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*Passover
Greetings*

Art by Liza Gewurtz-Lacoua

Editorial

It's hard for me to believe, but I have been writing in the space for seven years. Seven years ago, my father was 95. After 75 years of writing every week, he was running out of steam. The editor at the time, Ed Stattmann told me he needed copy to fill this spot. I thought I would write one time and then find someone else to fill my father's shoes. Approximately 250 editorials later, if you'll please forgive me, I'm taking a break for this issue and reprinting my editorial from March 29, 2006:

My first seder with the Aquarian Minyan, a Jewish Renewal group in Berkeley was Passover 1988. It was the first time I was exposed to the idea of examining our "inner pharaohs" to become aware of how we are keeping ourselves enslaved and to figure out what changes we can make in order to become free.

For example, holding on to resentments and regrets keeps one from feeling content. As the rabbis in the article state – it keeps one enslaved. At the time, I thought this was such a novel idea.

This week as I was looking through the 1946 bound volume of this newspaper, I came across the following article by Ruth Paller, z"l, of Indianapolis. She was a regular columnist at the time. It is from April 12. It reminds me again that there is nothing new under the sun.

The only change I have made from her original column was to make the language gender neutral. I will have more comments in italics in an afterword.

At a recent study meeting of Hadassah and Council of Jewish Women, one of the members asked, "Why do we still celebrate holidays whose reasons are buried in antiquity? So many things worthy of remembrance have happened in modern times."

There are many answers to her question, sociological, psychological, and religious, but it would seem that one valid reason for our continuing to observe the old holidays is that their meaning is timeless.

The freedom from slavery the Jews sought in leaving Egypt, we are still seeking today. In Europe, Jews are literally chained in physical slavery. Here in America, the chains we want to break are not so easily seen. People can be enslaved in many ways.

In the "New Haggadah" edited by Mordecai M. Kaplan, Eugene Kohn, and Ira Eisenstein for the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, the other kinds of slavery are called to our attention.

"People can be enslaved to themselves," say the authors. "When they let emotion sway them to their hurt, when they permit harmful habits to tyrannize over them – they are slaves. When laziness or cowardice keeps them from what they know to be right, when ignorance blinds them so that, like Samson, they can only

turn round and round in meaningless drudgery – they are slaves. When envy, bitterness and jealousy sour their joys and darken the brightness of their contentment, they are slaves to themselves and shackled by the chains of their own forging.

"People can be enslaved by poverty and inequality. When the fear of need drives them to dishonesty and violence, to defending the guilty and accusing the innocent – they are slaves. When the work people do enriches others, but leaves them in want for strong houses of shelter, nourishing food for themselves and for their children, and warm clothes to keep out the cold – they are slaves.

"People can be enslaved by intolerance. When Jews are forced to give up their Jewish way of life, to abandon their Torah, to neglect their sacred festivals, to leave off rebuilding their ancient homeland – they are slaves. When they must deny that they are Jews in order to get work – they are slaves. When they must live in constant fear of unwarranted hate and prejudice – they are slaves.

"How deeply these enslavements have scarred the world! The wars, the destruction the suffering, the waste! *Pesach* calls us to be free, free from the tyranny of our own selves, free from the enslavement of poverty and inequality, free from the corroding hate that eats away the ties that unite humankind.

"*Pesach* calls upon us to put an end to all slavery! *Pesach* cries out in the name of God, 'Let my people go.' *Pesach* summons us to freedom."

Isn't it wonderful that some things have changed? First and foremost our homeland has been rebuilt and survived for 58 years!

Intolerance has improved since then, at least in my experience of living in America. I am referring to the paragraph about Jews being forced to give up their religion, to abandon their Torah, or deny they are Jews in order to get work. This may still be true in some places, and there is still intolerance to Jews in America, but not to that degree.

Isn't it grand that some things have not changed? I am grateful to be able to recognize when progress has been made. I am thankful that there have been thoughtful people who came before me that I can learn from. I feel blessed that I have a religion that I can practice that offers me special occasions, opportunities, and tools to help me improve myself so I can hopefully leave this world a little better than I found it.

*Chag Sameach!
Jennie Cohen 3-10-10. ✨*

On this date in Jewish history

On March 10, 1845

The Association for the Reform of Judaism was organized in Berlin.

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

Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

March 5, 2010, Ki Tisa
(Exodus 30:11-34:35), 19 Adar 5770

There is a moment in this week's Torah portion that I have always felt to be one of the most spiritual moments in the Torah. After the incident of the Golden Calf, the following is written: "And Adonai said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name.'" "He said, 'Oh, let me behold Your Presence!'" "And God answered, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name Adonai, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show.'" "But," God said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live." "And Adonai said, 'See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock' and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. "Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen."

Moses is alone on this cleft of the rock. What is it that Moses feels since he can't really see? What does it mean when God passes God's presence by Moses? I get this feeling of a Moses enveloped by God, but what does this mean? Does Moses get a deeper understanding of God? Do they share something that is indescribable? Moses never shares this experience with Israelite people or his brother Aaron or even his father-in-law Jethro. This is a moment between the human Moses and the divine God. In truth, even when reading the text we are only told that it is going to happen, but not that it actually happens. We just assume, but the event must have been so overwhelming that Moses couldn't write about it or just chose not to as it was between God and Moses.

Many of us have spiritual experiences in our lives that are mostly indescribable. Maybe they are as intense as this one in Exodus 33, but if it not, it doesn't lessen the impact it has on us. I have been in groups where people have been encouraged to talk about a moment such as this. I listen, but it is always hard to feel and understand the depth of the experience. It isn't my moment with God; it is theirs. I can listen and appreciate and even be moved, but it still isn't my experience. So my question is whether we can have shared spiritual experiences? I believe the answer is "yes" and I believe it begins with making Judaism and Jewish ritual and celebration a part of your life.

At the end of the month, we will observe Pesach. Some people just have a special dinner with the traditional Passover foods. Some spend a little bit of time looking at and reading from the Haggadah. I believe that a truly rewarding Pesach seder comes from reading the words of your Haggadah (whichever one you might use) and stopping to consider and ponder the story that is being told. Ask questions and discuss what Pesach means.

Every week we can celebrate Shabbat and have a spiritual experience that comes from the recitation of the blessings, the gathering of a small community, and the understanding of the rest that comes from this special day. We may not be enveloped by the presence of God, but you can be sure that with candles lit, Kiddush chanted, and challah eaten that the spiritual presence of God rests on the shoulder of each person at the table.

Thus, when you light your Shabbat lights this evening, light one to help you feel that presence of God that brings calm and holiness in your life. Light the other as a reminder that it does take effort to feel this spiritual presence, but the feeling for many is like the warm glow of that Shabbat flame.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ✨

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Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Do we want something real or artificial?

Inserted in all the beautiful detail about the building of the *Mishkon* that we read in the Torah portion *Ki Tissa* is the "sin" of the Golden Calf. The Jews had just received the Torah at Mount Sinai, they had experienced all the miracles of leaving Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, how could they build the Golden Calf and have it magically appear before them? What is its relevance to us today?

It is important to know that the Golden Calf was built by the magicians of Egypt who left with the Jewish people. When Moses did not appear as they had calculated, they constructed this substitute for Moses. They lacked the internal resources for faith in the invisible and unknowable God. They had been idolaters in Egypt, so it was not so surprising that they would resort to what was familiar to them when frightened. We do that too when we are frightened. We run to what we know, what we can control.

In this Torah portion, we are also once again told of God's demand of exclusive worship. "Do not bow down to any other god, for God is known as one who demands exclusive worship and He does indeed demand it" (Exodus, 34:14).

Is it that God needs our exclusive worship? Or is this our need? In my book *New Age Judaism*, I wrote:

Even though idolatry is prevalent in some current spiritual practices, most people today do not bow down to idols of stone, wood and gold as they did thousands of years ago. Yet idolatry in a larger sense is still prevalent in more subtle forms in modern secular society.

Idolatry occurs whenever we transfer our personal power to objects and forces other than God. All too often we place our faith in what we have created, in what we can see, touch or feel and not in God...We even idolize God. Many people treat their concept of God, much as people worshipped idols in ancient times. They try to appease God with prayers and actions. We may say that we believe in God, but often it is only what we want or think God should be that we believe in. We want God on our terms, and for many that is merely a more romanticized version of themselves....

God in Judaism is not something sweet or sentimental, but rather the underlying reality that encompasses good and bad. The Torah tells us "God does good and creates evil..."

In the Bible, God continually expresses His anger about the Jews' fascination with the idols of the surrounding cultures. At first glance it appears that God is jealous. He wants the Jews to give them their undivided love and worship. If we consider

the matter more deeply, we will appreciate that it is for our sake that God wants us to leave idolatry. If our sense of self is externally determined, we are alienated from our true selves and from God. We are living in an artificial reality where we give our power to things that we have created rather than attach ourselves to the source of all creation, the True Reality.

Do we want real truth or some illusion of truth? Too often we seek comfort in what we make up to comfort us, or we want what looks good, but it can never really do it for us because it is not real or true. We may each have our golden calves that we use for comfort, but these are poor substitutes for faith in a true and living, loving God.

Faith in God is what we must work to acquire and cultivate within us, not for God primarily, but for us. We need faith, like we need water and food. But only faith can quiet the soul. Drawing close to God in all the good things, in all the challenging things of life is a way that we acquire faith. All the teachings and the spiritual practices of Judaism teach us how to develop faith in the unknowable God, a God that we cannot control or understand. It is faith that expands our consciousness and allows us to see that ultimately everything in life is good, for God is good and does good.

We may each have our golden calves that we use for comfort, but these are poor substitutes for faith in a true and living, loving God.

Interestingly, amidst all the details in this Torah portion surrounding the building of the *Mishkon*, a physical place for the *Shechinah*, the clothes that the high priest would wear, the incense that would be burned, the Torah records the incident with the Golden Calf. Perhaps this was to tell us, that Hashem understood the need that the people had for something physical before they acted upon it. This was to be revealed to them; if only they had waited, they would have received this divine gift. This teaching reminds me of the story of the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve would have been able to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil if they had only waited until Shabbat.

Patience is a virtue that we each need to actively cultivate. We will have what we want if we are patient. If we find ourselves becoming impatient, if we become angry, we need not be passive, we need not numb ourselves or repress our feelings but cultivate more faith through prayer, meditation, and Torah learning and be patient. God does good and is good.

These are my morning musings. I conclude with a blessing. Wherever we
(see Ribner, page NAT 15)

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Baruch Hashem, we had a happy and beautiful Purim, with some real miracles, just like in the times of Mordechai and Esther.

Every year I try to help the patients and staff at our local hospital to celebrate Purim, and all of the other holidays. This year it wasn't working. I couldn't find anyone to read the *Megillah*. One of my sons-in-law knows how to read the *Megillah*, but he spent most of the night in Tel Aviv reading the *Megillah* in one of the Chabad Houses. He read the *Megillah* at 2:00 a.m. By 3:00 a.m. a new group had gathered, and he read the *Megillah* again. This went on the whole night and most of the day!

This is an amazing phenomenon. Big changes are taking place in Israeli society. New Chabad Houses are opening all over Israel and all over the world. Ten years ago many Israelis wouldn't go near a shul. Now Chabad Houses are big attractions. The prophet Isaiah wrote about the times of Moshiach: "And the land will be full of the knowledge of Hashem." We see it happening in front of our eyes.

I asked another son-in-law if he could read the *Megillah*. He was sorry, but he hadn't prepared for the reading. I asked about my son Moti. He was busy helping 3,000 soldiers celebrate Purim in a big army base in the Jordan Valley.

It was getting late. Purim was almost over. A friend came up to me and asked if I was going somewhere to help people celebrate. I said sure. He asked if he could come and help. I said sure. I asked if he has a *Megillah*. He said yes. "Can you read it?" "Yes, and I have a car if you need a lift."

This was a real miracle. It made my Purim, and it made Purim for the 70 people in the hospital who heard the reading of the *Megillah*.

I had another amazing story a few days before Purim. I walked into a room in the neurology ward. A young man saw me carrying a pair of *tefillin* and started to sing a happy Purim song. Of course I joined in. It was great. We had never met before, but so what? We sang and danced and rejoiced in Hashem. Then he introduced me to his cousin Yaakov, who was in bed with a bandage on his forehead. Yaakov looked at the *tefillin* and smiled. "Now I know why this happened. It has been about a year since I last put on *tefillin*!" He was happy to put *tefillin* on his arm, but not on his head. He said his head was hurting. His cousin said not to worry, we will be gentle. I put the *tefillin* on his head very gently, and he *davened*.

I told Yaakov about my 60th birthday coming up the day before Pesach. He looked at me. "You mean March 29?" I said yes. "Wow, that is really amazing! My birthday is also March 29, and I will be 30!"

I asked him for a special birthday present. He said sure, what? I suggested that he put on *tefillin* every day.

About the Cover

The Exodus Haggadah

For years, author Seth Ben-Mordecai searched for a haggadah that respected tradition but was accessible to the average North American Jew. In other words, a haggadah that told the story of our ancestors' exodus from Egypt in plain language, and explained the cultural, linguistic, and religious context in which that story is set. Giving up on ever finding such a haggadah, Ben-Mordecai applied his academic training in Semitic linguistics and *The Exodus Haggadah* (www.exodushaggadah.com/) was born.

Unlike all other *haggadot*, *The Exodus Haggadah* includes the full story of our ancestors' journey from slavery to freedom. That story, newly translated directly from the Book of Exodus, is interleaved among the prayers, rituals and commentary of the standard haggadah. The traditional rabbinic commentary and anecdotes from the standard haggadah are set as margin notes to elucidate the Exodus narrative, not supplant it. Margin notes on language, word origins, the Egyptian deities whom the plagues discredited, and even Egyptian bread-making practices add interest and understanding to the haggadah. The result is refreshing and moving, yet very traditional.

