she has any flaw at all, it is that she seems to dismiss red flags out of hand.

Lenny has no problem confiding fully in Sandra. He tells her that he suffered a breakdown after his fiancée left him

because "we both" tested positive for Tay Sachs. Her parents stepped in and made sure that the engagement was broken. The writers underscore the irony of a Jewish relationship being dissolved because of a nasty "Jewish" disease, resulting in the collateral damage of exacerbated mental illness.

The complexity and suspense of this film rest in the depiction of Lenny's crush, Michelle (Gwyneth Paltrow), a blond Gentile neighbor to whom he is attracted. She lets him know that she is in love with a married man who is paying for her apartment. She works in a law firm where she is content with being an "assistant for life."

When Michelle briefly stops into the apartment to meet Lenny's parents, she is impressed with the family photos on the walls and with the bookshelves, though she cites A.D.H.D. as her excuse for not being a reader and for maintaining a certain level of (voluntary?) shallowness.

The writers emphasize Michelle's unfamiliarity with things Jewish by having her ask what "those things" – *Chanukah dreidels* – are. There is something disingenuous, however, about their having her query about dreidels. For the married man for whom Michelle consistently pines is named Blatt (Elias Koteas), and probably is Jewish. Hence, another less than perfect Jewish family, in which, it is related, there are children.

At one point, Michelle wants Leonard to join Blatt and her at a restaurant in order to offer his take on Blatt's intentions – or is she creating some kind of manipulative scenario. (Was this a case of one Jew being enlisted to adjudicate another?) While Michelle is in the powder room, the controlling Mr. Blatt asks Leonard to keep eye on her so she doesn't fall back into drug addiction. He tells Leonard that he looks like he has a nice heart, adding that Leonard reminds him of his son.

Lenny is cut a lot of slack by his parents and even by Sandra and her parents. Sandra's dad, who can be crass, senses that Lenny is flawed but never slams the door. He asks Leonard bluntly if Leonard plans to mess things up. But Mr. Cohen doesn't let his concerns become a deal breaker. Leonard qualifies as a son-in-law by the merit of his parents, by the given of his background, by ties of culture and business that can be reinforced. Cohen seems to know that he cannot guarantee what decisions his daughter or younger son might make in the future, and that Leonard can ensure some cultural continuity.

Suspecting his infatuation with Michelle, Leonard's parents walk on eggshells and their gentle restraint is not lost on Lenny. When his mother catches him

(see Gertel, page 10)

GERTEL

(continued from page 9)

sneaking off for an anticipated elopement with Michelle, Lenny acts like a sweet little boy running away from home. His mother reassures: "Come back here whenever you want. We want you to be happy."

Sandra also cuts him every slack. Noticing scars on his hand from a suicide attempt, she tells him that she wants to take care of him. She promises him that she appreciates that he doesn't pretend to be something he's not. She tells him that he doesn't have to be embarrassed around her. She says she understands him. She has gifted him a pair of gloves, as if foretelling that the signs of past self-destructiveness can be covered and overcome.

It would seem that Lenny is more affected by Sandra's words and actions than he realizes. He tries to use them on Michelle. He shares with Michelle more details about his rebuff by his fiancée and her parents than with Sandra: about how he tried to hurt himself when he could not find his fiancée, that he didn't think he'd ever love anyone again. He does this to emphasize that he understands Michelle and will never walk away. Echoing Sandra's words to him, he comforts Michelle: "You deserve to be loved."

Of course, Lenny cannot be Sandra. But does Lenny come to an awareness that he owes it to Sandra not to do to her what has been done to him, especially because Sandra is so good at what she does and has had such a saving influence on him? That question lingers at the film's end.

There is no stereotyping of Jews (or of Gentiles) in this film – not of any of the Jewish parents, not of the young Jewish male. (Lenny has unique issues.) Lenny does fall back on some Jewish (and general) anxieties when it suits him. But there does seem to be a conscious effort on the part of the writers not to make Lenny's parents "too Jewish," even though Jewish traditions, lineage and practices are important here. Much attention is given to their observance of Thanksgiving and of New Year's Eve, though Lenny's dad does link New Year's Eve to *Rosh Hashanah*. A New Year's Eve celebration has a lot to do with Lenny's redemption – or with his decision to be redeemed or redeemable.

The Jewish men and women are treated respectfully here – except perhaps the adulterer Blatt. As for Lenny, he is two-timing Sandra, but concedes that he is troubled. True, the young Jewish woman does all the giving in the relationship, and feminists could understandably object that Sandra is being exploited by the movie's plot. But in Sandra the film pays tribute to the biblical women who risk betrayal and exploitation and censure by

Spielberg awarded 2021 Genesis prize

The annual \$1 million award recognizes film director, producer, and philanthropist Steven Spielberg for his outstanding achievement as one of the most influential filmmakers in the history of cinema; his social activism and prolific philanthropy; and his principled stance against anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance. The Prize also recognizes his extraordinary work to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and prevent future genocides through film, public advocacy and philanthropy.