About the Artist

This drawing appeared in *The Exodus Haggadah*. It was designed and illustrated for The Rachel Klein Studio by Liza Gewurtz-Lacoua in Tel Aviv, Israel. Gewurtz-Lacoua lives in Givat Am with her husband, Eiran, and their son, Itai. She graduated from Avni Institute 10-1/2 years ago in the communication-design department. She studied with Creative Director Rachel Klein for 2 years. Klein recognized the unique style of Gewurtz-Lacoua and hired her upon graduation to work in the Rachel Klein studio (www.klein-design.co.il).

Ms. Klein is a graduate of The Parsons School of Design in New York and Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. ✪

He agreed. He gave me a big smile, and told me about growing up in Caracas, Venezuela. He had learned in a Jewish school and had put on *tefillin* and prayed three times a day. They had a Chabad House, and the rabbi was really crazy. On Simchas Torah he would drink a lot of vodka, and go outside and jump up and dance on the parked cars.

I asked how he had injured his forehead. He told me that he was fixing a car, and a piece of metal flew out, bounced off the wall and hit his forehead. He felt that it was a miracle that he was alive. If the piece of metal had hit his head first, it could have seriously hurt him.

He told me that in the garage where he works they have a little shul, and every day there is a minyan for the afternoon prayers. From now on he will join in when he can.

(see Chassidic Rabbi, page NAT 15)



An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Last words

The mood was somber in the downtown Manhattan offices of Agudath Israel of America, where I work, as 6:00 p.m. loomed large this past Tues., Feb. 16. That was the time designated for Martin Grossman's execution.

Mr. Grossman, a 45-year-old Jewish man, had been convicted of killing Margaret Park, a Florida Wildlife Officer, in 1984, when he was 19 years old, and was sentenced to death. Agudath Israel and other organizations representing the full spectrum of American Orthodox Jewry – as well as many other groups – appealed to Florida Governor Charlie Crist to spare Grossman's life and allow him to serve a life sentence instead.

While acknowledging the horror of Grossman's crime and expressing their deepest sympathy for the family of his victim, the advocates stressed that the murder had been an act of panic, not planning; that Grossman's low IQ and impaired mental state were not given proper recognition in his death sentence; and that Grossman had not only conducted himself as a model prisoner since his incarceration some 25 years ago but showed profound remorse and regret for his actions.

As the appointed hour grew closer, some Agudath Israel staff members quietly recited Psalms. Others just waited, hopefully, for news that the execution had been cancelled or postponed. Agudath Israel's executive vice-president, Rabbi David Zwiebel, was on the phone with the Rosh Agudath Israel, Rabbi Yaakov Perlow, the Novominsker Rebbe, who had called to offer his encouragement and appreciation for all that Agudath Israel had done to try to prevent the execution.

Indeed, in the week or two prior to the execution, much energy was invested in the campaign to spare Martin Grossman's life. Constituents were mobilized to telephone, fax and e-mail Florida Governor Crist to ask him to commute Grossman's sentence to life in prison. Religious leaders, government officials and prominent businessmen from outside the Jewish community were enlisted in the effort as well.

Unfortunately, to no avail. Mr. Grossman was executed as scheduled.

Governor Crist said that his office had received nearly 50,000 e-mails, phone calls and letters urging him to commute the death sentence. But, he said, he had "reached the conclusion that justice must be done."

Some people, even within the Jewish, even the Orthodox, community, are upset that Agudath Israel and others had made efforts to save Mr. Grossman's life. Some

of the objectors simply feel that someone who killed another person, no matter the circumstances, should himself be killed. Others worry about how it would look to the larger world that Orthodox Jews were "defending" a death-row inmate.

In a Gannett newspaper in Florida, the *Ft. Myers News-Press*, columnist Paul Fleming indeed waxed cynical about the Orthodox groups' efforts. "These folks," he wrote, "are welcome to fight against Grossman's execution for whatever reasons they choose."

"However," he continued, "when the next death warrant is signed and the next of Florida's 394 death-row inmates is scheduled for execution, I expect...those who oppose Grossman's sentence to once again...ask the governor for a stay. We'll see."

Ahavas Yisrael, the love each member of the Jewish people is to have for all other Jews, is not only a halachic mandate, it is a tangible reality among observant Jews.

New York Jewish Week columnist Adam Dickter blogged: "It didn't much matter to Peggy Park that she was killed by someone who had a bar mitzvah. Why does it matter to Agudah?"

What Mr. Fleming and Mr. Dickter don't fully appreciate, though, is that there is nothing for a Jew to be ashamed of in seeking to aid another Jew (bar-mitzvahed or not). To a believing Jew, every other Jew, no matter how ignorant or personally unobservant, is a relative – a member of *Klal Yisrael*, the Jewish Family. And when a family member is in danger, even the critics surely realize, one goes to special lengths.

Ahavas Yisrael, the love each member of the Jewish people is to have for all other Jews, is not only a *halachic* mandate, it is a tangible reality among observant Jews. Among the tragedies inherent in the relinquishing of the Jewish religious tradition within so much of the Jewish community is the decay of the very concept of Jewish Peoplehood. Lip service is readily paid to the phrase. But for any Jew whose heart is imbued with what it means, there can be only one reaction to the impending death of a fellow Jew: anguish. And a determination to attempt, no matter how futile it might seem, to stave it off. If love isn't compelling in such circumstances, it has little hope to be manifest in daily life.

After the Jewish groups issued their call to try to save Mr. Grossman's life, messages from caring individuals streamed into our offices. Jews from across the community were asking for contact information for the Florida governor and wanted to know



Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Passover and Bobby McGee

In the summer of 1968, just before I entered the 9th grade, I finagled my mother into driving over two hours to Atlantic City to take me and my best friend Cheryl to our very first rock concert. As we fled from the car to make sure that none of the cute older boys saw who the chauffeur was, our path was lit by the marquee with the name "Janis Joplin" emblazoned in yellow and orange lights.

Cheryl and I pretended to be nonchalant about being at the concert until Janis opened with "Me and Bobby McGee." From there on in, I screamed my way through the show, much to the chagrin of the college kids who were toking up a storm behind me. My mother fussed about how late it was as she drove us home, but joined in as we sang late into the night the one verse we knew by heart: "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

That line has resurfaced in my life repeatedly as a sort of mantra, especially when I was younger and things didn't work out the way I had planned. During times when I had no job, no boyfriend, or not much money, I was calmed by the thought that what I really had was "freedom." Freedom to do whatever I wanted, however I wanted, with whomever I wanted. Yeah, right!

Over the years, I have come to view freedom as something entirely different than the "nothing left to lose" concept of my youth. I now understand that freedom is quite the opposite of having no responsibility or ties. Genuine freedom comes with a large price tag because at the heart of freedom is free choice, the personal autonomy to exercise our will in the decisions we make in life.

The concept of freedom is essential to being human and being Jewish. It is what enables each of us, despite heredity, social



what else they could possibly do to help save Mr. Grossman. They knew nothing about him beyond the fact that he had committed a terrible crime and was facing execution. And that he was Jewish, a brother.

News reports described Mr. Grossman's last moments and words. "I would like to extend my heartfelt remorse to the family of Peggy Park," he said. "I fully regret everything that happened that night... whether I remember everything or not. I accept responsibility."

And then he recited the first verse of the *Shma*: "Hear, O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d, the L-rd is one."

(see Shafran, page NAT 15)

conditions, and environment, to choose to do good or evil. If we did not have free will, then it would make little sense to have a book like the Torah, which is our guide on how to act and live. We are free – to follow its laws or not to follow its laws – but the choice is ours. The freedom we have to decide, to elect to seek goodness, justice and mercy over evil, injustice and intolerance is what makes the choice significant and meaningful.

It is fascinating to note that Hebrew has three distinct words for freedom. *Hofesh* refers to physical freedom, such as a vacation from work. *Dror* is the name of a bird and, like a bird that soars and migrates, it refers to mental freedom. *Cherut* describes the kind of freedom we have to pursue a higher purpose in life: It signifies spiritual freedom.

Passover is the Jewish holiday that commemorates our freedom from Egyptian bondage. The Hebrews who fled Egypt in the middle of the night had been slaves for over 400 years. Moses led them to physical freedom, but it would take another 40 years of wandering in the Sinai desert before they would be able to relinquish their slave mentality and become free-thinking men and women. What would enable them to make this difficult transition?

The answer came seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the Hebrew people gathered to experience the most profound moment in Jewish history, the Revelation of the Torah. It was here that the people became unified as a *spiritual* nation, when they entered into the covenant with the God that brought them out of Egypt "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm." They were given freedom for a distinct and special purpose – to love God, to follow the laws of the Torah and to become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Passover is *Ziman Cherutanu*, which in Hebrew means the "time of our spiritual freedom." It is intricately linked to Shavuot, the holiday in which we celebrate the giving of the Torah. The journey of the Jewish people from redemption to Revelation is also the story of our redemption through Revelation. We are given our freedom so that we can become a holy people with a unique spiritual destiny.

This year, when we sit together at the Seder table and read the story of the Exodus from Egypt, let us remember that it is only because we are free, physically, mentally and spiritually, that we have the privilege of choosing how to live. And because of that freedom, we are never free from our responsibility to choose what is good and just.

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



Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

Play together and everyone's a winner

Dear Mr. Funsmith, my wife tends to be very competitive, even with the kids. She makes such a big deal out of winning, especially when she's the winner. I know you say games are good things to do with kids. But is this really good? Shep Nachas

Dear Mr. Nachas,

It seems to me that the only time we can truly play together is when we play together as equals. What especially interests me is that we can do this even though we are not equal at all. When the old are playing with the young, the abled with the disabled, the expert with the novice, the human with the animal – as long as we share the same rules, as long as we can somehow agree that we will treat each other fairly, that, despite any “real” differences, we will not overpower each other, not allow the inequalities to surface; we can play as if there were nothing dividing us, nothing separating, nothing differentiating.

When we are playing together, despite our differences, we celebrate a transcendent sameness, a unity that underlines the illusion of our separateness. You could call this an act of love – an enacted love that lets us keep the game going. Many acts of love, in fact, many acts of compassion, caring, trust, assurance.

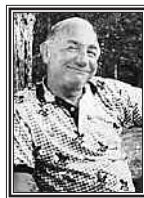
This is the kind of play that takes place between all kinds of lovers: parent and child, between older and younger, between you and your pets. And it seems to me that it is this kind of play that has been the center of my awakening, for all these 40 years I've been playing and talking about playing; this kind of loving fun, this form of play that is, in its very essence, love.

It doesn't seem to matter what kind of game we're playing – competitive, cooperative, planned, spontaneous, new or old – if the game is played between beings who are not equal in power or ability, and if we can keep it fun, it is almost as if we play in defiance of each other's differences.

This is very different from the kind of play we find in formal sports and games, where players are professionals. Under the competitive contract, it is a struggle between near equals – the nearer, the better. People of almost equal strength and build, knowledge and skill. People who are so much the same that we can tell them apart only because they are wearing different colors, or because they stay on their own sides of the field or board.

But when we play in acknowledgment of our differences, it is never the game that really keeps us together. It is always and only our desire to play with each

(see DeKoven, page NAT 15)



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

The father of hope talks to Elijah

It was a sparkling blue day in Heaven, exactly one day before Pesach 2010. It was the 3,300th Passover – give or take a few years – since the deliverance. The sky was a little bluer than usual and the heavenly hosts sang a little sweeter than usual. Naturally because of the imminence of the holiday.

And as was his custom, The Lord G-d of Hosts called Elijah to his side. “Go, my messenger” he said, “go to the Passover celebrations of *Kol Yisrael* – of all Israel. Sit with them at their seder table and speak in your silent voice that speaks only to the heart. Remind them that you herald the Messiah.”

Elijah hung his head. “I'm not really in the mood for it this year, it's a mess down there.” he mumbled.

Though blessed during his time on Earth with prophetic gifts and granted a fiery chariot ride to heaven, he was only human. And his grief for Jew and Gentile – all the children of Noah – made him bold.

“Maybe this year,” he said a little louder, “we oughta skip it – remember 9/11 and the terror that your world has suffered since.” His eyes rested on the sparkling sapphire floor of Heaven.

“Since Moses, Abraham, Job, Jacob, Isaiah, and even Tevye the dairyman can bother you with the ‘why’ questions, let me do the same,” said the Prophet.

The Almighty, who hurled the planets in an infinite sky and taught the mother fox to suckle its young, sighed. And the fluffy clouds of heaven flew like children's kites on his breath. “Did I not tell you my ways are hidden? Go read my book.” He knew the drill. Ah, the children of Israel, a garrulous, contentious, jabbering people. A breed whose curiosity was stronger than their faith. Would there be no end to the questions of patriarchs, saints, and sinners? Did he not even suffer the monologue of, yes, even Tevye the dairyman? And now Elijah, his favorite prophet was looking for arguments.

The prophet still stared silently at the floor of heaven as the Lord reminded him that they had been through this once before. “Remember the nights in the cave of Mount Horeb? Remember that in your fear of Jezebel, you called out to me? How faithless you were. I blew down the Terebinths. I shook the mountain and talked to you in a still, small voice.”

Israel had broken the covenant with me. You cried out. It's all in my book of Kings. You angered me, and I commanded you to attend every *bris*, every covenant making from then to eternity. So you would never again doubt me.”

“Go to every seder.” Assure the grieving

A Passover Question

© RITA B. STEIN, HOLLYWOOD, FLA.

Why is this night different
From all of the others?
It's the work that's been done
By all of the mothers.

They have found all the recipes
Put away since last year
And have been to the grocers
To shop, far and near.

They bought all the
Kosher L'Passover stuff,
And then bought some more
'Cause there's never enough!

They have searched for the Chomatz
And removed every crumb;
They have called all the guests
And asked them to come.

They have cleaned and have polished,
Have cooked and have baked,
Have changed all the dishes
And made a sponge cake.

They have looked at their menus
And wondered out loud,
“Will I have enough food
To feed such a crowd?”

Matzo kugel and brisket,
Matzo rolls and compote;
Or roast chicken and tzimmes...
Which ones have your vote?

They have carefully planned
Each holiday dish,
Chopped whitefish and pike
For the gefilte fish.

They have chopped the horseradish
With tears streaming down
And have made all the knaidlach
With nary a frown.