For the first time in the history of the Genesis Prize, the voice of global Jewry was a major factor in Laureate selection. Two hundred thousand Jews on six continents cast their votes; millions more engaged on social media. While the Prize Committee had the ultimate discretion about the selection of the recipient, the fact Spielberg received the most votes was a major determining factor. ✨



using their skills and graces to preserve the Jewish family and people. Because of Sandra, Judaism comes across as a civilization (to borrow Mordecai Kaplan's word) that sustains its own. This film's Jewish world may wound (as did Lenny's first fiancée and her parents), but it also provides a needed framework for healing.

Yes, there is a suggestion here that Leonard lives mainly in the confined world of his parents' apartment. But his room does hold the promise of his becoming a photographer. The rest of the apartment is surprisingly spacious, and its horizons expand considerably through memorabilia that extend back many generations and that reach to Israel, his dad's birthplace. With the Cohen family visit, vistas of livelihood, love, ties, tradition open to Leonard in that "narrow" home. He has been raised to appreciate the ties that family and tradition can provide. He knows that his mother's brother, Uncle Tobias, introduced his parents. Seemingly cramped ethnic spaces can expand one's world.

Tellingly, Leonard's encounters with Michelle are in the most cramped places – the apartment building courtyard, the roof, a subway car, a crowded restaurant, even a five-star hotel corridor (and lobby) that would reduce him to a stalker. Leonard is at his worst in the most expansive locations. The outside world wounds and disrupts, undermining his sense of home.

When, at the film's end, Lenny heads to the bridge again, it is Sandra's gift of gloves that saves him and brings him home. But Leonard has his own saving

KAPLAN/RECIPES

(continued from page 12)

and shape into balls about 1-1/2 inches (4cm) diameter and place onto a plate.

When the soup cooking time is complete, let the pot sit to naturally release the pressure for 30 minutes and as long as 2 hours. Turn the steam release handle to the Venting position. Press Cancel and open the lid. Let cool. Taste the soup and add more salt or pepper if necessary. Strain through a large sieve into a large container or other pot. Let cool.

If you are saving the soup as stock, place into containers in two-, four-, or six-cup (473ml, 1 liter, or 1.5 liters) amounts and label to use or freeze.

If serving as soup, strain the soup. Separate out 3 cups (710ml) of soup and set aside. Press Sauté to bring the soup to a boil. Add the *matzoh* balls and press Cancel. Secure the lid, ensuring that the steam release handle is in the Sealing position. Press the Pressure Cook button and set the cooking time for 15 minutes. When the cooking is complete, allow the pot to sit for 10 minutes to naturally release the pressure. Turn the steam release handle to the Venting position to release any additional pressure, and remove the lid. Return the reserved soup to the pot and press Warm to warm the soup. Serve the soup with the *matzoh* balls.

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Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, lecturer, book reviewer, food writer and compiler/ editor of nine cookbooks including, What's Cooking at Hadassah College. She and her late husband, Barry, came to live in Jerusalem in 2008, where she leads walks in English in Machaneh Yehudah, the Jewish produce market. ✨



graces. He is not bent on suicide; he wants to be redeemed. He is not dismissive of his saving network. There is a sense that while he could be headed for disaster, he is not doomed. His breakdown was part chemical and part circumstantial, but with Sandra's talent for connecting, his parent's efforts and a sustaining community, he may flourish.

Rabbi Elliot Gertel has been spiritual leader of congregations in New Haven and Chicago. He is the author of two books, What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic for The National Jewish Post & Opinion for more than 40 years. ✨



This Passover, help us make it possible to celebrate another kind of freedom.

Freedom from a pandemic.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage around the world, there's reason for hope. And no country has offered more hope for what life might be like again than Israel, which has led the world in immunizing its people.

Magen David Adom, Israel's paramedic and Red Cross service, has played a major role in this success. MDA has treated tens of thousands of stricken Israelis, administered Covid tests to more than 4 million, and vaccinated Israel's most vulnerable populations, including all its nursing home residents.

When you support Magen David Adom, your gift has an immediate impact in helping Israelis — today and every day.