They have roasted the shank bone
And made the salt water



that I am a Master of reencounters and renewals. Tell the discouraged and depressed that my favorite season is spring and among my top ten popular song hits are “You Gotta Have Heart” and “Tomorrow.” You know, “I love you tomorrow, you're only a day away.”

“Tell them the story of Jacob. A father whose vision is cursed with a bloody coat and a dead son. And worse, like you on Mt. Horeb, no faith in anything but eternal despair.” But look what happens. The lost son is not dead, he's not a slave, he's not in a cockroachy Egyptian prison. He wears imperial purple and sits on a throne only beneath that of omnipotent Pharaoh. And Jacob is brought to his side. The God of the Covenant is a God

For dipping the Karpas
Just like they oughter.

An egg they have roasted
And hard boiled some, too,
And filled up the cup
For Eliyahu.

Is the Seder Plate ready?
We need the Charoses!
Quick, chop walnuts and apples
In sufficient doses...

They have tasted and added
And tasted again
And added sweet wine
And some ground cinnamon.

The have set the big table
With silver and china,
Wine glasses and candles –
I've seen nothing finer.

They have checked every item,
The Seder Plate is complete:
There are Moror and Karpas,
herbs bitter and sweet,
Z'roah and Baitza, and Charoses to eat.

The wine's on the table
And the salt water, too,
The soup's in the pot,
What more should Mom do?

Choose three perfect matzos
And everything's set.
Not one single detail
Did Mama forget.

Haggadahs are ready,
One at each place,
And Passover's glowing
From each shining face.

Bless the Holiday lights
The Kiddush comes next
Soon it's time for four Questions
That each year are asked...

Why is this night
Different from all of the others?
Mama smiles, and she thinks about
All of the mothers. ★

of Reencounters. Tell them that this Passover! Remind them of that, and tell them that I can shake Iran and its nuclear laboratories like a child shakes a rattle. Tell them that I am the Father of Hope.” Elijah salutes and begins his infinite Pesach journey.

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

Parsha Perspective



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

Animal sacrifice and human spirituality

We read in the Torah (Leviticus 1:1–2): “And it came to pass on the eighth day, Moses called to Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel. He said to Aaron: Take for yourself a young bull for a sin offering...”

This verse describes part of the priestly service and animal sacrifice. The setting was the eighth and final day of the ceremony to induct the priests. The people had run amok with the incident of the golden calf – they had committed rape, incest, and murder. The building of the *Mishkan* (sanctuary) and the consecrated induction of the priests was the culmination of a lengthy struggle for atonement. Withal, the people were finally at one again with the will of God.

Moses commands Aaron to tell the people what offerings – animal sacrifices – they should make so “that the glory of *Adoshem* may appear.” When the consecration was virtually complete, Moses tells Aaron, his sons, and the elders that God will appear to them that day as fire descending from heaven to consume their offerings. It is to be a day that God will appear to the whole nation as a consuming fire, a continuation of God’s revelation at Mount Sinai. The Divine Presence is not to return to heaven but to reside in the *Mishkan*.

Even with the heroic dimensions of this picture of God appearing as fire descending from heaven, many of us are repulsed nonetheless by the sacrificial system of ancient Israel. The sacrifice of animals strikes us as bloody and barbarous, jarring our sensibilities.

But we need to be careful to avoid making self-deluded and ill-considered judgments, because the contemporary slaughter of innocent animals continues in the billions annually; and for those of us who are meat eaters, it’s done in our name – that is, on behalf of the “consumers” to whom the meat is sold.

What has changed is that the slaughtering is now a commercial enterprise and, in most cases, it serves no higher spiritual purpose – only to slake our appetite for meat and each corporation’s quest for profits. While, of course, animals were also slaughtered for food in the ancient world, the practice among the Israelites was limited to one central sanctuary, it served a spiritual purpose, and the people were to be weaned from it in time.

But how are we, as modern people, to make any sense of animal sacrifice?

The *korban* (literally, to bring near), unfortunately often translated as “sacrifice,” was a means to sustain a spiritual connection between the individual and God. The reason we have a problem translating *korban* into English is that our popular ideas about sacrifices and offerings are often based on pagan conceptions and practices. In pagan cultures, “sacrifice” and “offering” made sense religiously, and they are common linguistic currency in contemporary secular American culture.

The idea of “sacrifice,” according to Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888), implies that one is giving up something of value so that another will benefit. Hirsch goes on to say that, obviously, from a Jewish viewpoint, God doesn’t benefit from this practice, because God has no need for anything we sacrifice. To make a sacrifice also suggests that one is to do without something of value. In point of fact, what we as Jews *gain* from the sacrifice is usually much more valuable than the sacrifice itself. And the word “offering” is also inaccurate, because it suggests appeasement of the one to whom it is given – a kind of bribery – which is entirely out of synch with the Jewish view of our relationship to God.

The Israelite laws of sacrifice offer a beginning place to better understand its function in the life of our people: The offering had to be one’s own property.

Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, 1135–1204) posits that the sacrificial service was not of Jewish origin. It was the universal custom among all peoples at the time of Moses to worship by means of sacrifices. The general understanding was that, since sin for humans is “embedded in flesh and blood” (i.e., an integral part of the human makeup), the symbolism of sacrificing flesh and blood was necessary and particularly powerful. Because the Israelites were accustomed to this atmosphere, the Torah made allowances for their incremental abandonment of the practice.

The Israelite laws of sacrifice offer a beginning place to better understand its function in the life of our people: The offering had to be one’s own property. Only domesticated animals, raised for the purpose of providing food, were acceptable for sacrifice. According to Philo (25 BCE–40 CE), the Hellenistic philosopher who read and understood the Hebrew Scriptures, “Only domesticated animals and the most gentle birds were suitable for sacrifice...and they had to be free of blemish...as a symbol that the

offerers must also be wholesome in body and soul. The Jew had to approach the altar with his soul purged of its passions and viciousness if the sacrifice was to be acceptable.” (This is comparable to the attitude necessary if prayer is to be effective.)

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, formerly Chancellor of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary of America, has suggested that, because the sanctuary existed to make offerings in God’s presence, the individual and the community had a means “to approach God in joy and contrition, in fear and gratitude.” Required to lay his hands on the head of the sacrifice, the individual making the offering affirmed that the “hands” that had done wrong in the past would have the “support” of the offering to do better in the future.

The root meaning of the word *korban* is understood kabbalistically as “bringing together” or “uniting.” All of the kabbalists interpret sacrifice as spiritual worship in which the sacrifice itself is only a symbol – it has no magical power of its own to influence God – that enables human contact with the divine.

The dean of our Biblical commentators, Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak, 1040–1105), points out that making an offering to God allows us to experience – by our own choice and action – God’s love and care. The basic purpose of sacrifice was not the offering of an animal’s life to appease or manipulate God – that was, as we have said, the practice of pagans – but to offer oneself up for atonement with God. The purpose was to become at one with God again after failing to follow the path of Torah.

The 19th-century Chidushei HaRim (Rabbi Isaac Meir) offers an understanding of the sacrifice as a “pleasing scent” to God. Rabbi Meir explains that a *reyach*, or scent, is something that is recognized or detected far away. Thus anything that one can sense or feel from far off is called a *reyach*. A sacrifice must serve as a messenger of good – meaning that through the sacrifice one can immediately sense that *good deeds will be done* henceforth by the one giving the offering. This, says Rabbi Meir, is the main purpose of a sacrifice – that repentance brings the person to better actions in the future. It is the certainty of future deeds that makes a sacrifice a “pleasing scent.”

Far-fetched as it may sound at first, we might imagine that many lives would have been forfeited for their sins except for the Israelites’ understanding of God’s willingness to receive an innocent animal as a sacrifice. By placing hands on the head of the sacrifice at the time of its death, the sinner’s guilt was transferred to the animal. Without that sacrifice, the wrongdoer would be bound to carry an increasingly greater burden of spiritually dead parts of him- or herself, until hastened physical death followed inevitably from the growing weight of spiritual death.

Beyond relieving the individual of the spiritual detritus that obstructs *teshuvah* and *mitzvot* (turning one’s life to keep the

Passover

BY LOUISE RARICK, BLOOMINGTON, IND.

Come in the door set open by
Us who need you too.

It’s spring again, we need the rain.
We need the dew strewn around like jewels.

We need the sticky little leaves upon the trees
We need the Leaves of Grass that
Whitman wrote
We need the flowers, the blossoms

We need the sprigs of parsley on our plates
And water
And salt water
And horseradish, only a little
And matzah with its annual
unleavened taste.

We are emerging from a past;
The time of singing is here.

Let us drink to the future
And our food.

We open the door
and look
There is Black Night Air
As Personification it may come in as
Elijah!
Here is your chair
Here your drink we saved for you.

Who knows one, who knows two?
Who knows three, who knows four? ✨

commandments), the sacrificial system served to reinforce day-to-day rededication to action that would ensure the entire people’s continuous atonement with God.

With the destruction of the Second Temple and the end of the sacrificial system, prayer was established in place of sacrifice. Every one of us (except the angels and those who have never participated in congregational prayer) has at some time gone to services and said the words but not really gained from the experience of prayer. Yet, as with sacrifice, every prayer is an opportunity for growth, if it is preceded and followed by righteous deeds.

In our time we may choose to be united with God through our freely given *mitzvot*, our righteous deeds, and through our communal prayer that precedes and follows them. Our deeds are the offerings that create a sanctuary for God in our hearts, and our prayer is the communal means we have to review our actions, celebrate our pursuit of righteousness and justice, and recommit and recharge ourselves for the challenges to come – as sacrifice once did in Israel’s past.

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Rabbi Moshe ben Asher and Magidah Khulda bat Sarah are the codirectors 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

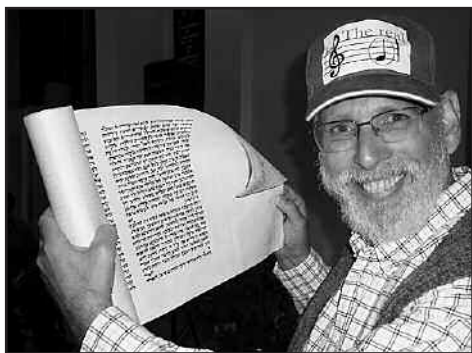
BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Purim goes on and on

To those outside of Israel, Purim began Saturday evening the 13th of Adar and continued on Sunday. To those of us in Jerusalem, a city walled at the time of Joshua, Purim technically began last night, Sunday, the 14th of Adar, and continued today.

If, however, you judged Purim by the number of stands selling costumes and accessories and the amount of *hamantashen* (In Israel called, *oznei haman*, Haman's ears), the holiday has been going on for weeks. Several days before Purim, people were already wearing hats of different kinds on the street.

Last evening, friends came with us (all in costumes) to our synagogue, Kehilat Moshet Avraham. Barry wore a plaid shirt and a vest and a cowboy hat, which looks like brown leather, and is sold locally. Our friends, husband and wife, were also in cowboy hats, but the husband, Jerusalem's Baptist minister, wore a large paper number one with a hole in the center. Her niece was a waitress; her husband had a snowflake hanging in front of his face (guess! a snow blower). I was in a classic plaid jumper I've worn on Purim for years, each year as someone different. This time I had red sequin bows on my shoes (where in Jerusalem would you find red sequin shoes?). Yes, I was Dorothy.



Rabbi Barry Schlesinger of Congregation Kehilat Moshet Avraham (our synagogue) shows the Megillah.

Our synagogue was more packed than on Rosh Hashanah, and hardly a person, young or old, was not in a costume or a hat. There were probably 300 people plus a huge contingent of soldiers from Kiryat Moriah, the education institute nearby. They are part of a conversion course learning Judaism as their mothers are not Jewish (many of them from the former Soviet Union). We are the only Conservative synagogue they attend during the whole nine-week course and they do a Havdalah experience at our synagogue also.

Various male and female members of our congregation, in different costumes,



Four members of our congregation put on a Purim shpiel. (Sybil is second from left.)

read a chapter each of the *Megillah*. Two large drums were also in use instead of groggers when the evil Haman's name was read.

Afterward, four of us from the congregation put on a Purim *shpiel* (play) I had written – Purim in Cyberspace. Marvin, a Portuguese professor and former member of the Diplomatic Corps, originally from Boston, translated line by line into Hebrew. Jack, a computer expert from Washington, D.C., here a few years, and Freda, a woman from England, here over 30 years, and I read the narration.

Afterward, *mishloach manot* bags were handed out to congregation members who had donated a sum, and *hamantashen* were served along with some drinks.

For the first time in four days, the day started out with some sun and not rain, so I took the bus to town to see what was happening. There were lots of Queen Esthers on the streets; cafes and restaurants and most stores were open. Many employees wore hats or wigs. The outdoor market, Machaneh Yehudah, was bustling and some vendors were in wigs or hats as were some customers. Prices were particularly low and *hamantashen* were still being sold in many varieties.

The weekend magazine reminded us that Israelis would eat 24.5 million *hamantashen*, and the average Israeli eats at least five at 200 calories each. The most popular costumes were characters from the Israeli version of *Survivor*, Spiderman, ninjas, Walt Disney characters, Jack Sparrow of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, princesses and princes. Adults favored flamenco dancers, hippies, pirates and pussycats.

On the bus home, the bus driver wore a top hat of sparkly silver.

Barry too was out enjoying the temporary respite from rain. A busload of American boys got on his bus, dressed as Hassidim, carrying food items to take to a party.

Canadian MP/Panel discuss delegitimization for English speaking organization

"Lawfare! Fighting False Legal Actions and Boycotts that Demonize Israel" was the title of a panel last evening at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center featuring Irwin Cotler, Canadian MP, former Justice minister and international human rights lawyer; Lt. Col. (res.) David Benjamin, retired from the IDF, international law consultant with emphasis on law of armed conflict, and

counterterrorism specialist; and D.J. Schneeweiss, antiboycott coordinator for Europe of the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Moderating was David Horovitz, editor of the *Jerusalem Post*.

The audience of more than 200 were welcomed by Bobbie Brown, chairman of Hadar, a new grassroots action and leadership organization for English-speakers, who reminded the people that "the Zionist dream is not something to leave to elected officials; it belongs to the Jewish people. We create laws, we abide by laws but the legal system is being used to isolate and create a different Israel and different Jewish people."

He introduced David Horovitz, who introduced Hon. Irwin Cotler to present the international perspective on delegitimization.



Pictured l-r: Professor Irwin Cotler, Lt. Col. (res) David Benjamin, D.J. Schneeweiss. All photo by Barry. A. Kaplan.

"Delegitimization is a kind of generic buzzword; delegitimization is not a new phenomena," said Professor Cotler. "It began with the establishment of the State of Israel and got international traction after the Six-Day War, which reversed the notion of the Jewish people as victim. But victory was seen as a betrayal."

The sophisticated campaign of delegitimization continued in the fall of 1975 with the "Zionism is racism" resolution passed by the United Nations.

"Israel was held out to be the enemy of labor, the enemy of health, the enemy of culture, the enemy of women, the enemy of human rights, and the enemy of peace," said Professor Cotler.

What has changed? Professor Cotler said, "The laundering of delegitimization, which is persistent and pernicious."

He then gave seven examples of the phenomenon of the laundering of delegitimization: (1) globalization of NGOs and international law; (2) reconfiguring the Arab-Israel conflict as the Palestinian-Israel conflict; (3) framing of the narrative of the Palestinian-Israel conflict as a human rights narrative; (4) mainstreaming of delegitimization among political elites, academics, scientists, trade unions; (5) politization of campus culture; (6) advent of human rights culture; (7) resolutions in international human rights and criminal law.

"Lawfare is the waging of war of delegitimization under the cover of law and laundering," said Professor Cotler. "Israel is the repository of evil."

In Canada, "every day there is mass exposure to the persistent and pervasive laundering of delegitimization under the protective cover of the United Nations.

Condemnations raise the specter of Israel being an international outlaw."

All of these are expressed through: (1) use and misuse of international criminal law; (2) advent of civil suits; (3) contracting parties of the Geneva Convention where laws are invoked against Israel; and (4) the international court of justice.

"Delegitimization is marching under the banner of human rights," said Professor Cotler, "with Israel as the mantra of human rights violations."

Responding for the Israel Defense Forces, Lt. Col. (res) David Benjamin said the IDF does not fight terrorism with terrorism, and Israel policy is to apply existing law, however we are dealing with terrorist armies.

"Hezbollah and Hamas are much more than terrorists; criminal law does not apply. We are in an armed conflict situation. We have the highest level of judicial supervision in the world."

Lt. Col. Benjamin added that "It is a challenge applying the law in armed conflict to Hamas, which deliberately endangers its own population. You have to distinguish between combatants and civilians, and you have to look at potential collateral damage or the law of proportionality."

In a sense, said Lt. Col. Benjamin, "Israel is a democracy fighting terror with one hand tied behind its back."

Representing the "diplomatic" point of view, D.J. Schneeweiss said, "We are busy convincing ourselves we're right, but we have to adapt [this]. This is an inadequate national response. We're out of sync with the rest of the world. There is a disconnect. We are a democracy at war."

Mr. Schneeweiss explained that Israel is presented with an ongoing strategic and political challenge that is multi-dimensional. "We have never directed our forces to meeting this challenge. Our responses are not heard by those attacking us; it is ideological. Our opponents are often the target audience we want to convince, and this poison is already mainstream."

Mr. Schneeweiss explained that we are slow to appreciate "this is a battlefield. We need to use full-court press – government to government, government to public, public to public. We have to be clever and challenge the opponents. Make them the issue not us." The poison is getting into the ordinary walks of life, said Mr. Schneeweiss, and "the measure of our success isn't to get rid of delegitimization; it will always be with us."

What needs to be done? Professor Cotler responded that we need to take back the narrative and reverse the delegitimization paradigm.

"Radical Islam is the source of the Middle East conflict. Iran and its proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah, present the danger to international peace and security. The real apartheid is a Middle East without Israel. When one speaks of a Palestinian state, we need to speak about

(see Kaplan/Israel, page NAT 15)



Holocaust Educator

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN

Need new ritual and liturgy to commemorate the Shoah

A week after the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, my daughter Rebecca and I watched the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival screening of the documentary film, *Pizza in Auschwitz*. I am so glad that the off-putting title did not deter me from attending. Israeli Holocaust survivor Danny Chanoch takes his two adult children and a film crew to retrace his steps from his home on a Lithuanian farm, to the Kovno Ghetto, and to the five concentration camps he experienced as a boy, from age 8 to 12. The film also shows clips from an earlier pilgrimage when Danny retraced this path with his wife.

The movie climaxes in Birkenau (Auschwitz II), where Danny tries to force everyone to spend the night in the barrack in which he slept as a boy in Auschwitz. Danny explains that he got his BA degree – Bachelors in Auschwitz – and wants his children to understand. Miri, his secular daughter and narrator of the film, calls it “Holocaust reality TV.” The tormented Miri compares her life of privilege in Israel to her father’s deprivations and says she can never understand. Her religious brother Sagi retreats to his prayers and remains surprisingly detached throughout the film.

After belligerent confrontations with two Auschwitz administrators who do not wish to grant him permission, Danny defiantly stretches out on his lower bunk, bereft of the dank straw he might have “enjoyed” as a youth. He remains oblivious to his daughter’s pleas to leave. Miri’s emotional intensity, her detailed recounting of his history, which she knows all too well, and her tears, all indicate she does understand, as much as any non-survivor can.

Danny’s bitter humor simultaneously elicits laughter and tears. Stretched out on a bunk in Birkenau, with two of the three people who love him most nearby, one in tears and the other praying, Danny resists entreaties to cut the visit short.

Ordering take out from Auschwitz? Danny eats pizza while lying down, a symbol of luxury surrounded by artifacts of horror almost beyond belief. Danny finally gives in, departing from Auschwitz before sunrise. This film, which I highly recommend, is really about the transmittal of the Holocaust experience, *l’dor v’dor*, from the survivor generation to the next. For more information about the film, go to the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival website, www.sjfff.org/film/detail?id=4605.

Please note: director Moshe Zimmerman is no relation to this writer.

Sixty-five years ago, on Jan. 27, 1945, surprised Russian soldiers encounter the death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, liberating its inmates from their physical captivity but perhaps not from their emotional bonds. On Jan. 27, 1995, this writer accompanied Mengele twin Eva Kor and her group of about 30 to Auschwitz to participate in the 50th anniversary of its liberation.

At that time, Eva’s biographer, Mary Wright, remarked to me, in a private conversation, that Eva returns to Auschwitz so often because that is where she spent her childhood. To spend part of one’s childhood in that death camp means that Auschwitz becomes a formative part of one’s psyche as evidenced by both Eva Kor and Danny Chanoch. Like Danny, Eva took her two adult children to Auschwitz along with a documentary film crew. She also invited the late Dr. Hans Münch, a former SS physician, who brought his two adult children and granddaughter to Auschwitz.

The movie climaxes in Birkenau, where Danny tries to force everyone to spend the night in the barrack in which he slept as a boy in Auschwitz.

I must hasten to add that Dr. Münch was the only SS officer brought to trial after the war and found innocent of any crimes, largely on the basis of testimony by Jewish physicians who worked under his direction. No one died in Dr. Münch’s experiments, which had to do with trying to contain the typhus epidemic at Auschwitz. Known as “the good Nazi doctor,” Dr. Münch’s story is detailed in the chapter about “Dr. B” in Robert Jay Lifton’s book *The Nazi Doctors*.

Eva’s filmmakers captured both the victims’ and the perpetrators’ first-hand experiences, as, like Danny Chanoch, both she and Hans Münch describe what happened to them in Auschwitz to their children and grandchild. For the story of Eva’s latest Auschwitz pilgrimage upon the occasion of its 65th anniversary, see the Feb. 10 edition of the P&O.

Remembering my pilgrimage with Eva and seeing *Pizza in Auschwitz* caused me to wonder if I have traumatized my own children. My own father, of blessed memory, was a German-Jewish refugee who returned to Germany with Patton’s Third Army and became a liberator of the Buchenwald concentration camp, near Weimar, Germany. He told me many times during his life that those images stayed with him: “You cannot forget – it marked me for life.”

If a liberator can be marked for life, I



Caption: Israeli Holocaust survivor Danny Chanoch and his daughter Miri from the documentary, *Pizza in Auschwitz*.

wonder, is it possible to survive the trauma of the Holocaust without having PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder)? Does this mean that every survivor has PTSD? Is that trauma passed along to their children?

I acknowledge that my father’s anguish became my anguish; his guilt internalized into me. I have made the Holocaust the focus of both my professional and personal life. Are these signs of my own stress disorder?

In the last two years, I have acquired two sons-in-law and one daughter-in-law. It has been brought to my attention that these children-in-law consider me to be, shall I be frank, “obsessed with the Holocaust.” [Note from eldest offspring Rebecca who is proof-reading this article: “I have introduced my mother to a group of educators studying at Yad Vashem as being obsessed with the Holocaust.”]

When Rebecca was only five and we were talking to one of her babysitters who seemed to know nothing about the Holocaust, I felt her little hands tugging at my skirt. “Tell her about Opa, Mom. Tell her about Opa,” she pleaded earnestly. I remember vividly her little girl face suffused with urgency and thinking something along the lines of, “Only five years old, and she knows her grandfather’s story.”

Even though I try to avoid conversations about the Holocaust over the family dinner table when my children visit, it seems that one or more has heard something related to the Holocaust or will ask me a question about it. They bring up the subject, not I.

Is it my fault that Holocaust events continue to make the news, such as the current trial in Germany of John Demjanjuk, allegedly the sadistic guard at Treblinka death camp, who was known as “Ivan the Terrible?” or as, one by one, stolen Holocaust-era art is restored to the family of its former owner? or the death of a prominent Holocaust-era figure such as last month’s passing of Miep Gies, who hid the family of Anne Frank? or last fall’s loss of the last leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Dr. Marek Edelman?

Have I, indeed, passed along this trauma to my children? Rebecca is the only one of my three children to live in the Bay Area. She willingly accompanies me to attend Holocaust events such as the screening of *Pizza in Auschwitz* and the recent

opening of the exhibit, “Our Struggle: Responses to *Mein Kampf*” at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. This fascinating exhibit will be the subject of a future column.

The Holocaust both inspires and motivates me: to pay tribute to survivors, to tell their story, to achieve. As someone who took up running in midlife, I use images of death marches to keep me going when I feel exhausted. If those valiant people could survive a death march, I could do one more lap around the track. When I was frustrated by my little children, I remembered the many hidden children or children on the Kindertransport who had their mothers robbed from them. Such flashes of memory challenged me to have a little more patience with my children.

Since I know so many whose lives were scarred by the Holocaust, I can put names and faces to many aspects of the Holocaust: Helen Farkas, survivor of Auschwitz and a death march; Herman Shine and Max Drimmer who together successfully escaped from Auschwitz; Gloria Lyon, survivor of five different concentration camps including Auschwitz; Judith Rabbie, a hidden child; Eric and Hilde Gattmann, child survivors; Paul Schwarzbard, hidden in a monastery; or Lily Robinson, a Bulgarian refugee.

Each story is different but shares the common bonds of persecution and the threat of annihilation. Like the stories of Purim and Passover, recounted every year in festive or familial ways, respectively, I believe the Holocaust is a seminal event in Jewish history, in need of ritual and liturgy that go beyond the many local *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day) observances.

The Holocaust and the subsequent birth of the State of Israel is no less of an event in Jewish history than the Exodus and the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Jewish people need to commemorate the *Shoah* in as emotionally healthy ways as we do the trauma of the Exodus, at yearly Passover Seders.

Judaism needs to develop a similar ritual and liturgy so that the Miri’s, Sagi’s, and Rebecca’s do not need to bear the burden of transmitting the story from one generation to the next, *l’dor v’dor*, by themselves.

The symbology of the Passover Seder transforms the bitter mortar of slavery into the deliciously sweet *charoseth*. What commemorative food could symbolize starvation? If Danny Chanoch were part of this conversation, I can imagine the twinkle in his eyes in his suggestion: “Why not pizza – especially, pizza, because it was never available in Auschwitz?”

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Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

The miracles of Passover

When we think of miracles, we naturally think about things happening that are not normal. For example, if we lift a book and then let go and the book stays where it is and does not fall, that is a miracle. It is a miracle because the laws of physics tell us that gravity will bring the book down. Of course we all understand gravity. We cannot exist without it. All of us would fly around like some "superman" from another planet. We would never be able to touch the ground or stay in one place.

On Passover we look at the experience of the Israelites crossing of the Sea of Reeds as some miracle because the sea parted, the Israelites walked safely to the other side and the Egyptians drowned. And that wasn't the only "miracle." There were the ten plagues and the march across the desert toward an unknown destiny.

During that journey we were fed *manna*, some mystical nourishment that had whatever taste we wished. We weathered storms and upheaval that caused us, on more than one occasion, to ask: "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that we were brought to die in the desert?"

Our first encounter with this destiny finds us at the foot of a mountain awaiting the message that has survived time. It is a message of completion. It is a message of fulfillment. It is a message of change. It is an eternal message.

Passover is a time of miracles:

There is the miracle of change. To say the least – change does not come easy. We resist change at every turn in our journey. We are creatures of habit and somehow we feel that the past is to be romanticized and cherished and any change to that feeling makes us feel uncomfortable. The past reminds us of a period in our lives when we were younger and healthier and capable of so many things that we are not able to accomplish today. That is frightening.

Even during our greatest triumph, the Exodus from captivity, we constantly regretted having made the effort because of the insecurity of the unknown. Our rabbinic tradition refers to the desert wandering as *Dor Midbar* (the generation of the desert) – the generation that witnessed marvel upon marvel and still regretted the decision to journey to a promise yet unfulfilled.