Make a gift today. *Pesach kasher v'sameach.*



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Kosher Kitchen



The Jewish Post & Opinion

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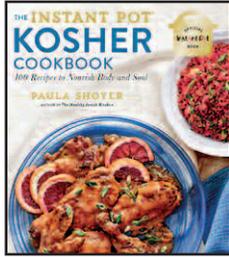
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REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Expert Recipes High in Flavor

The Instant Pot Kosher Cookbook by Paula Shoyer, Sterling Publishing, \$22.95 paperback, 224 pp. March 9, 2021

Paula Shoyer is a very talented, creative cookbook author (*The New Passover Menu, The Holiday Kosher Baker, The Kosher Baker and The Healthy Jewish Kitchen*) based in Chevy Chase, Md.



On a trip to Israel, a few years ago, I had the pleasure of accompanying her through Jerusalem's produce market, *Machaneh Yehudah*. She has a French pastry degree from the Ritz Escoffier pastry program in Paris and teaches French and Jewish baking classes in the Washington, D.C. area.

The Instant Pot allows for short cooking time in a modern appliance, similar to the pressure cooker, and is "the official Instant Pot cookbook."

"Instant Pot Cooking is the New Fast Food for Kosher People," she writes in her introduction. "Jewish food and the IP are a natural fit...With the IP, recipes that used to take hours are now ready in a fraction of the time."

Six reasons why "everyone Would Love to Have an Instant Pot": it's fast, easier cleanup, less cooking effort, more nutritious, kitchen stays cooler and smells stay inside, uses less energy and less water.

Since the food only touches the inner pot and the lid, can you use this appliance for both dairy and meat? By the time you buy a second inner pot and lid, the cost is the same as buying an entirely separate IP. Paula recommends having two. The inner pot and lid may be submerged in water to be toveled.

Chapters include: Breakfast and Brunch; Salads, Dips and Appetizers; Soups; Meat Mains; Vegetarian Mains; Side Dishes; and Desserts – a total of 100 recipes accompanied by 63 color photographs.

Is your interest Jewish? *matza brei* brulee, *gefilte* loaf, stuffed cabbage and *kasha varnishkes* are there. Israeli? Try the familiar Moroccan carrot salad, *hummus*, orange *shakshuka*, Persian lamb and herb



stew. International ideas for experimenting include Thai red curry fish, French onion soup puree with shredded short ribs, Swedish meatballs, Peruvian spiced chicken. If you want special recipes for *Rosh Hashanah*, Thanksgiving, *Chanukah*, *Purim*, *Passover*, and *Shavuot*, you will find useful suggestions.

Every recipe has introductory remarks, my favorite characteristic. Although instructions are not numbered (another favorite), ingredients are boldly listed. This is a book of expertly developed recipes, high in flavor and with great textures for the *kosher* cook today.

Classic Chicken Soup with Herbed Matzo Balls

(Serves 8–10; Makes 10–3/4 cups, 2.5 liters, of soup)

Hands-On Time: 12 Minutes; Time to Pressure: 30–33 Minutes; Cooking Time: 45 Minutes; Buttons to Use: Sauté and Pressure Cook; Release Type: Natural Release for 30 Minutes to 2 hours; Advance Prep: May be made 3 days in advance or frozen.

Matzo Balls

Time to Pressure: 8 Minutes; Cooking Time: 15 Minutes; Button to Use: Pressure Cook; Release Type: Natural Release for 10 Minutes; Advance Prep: Batter may be made 1 day in advance.

Soup

- 1 whole chicken, cut into quarters
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into quarters
- 2 stalks celery, cut in half crosswise
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2-inch (5cm) chunk of fresh ginger
- 2 parsnips, peeled and cut in half
- 1 fennel bulb, quartered
- 1/2 cup (40g) sliced shiitake mushrooms, about 4 large
- 1 cup (25g) Italian parsley leaves
- 1 cup (25g) fresh dill
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 teaspoon *kosher* salt
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 7 cups (1.7 liters) water or to the maximum fill line

Matzo Balls

- 4 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped herbs, such as a combination of parsley, thyme, and dill
- 1-1/2 teaspoons *kosher* salt
- pinch white pepper
- 1/3 cup (79ml) seltzer
- 1 cup (127g) *matzo* meal

Place the chicken pieces into the inner pot. Add the onions, carrots, celery, garlic, ginger, parsnip, fennel, mushrooms, parsley, dill, bay leaves, salt, peppercorns, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, cumin seeds, and water.

Secure the lid, ensuring that the steam release handle is in the Sealing position. Press the Pressure Cook button and set the cooking time for 45 minutes.

To make the *matzo* balls, place the eggs, oil, herbs, salt, pepper, and seltzer into a large bowl and whisk together. Add the *matzo* meal and whisk well. Cover loosely with plastic and place into the fridge for at least 1 hour. Wet your hands

(see Kaplan/recipes, page 10)