No matter what God does for us, we are not satisfied and even resentful. We can relate to these feelings because we reject change because we see in ourselves the inability to adjust in order to fit. We object to suggestions that will enhance

our lives whether from friends, relatives or God. God tells us that to grow we must be willing to experiment. And He does this with the "miracle" of everyday living.

Yes, change is painful and yet it gives us the ability to realize that what we encounter in our lives contains changes we don't even understand or recognize. We are not the same person we were yesterday or even a minute ago.

The one thing we should try to remember is that, as we get older, change is necessary for continuation, not stagnation. If we stayed the same – well, there certainly would be no excitement or anticipation. Now, more than ever, we need to adjust our thinking to accommodate all the changes we can absorb – not run away from them as our ancestors tried to do. Don't say: "Why can't they, our children and grandchildren, be like us?" Do we really want that for them or do we want them to grow and develop into what they can be for themselves?

Our rabbinic tradition refers to the desert wandering as *Dor Midbar* (the generation of the desert) – the generation that witnessed marvel upon marvel and still regretted the decision to journey to a promise yet unfulfilled.

This is one "miracle" of Passover that Torah endeavors to translate for us: growth and evolution. And for sure it is the path we should be involved with in the later years of our lives. We connect because of comfort and we expand those relationships because, as Scripture reminds us, there is no future without change.

There is the miracle of action. The *Midrash*, the teachings of the rabbis in explaining the meaning of Torah, understood God's message that when action is needed, we should not waste time praying. The People are at the edge of the sea, and their doom seems inevitable. What do they do? They start to pray for deliverance. The *Midrash* answers quite succinctly by stating that prayers are not the salvation but action – the action of putting your foot into the water – the action of faith. Faith in your own ability to overcome darkness by inserting light to show the way to freedom from reluctance is a "miracle" that cannot be provided for us, only we can do it.

Moses, at the very same time, lifts his rod and stretches it over the water and the sea does not divide immediately. It takes hours for the final step in the rescue



Emanu-El Scholar

BY RABBI LAWRENCE KUSHNER

Seder's Secrets

The late, great, comedian Andy Kaufman used to say that the only thing that separates us from the lower animals is mindless superstition and ritual. If he's correct, then, for many of us highly educated, liberal, assimilated Jews, all we have left separating us from the lower animals is seder! (It is easily the most widely observed Jewish ritual we have left.)

Most of the seder's teachings, however, are so intimately and brilliantly concealed within the ritual's mime, song, and libretto that most of the time we don't even realize how they shape our souls and our deeds, generation after generation.

Here, in the order they appear, are some of the seder ritual's *hidden* but primary teachings.

1. The seder must happen with as much of the family as possible and as many guests as can be squeezed in. (It's better with a crowd.)

2. Seder happens *around* a table where the celebrants eat a covenant meal. By sharing the same food, we create a primal covenant bond with one another and the food (i.e., the sacrifice) we consume. Consuming this sacred food makes us one body.

3. We practice delayed sensory gratification. You may *not* eat any bread or leaven. And, even more important, you don't get the main course until the story is told. ("When do we eat?")

4. But this sacred history of our deliverance is *not* told sequentially but, instead, as a *midrash* – free-associative, nonlinear, and often self-contradictory. (Do we eat *matza* because it's the "bread



to be accomplished, because it was not the "miracle" that was needed but rather the ability to realize that with faith all things are possible: The faith in oneself and the faith that God will answer if we are willing to step forward.

Sometimes we can't see the "miracle" of life and opportunity because we are blinded by insecurity. We doubt our ability to overcome hardship with steadfastness. Self-doubt can be debilitating and cause us to despair when all we have to do is turn the corner and witness redemption through the miracle of action.

And yet, even when we accomplish what seems impossible, the next time we encounter situations that cause us anguish, we forget, all too easily, the successes. Our euphoria lasts and our faith is strengthened until the next ordeal reveals itself.

The true test of our "miracle" of life is whether we are capable of remembering (see Wiener, page NAT 15)

of affliction we ate in Egypt" or because, as we fled, the "dough didn't have time to rise"?!)

5. *Everyone*, no matter how old, is a student. Indeed we literally ritualize the beginning of any good teaching by asking (four) questions. Alas, for us Jews, people who don't question are just dumb.

6. We invite all who are hungry to come and eat. We even set an empty place – perhaps for Elijah, but, more likely, for a beggar (who – what a surprise – is Elijah's guise of choice!)

7. The traditional Haggadah includes a passage from Joshua 24:2 reminding us that even our revered grandparents once worshipped idols. In other words, they too put their pants on one leg at a time and made some really stupid mistakes!

8. We remind ourselves that we were slaves so much that we identify with them. While we now live more among the upper classes, we vote with the lower ones.

9. The name of Moses is not mentioned *anywhere* in the traditional Haggadah. We Jews are not big on celebrating human heroes. Passover, in other words, is not Moses' show but God's.

10. It wasn't our ancestors but us! We mystically re-experience ourselves as *personally* having come forth from Egypt. A member of my former congregation in Boston once took a course in geography. She told me that the teacher asked if anyone had ever been to Egypt. My friend said she raised her hand and said, "Yes, every year – for about an hour."

11. In many religions, the god gets reborn (usually around springtime). But for us Jews, rebirth does not happen to God (who is beyond life and death); it happens to us, the Jewish people: We all walk into the sea as slaves, drown, and then reemerge on the distant shore, now reborn free men and women.

12. We stubbornly hope for one, final surprise guest: Elijah, harbinger of the Messiah. This messianic hope, in other words, is ritualized as an invisible guest.

13. We sing after meals. (If you can't read the lyrics in Hebrew or don't know the melodies, then sing anything but for the love of Heaven, sing something!) Those table songs (and games) are *how* we celebrate a holy meal – not watching TV or a movie, not surfing the web or listening to your iPod: Just folks singing and making fun of themselves and laughing.

14. And finally, we conclude our holy meal with the prayer, "Next year in Jerusalem" which, for us, means peace in Israel because, let's face it, if the Jews can have peace there, then everything else is just a piece of (matza-meal) cake.

A kosher and a zissen Pesach!

Rabbi Kushner is the Emanu-El Scholar, at Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco. He is the author of 17 books including *Honey from the Rock*; *God Was in This Place* and *I, I Did Not Know*; *Invisible Lines of Connection*; *Five Cities of Refuge*, and his first novel, *Kabbalah: A Love Story*. This is from *Emanu-El's April 2009 bulletin*. His web site is at www.rabbi-kushner.org. ✨



Notes from the Antipodes

BY DR. RODNEY GOUTMAN

Pesach contextualized

Well before post-modernism popularized and elevated gut feelings as the measure of value of all things, the Exodus from Egypt had already been appropriated by activists in all manner of causes as a template for liberation. Nonetheless, the Exodus is a core Jewish narrative that poses contemporary questions about the state of Jewish belief, identity, leadership, unity and place in an often hostile environment. This applies as much to individual Jewish communities as it does to the State of Israel.

In the past, the coincidence of Pesach with Easter and its accusations of Jewish deicide was a time of great physical danger for Jews where medieval Christian theology held sway. There was also the superstitious belief labelled "the blood libel," which claimed that Jews ritually murdered young Christian children to require their blood for the baking of matza.

This obscenity is now popularized throughout the Arab and Islamic hemisphere through television dramas. These have even been beamed into Australia by satellite via Hezbollah's station Al Manah, irrespective of protests by the Jewish community. Until now, regulatory authorities seem unable or unwilling to act against this defamation. However, there is a government attempt afoot to make the Australia Racial Discrimination Act cover online hate. Whether this can be used to stop the Al Manah transmission is moot. What cannot be doubted is that any attempt to do so will run the gauntlet of civil libertarians who believe in absolute freedom of speech.

Today the blood libel has been transformed in an updated version of the notorious *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The perversion of the blood of innocents in the matza has been sublimated into nouveau Jewish/Zionist conspiracy theory. Jews/Zionists allegedly now manipulate all manner of plots and disasters against humankind solely for the benefit of the State of Israel. Such ideas have become integral to the current discourse of the Left and its more moderate ideological acolytes, the racist Right, and rampant Islamists.

With the advent of Vatican II in the early 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church greatly softened its medieval view on Jews and Judaism. Unfortunately, the Orthodox Churches and a number of Protestant denominations and sects have not had a similar metamorphosis. Further, Islam's revamped version of Christian anti-Semitism is unlikely to weaken in the near future.

The Vatican in Rome is as much an independent political entity as the

headquarters of a global religion. Hence, it is more likely than not to follow its own perceived interests even in cases where human tragedy is unfolding, as happened during the Holocaust. Apologists for the silence of Pope Pius XII at this time when even Jews in his own backyard were being herded off to Auschwitz say he was merely protecting the interests of his Church against Nazism. Such a view is again expressed in the current Vatican/Jewish impasse over the inevitable canonisation of Pius XII.

Not unexpectedly, these contretemps have passed over the heads of most Australians for they have attracted little media coverage here. Instead, local Catholics and others have proudly focussed on their nation's soon-to-be first saint, Sister Mary MacKillop. Ironically, in her early years of religious service, she was given support and shelter by a leading Jewish member of the then colony of South Australia after running foul of her bishop.

The perversion of the blood of innocents in the matza has been sublimated into nouveau Jewish/Zionist conspiracy theory.

While Jewish concern has understandably been on Pius's public silence during the Holocaust, their attention has been deflected away from his outlook on Jewish national aspirations in Palestine. In his pre-papal life as Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli, this Vatican official was well versed in the Holy See's perspective of the ingathering in the Holy Land of those who it believed had been expunged from "salvation history."

Politically, the idea of granting any rights to these Jews stood against its drive to have all of Palestine, not just Jerusalem and the holy sites, under international mandate. Moreover, total internationalization would also have provided the Catholic Church with significant influence against the claims of the Greek Orthodox Church in the struggle for Christian theological authenticity and authority in the Holy Land.

Indeed, once the push for total internationalization seemed lost, the Vatican concentrated specifically on Jerusalem and the holy sites. On this score, Pius XII issued three encyclicals. They were *Auspicia Quaedum* of May 1, 1948, *In Multiplicibus* of Oct. 24, 1948, and *Redemptoris Nostri* on Good Friday 1949. The last was designed to block Israel's membership in the United Nations, to mobilize world opinion in favor of internationalization, and to restrict the self-declared fledgling Jewish state consolidation of its authority in Palestine.

In Australia, this move was led by Cardinal Dr. N.F. Gilroy of Sydney, who sought assurances from Prime Minister



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

Politics

While I was taking note of the votes on health care proposals in the United States Senate, I was taken even more by the show of party unity. We have not seen votes like this for decades. There was not a single party dissenter. And even though at the last, the Democratic Party had to "buy in" a few senators, it was a show of power. In parliamentary governments, in the United Kingdom and Israel, party counts, and voting against party results in not getting party support, usually resulting in defeat at the polls.

The United States Senate has, for years, had strong blocs of votes from left to right within the party, and to bring them all in line took a very determined effort, urging, coaxing, and arm bending. While there are some variances within the House of Representatives, there is a greater likelihood that they will vote party.

It was equally interesting to see that there was a determination made by the president and his advisers that even with a commanding majority, they could not hold out against a filibuster by the Republican Party. They needed the 60 votes. It has been some years since there was that kind of majority in the Senate, and all of those administrations passed legislation. Perhaps, it was because they did not have that kind of majority, that they began by negotiating. Now having lost the momentum, and finding the atmosphere changing, the president has decided to go back and see what can be salvaged. It will be interesting to watch the process when the Republican Party has to take responsibility for what it does in the coming election year.

While there are all kinds of polls going on, you have to know how to read the polls. In rallying against the health



Ben Chifley that there would be no slackening of the nation's support for the internationalization of Jerusalem and the holy sites.

Of more recent concern, Vatican self-interest is evident in Pope Benedict XVI's refusal to severely discipline his dissenting priest, Bishop Richard Williamson, for refusing to recant his Holocaust denial position. The reason for this seems to lie in his desire to bolster unity among his oft divided and troubled constituency.

Every year the story of the Exodus reminds us that it talks of events not frozen in history, but ones with modern resonance. Although, most thankfully, we have a Jewish homeland in Israel, many of the circumstances that confronted, confounded, and even at times deceived,

(see Goutman, page NAT 15)

legislation as it was, it does not indicate that the country wants to go back to where they were. Decency demands that we try to bring better health care to more Americans. It may be that the anger was expressed in this bill, but resulted from frustration with throwing our money at issues, and not bringing the results quickly enough.

The whole debacle, and it was one, should get the present administration to review its tactics. This president, who one year ago came to the office with such energy and hope, cannot just talk his way back into the hearts of the broad consensus he needs to lead this country in this time of crisis. He needs to step back, take a longer look at the governed, and begin anew. One area that definitely needs reworking is his speech writers. The president continues to speak too long, say too little that is memorable, and is not inspiring confidence. He has the skills to be a great communicator, but the results are not inspiring.

At another area of our concern is the step into our consciousness of J Street, a newer Pro-Israel, Pro-Peace PAC, which is vying nationally to represent American Jewry. It is not the goals of this organization that demand our scrutiny, but the long list of supporters, that many of you will find familiar. Names that have been associated with a whole group of other organizations much to the left of most American Jewish organizations.

The issue with their materials, available on their website, is the overabundance of responsibility for fixing what is wrong, and the understatement of responsibility for the fact that nothing has happened, is happening and perhaps will ever happen.

For most of my lifetime, the State of Israel has been willing to sit and talk with responsible parties about solutions to outstanding problems. What seems to have always been the block to progress are cultural differences. Israelis and Jews around the world seek justice, and the Palestinians and Arabs are focused on honor. Honor has meant, does mean, and continues to mean that unless we give everything back that we earned in a series of unwanted wars and the death of our children, husbands and civilian population, that there will be no peace.

There is a weariness with war in Israel and in the United States. We have seen too much death, but first we must find a forum and a government that wants to negotiate.

On a daily basis the world is witness to Arab terrorists killing Arab civilian populations in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Yemen, Saudi Arabia and on and on, killing Arab civilians, other Muslims, all in the name of "right." What chance does Israel stand in such a conflict? J Street has every right to put its position on the table. But in doing so, they, as well, have the obligation to find willing partners; and to tell us why they are optimistic that they will.

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The Roads from Babel

BY SETH BEN-MORDECAI

The "gods" of Egypt

"Upon all the 'gods' of Egypt, I will execute judgments – I – Adonai," declares God in Exodus 12:12. Quoted in the Haggadah, the passage evokes images of cataclysmic destruction – Egyptian temples and idols crumbling to dust. Yet, from Moses' first audience with Pharaoh to plead for the Israelites, to the drowning of the Egyptian army, only a dozen unusual events occur: A staff becoming a crocodile, water turning to blood, frogs proliferating, etc. These events must constitute the promised "judgments" against Egypt's gods. Linguistic analysis demonstrates how.

The fourth plague is called *arov* (ארוב). Its meaning was lost centuries ago, but some suggest it means "insects," others "a mixture (of wild beasts)." In early Hebrew, *arov* was pronounced *gharab*, which is phonologically related to the Egyptian word *khpr* and its variant, *khrb*, scarab beetle. Thus, the fourth plague is a plague of scarabs.

Scarabs are busy insects: A scarab lays eggs in dung, forms the dung into a ball, and rolls the ball into a hole in the river-bank to incubate. Analogizing, Egyptians believed that a god, Scarab, rolled the sun across the sky by day, pushed it into a hole in the western desert at sunset, rolled it inside the earth at night, and pushed it out in the east at dawn. Unlike most gods, Scarab dwelt in the interior of the earth, not on or above it. And Exodus alludes to the god's address: "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*, the plagues judge the Egyptian gods by demonstrating that Adonai controls the forces of nature ascribed to those gods, who control nothing. Yet speaking the gods' names would honor them. (Cf. obliterating Haman's name at Purim.) Therefore, the gods are referenced obliquely: The plague of frogs implicated Heqet, the fertility goddess whose name means "Frog," while the plague of lice implicated Sepa, "Centipede," who protected against insect bites. Unfortunately, Hebrew had no native word for scarabs, which do not occur in Canaan. Thus, to describe the fourth plague, the Book of Exodus had to borrow the Egyptian god's actual name, modified to fit Hebrew phonology.

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

Morton Gold to receive Kavod Award

BY KRISTEN SCHULZE MUSZYNSKI

SANFORD, Maine — At the intersection of faith and art, Dr. Morton Gold of Sanford has made his mark – and will soon be formally recognized for his contributions.

Gold, a composer and former Nasson College music professor, will receive the Kavod Award from the Cantors Assembly of U.S. and Canada, an organization that represents cantors in Conservative Judaism.

The Kavod Award is the equivalent of a lifetime achievement award in the field of Jewish music and the highest honor that the cantors can bestow on an individual. Only a few non-cantors have been recognized by the society in its 50 years of existence.

"I'm tickled pink to get it because it doesn't happen every day," said Gold. "Many of the cantors I dealt with...were outstanding...I suppose they got together once and decided they ought to acknowledge me."

Gold is slated to receive the award at the annual national convention of cantors in New York City this May. To mark the occasion, a concert of his original vocal works will be performed at the event.

Gold said he has written a total of 96 pieces in his lifetime so far – and he's still at it. Just last week, he completed a piece for a show in New York.

It will be only a slice of an impressive variety of works that Gold has composed over the years. In addition to many Psalm settings, chamber and instrumental works, Gold has composed seven oratorios, all with orchestral accompaniment, commissioned and performed, as well as seven concerti for various instruments.

"It's been my misfortune or maybe a blessing to be adaptable to different kinds of work," he said, noting that he has been adept at writing for and directing choral groups, bands and orchestras. "I haven't given a course on method for the xylophone, but I've done just about everything else."

Gold said he has written a total of 96 pieces in his lifetime so far – and he's still at it. Just last week, he completed a piece for a show in New York. He recently completed a

includes the full story of the Exodus in an accessible format. When not lawyering or writing, he tends his 20-year-old ocarina. Email: Seth@VayomerPublishing.com. ✨



Dr. Morton Gold, of Springvale, Maine, pictured in Biddeford in late January, will be receiving the Kavod Award this spring for his contributions to Jewish music. Photo by Kristen Schulze Muszynski.

bassoon concerto for a bassoonist friend, an anthem for the Sanford High School chorus and just last spring conducted the Stratford (N.H.) Wind Symphony. Along with composing, he occasionally works as a substitute teacher and writes music and arts reviews for the *Journal Tribune* and for the *Jewish Post & Opinion*.

Gold attributes his interest in music to his father, Leon, a cantor and actor whose experiences put his son in touch with the composers and directors of the 1930s and 40s. Raised in the Jewish faith, much of what he saw [and heard] was cantorial music.

"I knew people in the theater and several of them also wrote sacred pieces," he said. "It stuck with me and became an unconscious part of my musical vocabulary."

He still recalls clearly when he decided to pursue a music career. A friend of his father's, composer Joseph Rumshinsky, visited the family one night and asked what the boy would be studying. When he was told that Gold was considering a business degree, Gold recalls clearly that the composer pointed a finger at him and said: "He should better study music."

And so Gold went, to earn his bachelors of music in theory at Boston University, followed by a masters in music teaching from Harvard and later, a doctorate in composition from B.U.

Since then, the bulk of his work has been set around Hebrew sacred texts. The first public performance of his work was in 1953, during a concert of student composers at Boston University. His father, a tenor, sang in one of his pieces, "Shir Echod," while Gold performed on the piano.

During his junior year, he wrote a piece for a full orchestra, which took him an entire year to copy out into each instrumental part.

"It can be attributed to my stubbornness that I did it all," he said, recalling the tedious use of a mimeograph machine to copy the string parts.

Later, he was commissioned by a cantor

who knew his father to write "Haggadah: Search for Freedom," an oratorio based on the seder, which was broadcast on public television.

His career has been varied since, with many highlights along the way and a total of seven commissioned works. Among many other accomplishments, he performed with the Portland Symphony Orchestra; was assistant conductor of the youth orchestra in Boston from 1959–60; and conducted at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony. He is particularly proud of having his work performed by the Boston Pops – "sacred ground, so to speak" – which he conducted, in 1954 and 59.

"It's all very lovely, but one doesn't make a living for it," he said of his accomplishments. His living has come from teaching music, directing summer music camps and festivals, and from working as an organist and choir director at several churches and temples over the decades.

In 1964, Gold's career path brought him to Sanford, to teach music at the now-defunct Nasson College, where he conducted three oratorios.

He recalls that the administration was considering canceling his first performance there, for the perceived lack of interest. When the gymnasium was packed for the show, Gold no longer faced opposition.

He left Nasson in 1982 to be the organist at a large Michigan temple, but later decided that he wanted to return to New England and so spent 14 years as a Lutheran Church organist in Vermont. During those years he taught in the public and private schools and colleges in the area. In 2006, the Vermont Music Education Association awarded him a citation for services to music education in Vermont.

It wasn't until 2007 that he returned to Maine, to be close to his daughter and two grandchildren in North Berwick.

Though he has worked with a wide variety of musicians, from the professional orchestras to the community choruses, Gold said he was particularly impressed during his stint as a choral director in Vermont, by the amateurs who braved snow and ice to make practices for his chorus each week and dedicated themselves to learning his music.

"In music, the desire to learn or accomplish something counts more than anything else," he said.

Gold recently donated his sheet music and scrapbooks to the Jewish composers collection of the Florida Atlantic University.

"This way, I know it will be archived and well preserved," he said.

"When you're doing it, you don't think you're doing anything but...it adds up," he said of his lengthy resume.

This article was originally published in the *Journal Tribune* daily newspaper in Biddeford, Maine on Jan. 29, 2010 and is reprinted here with permission. City editor Kristen Schulze Muszynski can be contacted at 207-282-1535, ext. 322 or kristenm@journaltribune.com. ✨



Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

Another look at Terezin through song and sorrow

One of the most heartening aspects of the recent production of *Signs of Life* was its young audiences. On the morning we attended, students (mostly black, with a sprinkling of Latino and Asian students) filled the theater. Classes had arrived from two Manhattan schools – the all-girls' St. Michael's Catholic Academy and PM 34 Middle School (boys and girls).

The show in question, held at the West Side YMCA in Manhattan, was a new musical depicting the horrors of Terezin (renamed Theresienstadt by the Nazis). It was inspired by a visit producer Virginia S. Criste had made to Terezin, where her grandparents had spent their last days. With that memory in mind, she forged ahead with plans for a musical, commissioning composer Joel Derfner, lyricist Len Schiff, and librettist Peter Ullian, with Jeremy Dobrish to direct.

As to the finished product, the young viewers were clearly affected by the proceedings on stage, gasping when the brutal Nazis treated the Jews badly, and cheering when the Jews showed courage and cunning. How much this really meant to the young audience, we cannot say. Since they probably view the Holocaust as ancient history (much as we view our own Civil War), were they truly affected? (They are studying the Holocaust in class, we were told.) Or was it more like a cops-and-robbers, good-guys-versus-bad-guys show? Alas, we could not stay for the talk-back (since we were rushing to another show), and we'll never know.

For the show itself, titled *Signs of Life*, there is good news and bad news. On the positive side, the work is clear, simplistic, with sharply defined villains and victims. The message comes through clearly and is clearly accessible to young audiences. The music is pleasant, the story is moving, and the performances are competent.

Actually based on a true story, *Signs of Life* follows the efforts of one young artist. While she paints pretty pictures for the Nazis' edification, she secretly sketches the real conditions in the camp. As we all have learned by now, the Czech camp had been set up by the Nazis to convince the world that they were treating Jews decently. Calling it "a city for the Jews," Hitler had proceeded to fill the camp with noted artists, composers, scientists and scholars from all over Europe. Though the Jewish prisoners did, in fact, make a kind of cultural life for themselves, conditions were horrendous – with cruelty, starvation, random killings, and ultimate shipments



Officer Heindel (Allen E. Read) looks over Lorelei Schumann (Patricia Noonan) as she sketches. Photos by Joan Marcus.

of prisoners "to the east" (i.e., Auschwitz).

The story of this musical revolves around the young girl's efforts to get her pictures to the right authorities. The Nazis are preparing for a Red Cross visit, and, in that context, create a charade for that brief visit. Fake boutiques are created around the "village square," while children play ball, women knit, men smoke and try on new shoes. Nothing could be further from the truth. But the Red Cross visitor (in this musical, as in real life) is completely deceived.

The bad news about this musical is its very simplicity. What an opportunity this might have been for more subtle characterization and more emotional impact! We cannot help but compare *Signs of Life* to a play offered Off-Broadway last spring, called *Way to Heaven*. Though *Signs of Life* claims to be the first such effort to lay bare the story of Terezin, it is not quite true. The first



Patricia Noonan as Lorelei Schumann, Allen E. Read (Officer Heindel), on the ground Stuart Zagnit (Jacob Schumann) and Nic Cory (Nazi Soldier) in the back in *Signs of Life*.



Book Review

REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Entry into a once guarded private life

The Amos Oz Reader. By Amos Oz. Selected and Edited by Nitza Ben-Dov. Introduction by Robert Alter. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2009. Pp. 392.

We are beneficiaries of this representative collection by Amos Oz, the world's best-known Israeli author who teaches at Ben Gurion University though courted by Hebrew University. A peace activist, he is a member of the Israeli Reform movement.

The book's selections are grouped under four major themes: The Kibbutz – An Exemplary Non-Failure, Jerusalem – An Alien City, In the Promised Land and In an Autobiographical Vein. Because some of the offerings go back to the 1960s and 1970s, they might need revision, as is the case with the kibbutz's evolving saga and, conversely, Oz's consistent lack of attachment to a united, undivided Jerusalem.

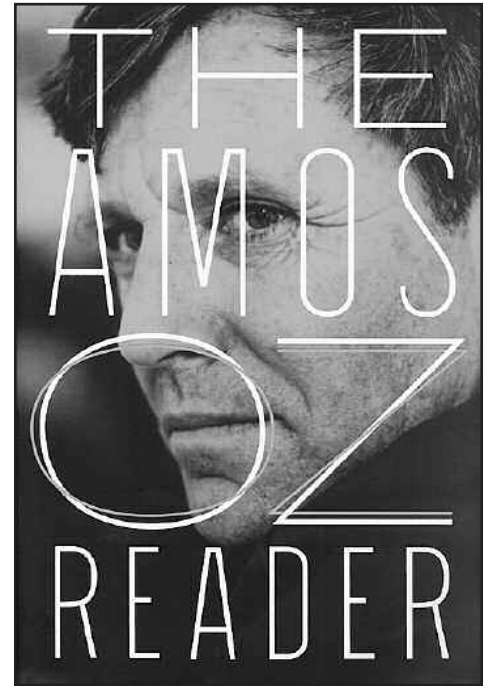
The kibbutz, the hallmark of a pioneering Israel, has been on the defensive both ideologically and economically in recent decades in a society transitioning from socialism to encroaching capitalism, with



musical, yes, but not the first dramatic look at Terezin. *Way to Heaven* was truly devastating, but *Signs of Life* – music and all – is merely disturbing.

Nevertheless, one is reminded once again of the Terezin story, and that is good. Statistics have indicated that of some 144,000 Jews sent to the camp, about 33,000 died there and 88,000 were deported to their deaths in Auschwitz and other camps. At war's end, about

(see Backalenick, page NAT 14)



heightened emphasis on the individual rather than the collective. It was to Kibbutz Hulda in 1954 that vulnerable yet determined 15-year-old Oz retreated from his native Jerusalem, and where his identity was reshaped symbolized by changing his European surname Klausner to the Hebrew Oz, befitting the courage of the kibbutz's re-born Jews. His great-uncle was Professor Yosef Klausner of Hebrew University, the famous scholar of the Second Temple period.

Oz's autobiographical revelations allow us entry into a once guarded private life and a possible connection with the public one, particularly the trauma of Oz's 38-year-old mother's suicide when he was only 12 years old. The author's negation of the Diaspora in the spirit of classical Zionism, which is based on the European experience, leads him to conclude in an uncharacteristic dogmatic style, "Therefore being a Jew in the Diaspora means that Auschwitz is meant for you" (p.237). I wonder if Oz would contemplate amending this fatalistic view expressed in 1967 in light of the Jewish American model as well as his growing friendship toward Germans and Germany.

Now reconcile the above harsh statement with the following one that better reflects Oz's vision. "I believe in a Zionism that faces facts, that exercises power with restraint, that sees the Jewish past as a lesson, not as a mystical imperative or as an insidious nightmare" (p. 252). The author is the very embodiment of Eretz Yismel Hayafa, that beautifully inspiring Israel and perhaps a bit naive, with its legacy of the Jewish people's humane values being tested in a demanding environment. The book's selections and editing are professionally illuminating. Introduction is by Professor Robert Alter of the University of California at Berkeley.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Va., is the son of Polish Holocaust survivors. He grew up in Haifa, Israel. ★



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

NCIS

At the end of the last TV season, when we last saw Ziva David, the Israeli agent working with the NCIS (Naval Criminal Investigative Services) crew, she was somewhere in the African Horn at Somalia being held hostage by a Muslim terrorist who demanded: "Tell me everything you know about NCIS." Her captors ripped off the Star of David around her neck.

Some viewers may have wondered over the summer whether Ziva (Cote de Pablo), a Mossad agent and daughter of the head of Mossad, would give up information about the American agency to which she was a liaison, actively involved in investigating cases.

Writers Jesse Stern and Dennis Smith, who gave us the spring cliffhanger, waited until the autumn to make that question irrelevant. For Stern had NCIS agents, Tony DiNozzo (Michael Weatherly), with whom Ziva had some romantic tensions, and Timothy McGee (Sean Murray), risk their lives to become prisoners themselves in order to rescue her, encouraged by their commander Jethro Gibbs (Mark Harmon). The Muslim terrorist, Salim, promptly injects sodium pentothal into DiNozzo, who is forced to spill every bean. True to her tough and principled character, Ziva has shared nothing. Yet for whatever reason, no one has cared enough to shoot her up with the truth drug.

Stern's message in this episode is that terrorists who let themselves like American fast food and football will become weak and fail. Has he given away State secrets regarding ways of tracing such things? Probably not. But he does offer nostalgic ways to figure out Israeli secrets. But in the first episode of the 2009-2010 season, he did contribute to leaving viewers with the impression that Ziva, like her half-Palestinian half-brother, was spawned by her father to do Mossad's work, including murdering her brother when the time came.

Come the first episode in the new season, Jews were treated to a nostalgic rendition of the Passover song, *Chad Gadya*, "One Little Goat," sung by two Gentile staffers (and, in a later episode, by a third at a urinal!). The point of this rendition was to indicate that it had been a code on Ziva's computer for a terrorist camp – the place to which her father sent her after pulling her from her work with NCIS. It seems that Dad continuously sacrifices his children, dispatching them into dangerous situations and ruthlessly pulling them from cherished friends and loyalties.

Little wonder that Ziva is lacking in social graces, even in the ability to express simple gratitude. When she is thrown into a common hell hole with Tony and

Timmy, her first comments are not only lacking in gratitude but are downright negative: "Out of everyone in the world who found me, it had to be you... You should not have come... So you will die with me. You should have left me alone." The notoriously rambunctious Tony shows infinite more grace and wit.

In the next episode "Reunion," written by Steven D. Binder, Ziva is fully assimilated into the likability of the rest of the staff by breaking with her father. Binder's witty banter between DiNozzo and McGee brings them to the top of the likability scale, almost on a par with Gibbs, whose virtues are sung by Ziva: "You were right to leave me in Israel, Gibbs. I had forgotten who[m] I could trust. We were a team, and I would like that again."

So Ziva must break from the untrustworthy Israelis, including her dad, in order to be liked and accepted? After all, she is reminded: "We [NCIS] rescued you. Not Mossad. Not your father." The "director" continues: "You're damaged goods. How damaged I need to know before I can even begin to figure out what to do with you. You pass the psych evaluation battery and we'll talk. No promises."

Meanwhile, all of Ziva's likable colleagues tell her that she must forgive Tony for killing her Israeli boyfriend, whether he was a rogue agent or not. Ziva corners Tony in a men's room (!) where he has been singing *Chad Gadya* (!). She tells him, "You had my back. You have always had my back. I was wrong to question your motives." She kisses him in gratitude after telling him that because she trusted her brother and her boyfriend (and, one might add, her father), all of whom betrayed her, she felt that she "could not afford" to trust DiNozzo. The suggestion is that by extricating herself from her Israeli experience, she has learned how to feel and to show gratitude. All this is happening while the team is discovering that a cold-blooded murderess named Elana Marcus has killed a few people who were in her way. Was this intended to show that an American woman with a Jewish-sounding name was even more messed up?

Ziva saves her most profound statement of gratitude for Gibbs, confessing to him that she had orders (from her father's Mossad organization) to kill her brother and to gain Gibbs' trust. But she does seem to suggest that the State of Israel, Mossad and her family are not as warped a mafia as events would indicate. She says that she killed her brother to protect him from being killed by others! Yet she also confides that when she finally pulled the trigger on her brother, it was to save Gibbs' life, not because of orders. She concludes that Gibbs is "the closest thing that I have to a father."

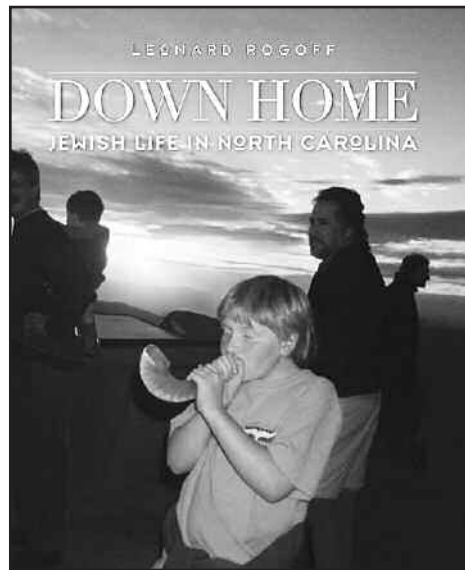
In a subsequent episode, "Good Cop, Bad Cop," written by Jesse Stern with a story by David J. North, "The Director," the African American department head who has a history of mutual respect with Ziva's father, warns her, "You have had two masters for too long." Mossad sends an operative,

Book Review

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Jews of North Carolina

Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina. By Leonard Rogoff. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. April, 2010. 432 Pages. \$35.



In recent years, a number of books have been published that deal with Jewish life in some part of the United States, such as Chicago, Boston, Utah, New York, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Texas, among others. The latest addition to the group is this new book, *Down Home*, which focuses on the Jews of North Carolina.

Author Rogoff, who lives in Chapel Hill, is a distinguished scholar who is well qualified to write about North Carolina Jews. He has published a book on the Jews of Durham and Chapel Hill as well as a number of essays on the Jews of the South. After earning his Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Rogoff taught for many years at North Carolina Central University. He retired to become the research historian of the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina. He is president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Rogoff did extensive research for *Down Home*,

Malachi ben Gidon, to bring Ziva back to Israel. He accuses NCIS of holding her hostage and then threatens that she will be branded a violator of Israeli law.

Still angry about his treatment in Israel after killing Ziva's boyfriend, an intoxicated Israeli operative, in self-defense, Tony taunts ben Gidon: "You should have told me you were coming, Mal... I hope we're showing you the same hospitality you guys showed me. I had a blast in Israel. Anyone offer you tea or coffee? We're out of gefilte fish." The dialogue given to Gidon does not help matters: "Do you really enjoy jelly bowls of carp, or are you merely being anti-Semitic?"

(see Gertel, page NAT 15)

collecting oral histories and locating letters, memoirs, and documents. He also obtained many photographs that are included in the book along with selected profiles, records, and reports.

The presentation is organized chronologically into six chapters, each of which deals with a block of years, starting with 1585 to 1776 and ending with 1968 to 2009. This format creates some repetition since a number of issues and developments transcend the chapter boundaries. However, this is a minor concern since each subject takes on different dimensions in different time periods. For example, a common theme is the transition of Jews from peddler to store owner that was a characteristic pattern through the years. It came to a halt more recently when sons and grandsons showed no interest in becoming retail merchants and when national chains overwhelmed local stores.

Similarly, the rise and fall of synagogues, which Rogoff discusses extensively, took place and continues to take place throughout the state as Jews move in and out of small towns. The circuit-riding rabbis who served some of these places are portrayed. Rogoff also traces the impact on the Jewish community of the changes in industry as cotton, furniture, and tobacco became less significant in the economy of North Carolina.

Such topics as Jewish organizations and the participation of Jews in civic affairs, including local government, are examined. Inevitably, since this is a book about a Southern state, Rogoff explores the relationship between Blacks and Jews. Also, the enigma of anti-Semitism is confronted. It is an enigma because there certainly was some evidence of anti-Semitism which Rogoff identifies frankly, but there were also examples of harmonious relationships. North Carolinians tend to be religious church-goers and many of them regarded Jews as the "People of the Book." Although not mentioned by Rogoff but worthy of note is the fact that in the 1980s, almost half the graduate school deans at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill were Jews.

Jewish attitudes toward Zionism are traced through the years, showing progressively more "tightened bonds" between Israel and North Carolina Jews. In one example, Rogoff cites "academic exchanges" and (full disclosure) cites my work in helping to start a school of social work at Bar Ilan University.

This book elevates the quality of Jewish histories that focus on a particular locality. Rogoff fully confronts the difficulties that Jews in North Carolina experienced and he skillfully traces their history to the present day when 26,000 Jews comfortably call North Carolina their home. This book will be of interest to Jews generally as well as to everyone who is curious about Southern history.

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. ✨



Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Coconut, almond, chocolate and more

Sugar free. Banana. Chocolate chip. The varieties are endless for this little sweet whose Italian (or perhaps French) origins relate to the fine paste that is its basic ingredient, almond paste, as well as ground almonds, sugar and egg whites.

Of course – it's macaroons, associated with Passover. The word macaroon comes from the French *macaron* and that from the Italian word *maccherone*, an Italian word for a tubular pasta that was the same color as the almond paste in macaroons.

Barbara Revsine (*Chicago Tribune*, April 16, 2008) writes in "Macaroon Migrations" that its origins go back to an 8th century French monastery. Others say it was probably Italian Jews who adapted the cookie for Passover based on one developed by Italian monks.

My research tells me that French macaroons are dense, chewy and flat; Parisian ones are light and sandwich a creamy filling; American macaroons use coconut not almond paste; and Italian ones, called *amaretti*, are sometimes flavored with bitter almonds, are crispy on the outside and chewy on the inside and are made with almond flour, egg whites and sugar.

How macaroons became associated with Passover is logical. Almonds are Middle Eastern and mentioned in the Bible. The basic ingredients of ground almonds, sugar and egg whites, as well as coconut, would fit the requirements for a flourless Passover dessert.

In *The World of Jewish Desserts*, Gil Marks writes that Ashkenazic macaroons were called *makarondelach*, and he confirms that Ashkenazic Jews got the idea for the flourless cookies from the Italian Jews. He also writes that among Sephardim, there is a denser and softer cookie called *marunchinos*, also made with almond paste and egg whites, and eaten for Passover.

Faye Levy suggests in her book, *1,000 Jewish Recipes*, that macaroon cakes baked in a Springform pan are a Passover tradition. At the cooking school in Paris where she studied, she was taught to bake macaroons on a paper-lined baking sheet with a little water poured under the paper before removing the macaroons. In this way, they remain moist. Another secret to keeping them moist is to prepare Italian meringue with sugar and water boiled to a syrup then poured in a thin stream onto stiff egg whites.

Claudia Roden, in *The Book of Jewish Food*, writes that Jews of Iran and Iraq make macaroons in a Turkish turban style and add bitter almonds, cardamom and sometimes rose water. Jews of Turkey and

the Balkans add rose water. Moroccan Jews make a similar pastry dredges in confectioners' sugar and serve them in paper cups.

Here are some interesting ways to make macaroons for Pesach.

Classic Almond Macaroons (Yields 20)

- 1 1/2 cups blanched almonds*
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 egg whites
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 4 tsp. confectioners' sugar
- cookie sheet with sides

**To blanch almonds: Place water in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add almonds and boil 10 seconds. To test if done, remove one almond with a slotted spoon, press with thumb and finger; if skin slips away from almond, it is done, otherwise boil a few seconds longer. Drain and peel. Spread in a single layer on paper towels and pat dry. When dry, grind.*

Preheat oven to 325°F. Line a cookie sheet with waxed paper or parchment paper. Grind almonds finely with 1/4 cup sugar in food processor. Add egg whites and almond extract and blend 20 seconds. Add 3/8 cup sugar and blend 10 seconds, add remaining 3/8 cup sugar and blend 10 seconds.

Wet hands; roll 1 Tablespoon dough between palms into a smooth ball. Place on cookie sheet and continue until all dough is used. Flatten each to 1/2-inch high. Brush each with water. Sprinkle confectioners' sugar on top. Bake 25 minutes until very light brown.

Remove cookie sheets from oven. Lift one end of paper and pour 2 Tablespoons water onto the cookie sheet. Lift the other end of the paper and pour 2 Tablespoons water onto cookie sheet. Tilt sheet to spread water. When water stops boiling, remove macaroons from paper with a spatula and cool on a rack.

Carrot Macaroons (Yields 24)

- 1 cup blanched almonds
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 egg white
- 1/4 lb. grated carrots
- 2 egg whites
- Pinch salt
- Pinch cream of tartar
- 1/4 cup sugar

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line cookie sheets with foil, and butter foil. Food process almonds with 1/4 cup sugar in food processor 10 seconds. Place in a bowl. Add one egg white and carrots. Beat 2 egg whites with salt until they are frothy. Add cream of tartar and beat until they hold soft peaks. Add 1/4 cup sugar. Add one quarter to carrot mixture then fold in remaining whites. Drop batter by Tablespoons onto cookie sheets. Bake in preheated 350°F. oven 15 minutes or until golden brown. Transfer to racks and cool.

Mini Chocolate Macaroons (Yields 40)

- 3 egg whites
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup coconut
- 4 oz. unsweetened baking chocolate
- 1/4 cup oil

Preheat oven to 325°F. Grease cookie sheets. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks appear. Add sugar and beat a while longer. Place coconut, unsweetened baking chocolate and oil in a mixing bowl. Fold in egg whites. Drop by teaspoon onto greased cookie sheet. Bake 30 minutes. Transfer to rack to cool.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food writer, and compiler/editor of nine kosher cookbooks including The Wonders of a Wonder Pot, Israeli Cooking on a Budget, Kosher Kettle and What's Cooking at Hadassah College Jerusalem. She lives in Jerusalem. ✪

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BACKALENICK

(continued from page NAT 12)

17,000 inmates survived. And of the 15,000 children living in the "children's home" within the camp, only 93 survived.

As we all know, the Holocaust tale must be told to each generation and certainly to young people of all ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds. And bringing *Signs of Life* to New York City children is indeed a worthy project.

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

Passover pressure cooker

BY SHIRLEY MILLER STEIN, MSW

Passover and guests go together like chicken soup and matzo balls. Boston attracts many folks who combine holiday visits with great sightseeing. Pesach is a little like winning the lottery. Suddenly you have more family and friends than you realized. Do you fly into orbit at the impending tumult?

When family and friends merge for holidays, personalities sometimes collide. Strong emotions lurk beneath the surface. Depression, joy, sadness and anger seem to tumble inside us like popcorn in a microwave. Grudges surface. We also grieve for family and friends no longer with us. It seems that the harder we try to put on a happy face, the more stress we feel.

The war in Iraq, increasing anti-Semitism and tensions in Israel add to our anxiety and worry. How can we best capture the joyous essence of our Festival of Freedom?

For most of us, Passover requires tons of work and attention to detail. Enlist the family. If possible, splurge on professional help. A little goes a long way. Avoid "victimitis." Take time out. Keep on track. If Pilates, pedicures and pinochle are habitual, stick with them. Like joy, tension is infectious. A calm demeanor promotes organization and success in readying the house, shopping and cooking. Soft background music helps as well.

Holiday foods and rituals evoke nostalgia and strong feelings as well. Do we serve rice to Sephardic guests? Do we dip or spoon the wine? Do we add a "feminist orange" to the seder plate? Trivia perhaps, but these matters can raise hackles. What time do we start and end? When do we eat? Who asks the Four Questions? Hebrew, English, Yiddish, Spanish? Do small children sit at a separate table? "But in our house, we always..." is a familiar refrain. If you are relaxed and confident, loving vibes should elicit consensual smiles.

Reunion with loved ones can be precious, memorable, even fun! Create your own traditions. Blend the old and new. If time permits, dig out old photo albums. Kids love to see relatives, friends and themselves in their "younger days." Laughter goes a long way!

At Passover, we take stock of our lives. Ideally, we treasure our many blessings. Life-cycle events and dreams for the future come into sharp focus on Pesach. May this year's *sedorim* be the start of a year of lasting peace, good health and *simcha!* *Chag Someach!*

Shirley Miller Stein has been married for more than 50 years to Dr. Ira Stein. They are parents of three grown children and ten grandchildren. Mrs. Stein is a social worker, freelance writer and community activist. She's currently director of Jewish Services at a nursing home in Canton, Mass. ✪

Letter to the Editor

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

28 Tevet 5770

Dear Editor,

I'd like to share a story with you that takes place in prison. Since being here I have become a *ba'al teshuvah*. I have spent a lot of time studying Torah, while incorporating the *mitzvos* into daily life. I have often asked G-d why I had to go this route. I'm in an environment where blind hatred and racism runs rampant, and anti-Semitism spreads like a cancer. If ever one could say "*shrer tzu zayn a yid*," it is me in this place.

Surrounded by the Aryan Brotherhood and their Nazi ideologies, I have had to constantly repeat in my mind Leviticus 19:2 "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your G-d, am holy." Despite my surroundings, I decided to make the most out of every situation and bring honor to Hashem through my actions.

One day I got a new neighbor in the cell next to me. As it turned out he was a member of the Aryan Brotherhood. I thought, all I need is him around to harass me. I asked G-d, "Why did you allow this person to be moved next door to me?" Despite our differences I said to myself I'll be respectful and keep G-d in mind.

One day I overheard him ask one of his "so-called brothers" for a bar of soap because he had no money to buy one to shower with. None of his "brothers" would give him one! I decided that I'd provide him a bar for free. At this point we had never spoken a word to each other. When I did this, it really took him by surprise. He assumed that I'd hate him because he is an Aryan Brotherhood member and I am a Jew.

This act of *tzedakah* opened the door for further conversation. He asked me many questions about being Jewish, as he had never met a Jew before. He had a lot of preconceived judgments about Jewish people.

Over the following three or four months, I have let him read many of my Jewish books because he was curious and wanted to learn. Through more and more dialogue, he began to better understand the truth and we became friends.

I'm getting ready to leave and this is the letter he wrote to me.

Dear Shlomo,

Hey I just wanted to sit down and tell you thanks again for everything you have done for me since I've been here. You have been a big help. I'm glad to call you a friend. My only Jewish friend. I will promise you one thing, and that is I will never judge and discriminate against your people every again. I was told before by the Aryan

Brotherhood to hate you and your people for many reasons. Unfortunately at that time I believed their lies.

I also want you to know that I quit the Aryan Brotherhood because I now see them for what they are. I wish I could go back and change the fact that I even started, but you live and you learn from the mistakes that you make. And I've definitely learned. Anyway this is not about me, it's about you. It's about me being thankful to you for helping me to open my eyes to see who your people really are and what you're about. The impression you made on me, I'll never forget. Thank you. Brad

After reading his letter again and again, I finally understood something very important. Wherever we are in life, if we allow the Divine Light of G-d to shine through us, darkness will flee. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, once said, "darkness is not the enemy just the absence of light."

With every event that happens in our life we have an opportunity to bring honor to Hashem with our actions. When we do so *tikkun olam* is in full effect and we can make a difference.

Months ago what seems like a curse (me being here), today seems like a blessing in disguise. I realize now this is the reason we are taught to bless G-d for the bad as well as the good: We never really know how things will turn out. But G-d has a reason for everything.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Sholem Aleichem, Shlomo Work #978813, WVCF, PO Box 1111, Carlisle, IN 47838 ✨

RIBNER

(continued from page NAT 3)

are, with whatever is happening in our lives, may we each be blessed with faith and know that God is running the world and God is good.

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

CHASSIDIC RABBI

(continued from page NAT 3)

We hope that *Moshiach* will come already, now! That will be the most wonderful birthday present for all of us. However, it will not happen by itself. It is up to all of us to make it happen. We have to do more Mitzvahs to bring *Moshiach* now!

Now is the time. Take a minute and think of some Mitzvahs that you can do, blessings to give me for my birthday, and send me a nice email about it.

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

SHAFRAN

(continued from page NAT 4)

A witness to the execution reported further that Mr. Grossman added two words before the lethal injection was administered.

I shuddered when I read them: "*Ahavas Yisrael*."

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Rabbi Shafan is director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America. ✨

DEKOVEN

(continued from page NAT 5)

other, our need to keep ourselves and each other in play. It is merely an act of love.

It never was a question of who wins or loses, as the cliché has it. The truth and marvel of any game has always been found in how, despite everything that divides us, we manage to play it, together.

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

KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page NAT 7)

the delegitimization of the Israel state. When one speaks of settlements, we need to talk about [Arab] state sanctions and incitement. When one speaks of Palestinian refugees, we need to speak of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. We need to delegitimize the delegitimization."

Sybil Kaplan lives in Jerusalem. ✨

WIENER

(continued from page NAT 9)

the past so that the future will contain the "action" necessary to move on and rejoice in the gifts with which we have been blessed.

Passover is a time of miracles. Passover reminds us that "Let my people go" is a clarion call for all people and for all time. And the miracle of that issuance is that as long as there is breath we will never forget the past because it is the secret of a "miracle" called the future.

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

GOUTTMAN

(continued from page NAT 10)

our ancestors in Egypt and beyond, still haunt contemporary Jewry.

Dr. Gouttman is a former senior academic at the University of South Australia, current senior political analyst with the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission (Australia's ADL), and associate of the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. He is one of the founders of the Australian Jewish Studies Association. He can be reached at rimgout@melbpc.org.au. ✨

GERTEL

(continued from page NAT 13)

The moral of the story is that wherever Ziva has gone, her father and his Mossad organization have steered her directly into harm's way and purposely made her look bad whenever she seemed to balk at their orders, or set her up for suspicion by her American colleagues in order to be able to control her. As Gibbs tells her regarding her father, "He raised you to be a soulless, ruthless killer." The implication is clear: Daughters of Israeli warrior fathers need to be rescued by American father figures who will utilize Israelis' inherited (?) warrior talents with more compassion and understanding.

By February 2010, Ziva had begun to advise the traumatized in an episode, "Jack Knife," about a murderous trucking company, written, not surprisingly, by Stern. Honorable but damaged ex-Marine Damon Werth (Paul Telfer) is paired up with Ziva when his buddy is killed. Werth is unable to move beyond terrible war experiences, not to mention steroids pumped into him to make him a better warrior. Ziva comments that she knows people who have been through such things (in Israel?), and that one can learn not to let such things happen again. (war, too?) Her advice comes across as rather trite and gratuitous, but it may have been inserted here because the episode makes a point of mentioning Ziva's intention to "move forward" and to "find the right path," as she advises Damon to do. "I'm in the process of becoming a sworn NCIS agent," she proudly proclaims to Damon. When Damon queries: "I thought you had to be an American citizen to join a federal agency," Ziva declares: "I'm also in the process of becoming an American citizen."

In the fall of 2009, NCIS became the most watched show in the country. Will this enable the series to tarnish the reputation of Mossad or of the State of Israel, or just that of Ziva's father? Do we have here a new genre in which American Jewish TV writers express a wish that young Israelis assimilate the likability of American military staff as depicted in TV dramas?

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek since 1988. He attended Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of two books, *What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television*. He has been media critic for *The Jewish Post & Opinion* since 1979. ✨



Musings from Shiloh

By BATYA MEDAD

Handicapped accessibility

Wed., Feb. 17, 2010

Our neighborhood synagogue has expanded and been renovated. One change is a new front door, and this one is set up for a wheelchair. Actually, we have two wheelchair ramps now: The other one is in the back to a "room," which is partially set up as a second *Ezrat Nashim*, Women's Section. (In Orthodox *Torah-based* synagogues, men and women sit separately.) The main *Ezrat Nashim* is a gallery/balcony. The stairs leading up to it are too difficult for many, young and old, with babies and physical handicaps/restrictions.



My son is opening a sports bar-grill in Jerusalem, and there, too, will be facilities for the handicapped. Today, it's the norm.

For those wondering why the Israel Museum is undergoing very major renovations and the only indoor exhibits are in the Shrine of the Book complex, it's to straighten the floor, make it all one level, instead of that once trendy step up-step down from room to room. In the 1960s when the museum was planned and constructed, nobody thought of easy equal access. The post-World War II world was young and healthy. The disabled were hidden and made to feel guilty for being different.

Actually, Israel was relatively good to the handicapped in some ways. In the 1970s I went to a concert in Jerusalem with a friend who needed a wheelchair. She had bought us two tickets and also told them that she'd need a place to sit in her wheelchair. She was given a great spot for her wheelchair and a comfortable plastic chair was brought for me to sit next to her. When she tried to give them the tickets, they told her that it was unnecessary, since a certain amount of space was allocated for the handicapped for free, as a service. I don't know what the practice is today, but she was amazed.

When we made aliyah in 1970, there were few elevators in Israel. Even large medical clinics required the ill and handicapped to walk up and down stairs. I'm sure nothing is perfect today, but the situation has improved.

It was worth the calculation

Today when I was in Jerusalem, I did my annual candy shopping. Yes, I only buy candies once a year, for the Purim *Mishloach Manot*, food gifts. I always buy by the weight, but the first stores I found were selling the little wrapped candies I like at one for NS1.

I was curious to see if it was a better deal, so I examined the package to discover the weight, just 30 grams. Then I tried to calculate the weight I would get at the per kilo price. I had remembered something like NS18, which according my calculations would give me just over half a kilo. That was pretty dumb of me; the price was much higher. Later when I found that all the stores were selling them for NS24. So, let's calculate: $24 \times 30 = 720$ grams!



Yes, that means that you're paying a lot more when you buy them one by one, rather than by the weight. The unwrapped candies are less money, but I feel safer with wrapped ones. I didn't find any price variations, and I didn't have the time to search all over.



If at first you don't succeed...

I'm trying again. Call this Part One, because after over an hour, only two pictures succeeded in uploading onto the blog. I wasn't raised on Israeli flora and fauna. I barely know the names of the plants I bought. My knowledge of fauna



is pretty general, like dogs, cats and birds. So, here are two out of the five pictures I tried to post. No, I don't know their names!



My little gmach (loaner)

It's customary in traditional Jewish circles to have a *gmach* for all sorts of needs. A *gmach* is a fund, collection, of something that gets lent out or leased for minimal money. Sometimes it's money lent at easy terms. I have an extra pair of reading glasses. Friends know about them, and sometimes, like today, I get a call: "My glasses are broken/missing. Can I borrow a pair?" It's a very easy, no-fuss way of helping people.

Solution to the "Women to the Back" of the bus dilemma

Sat., Feb. 20, 2010

This could very well be one of those pre-Purim jokes. I wouldn't be surprised if the *Jerusalem Post* had been conned when they published this piece about individual, portable *mechitzot* (curtains) for men to wear in airplanes to prevent them from seeing movies, women and such.

Let the men who insist that women should sit in the back of the bus, because they don't want to see them wear those "portable mechitzot" when traveling on the bus. The driver should just announce each stop in advance like in the subways or the Long Island Railroad.

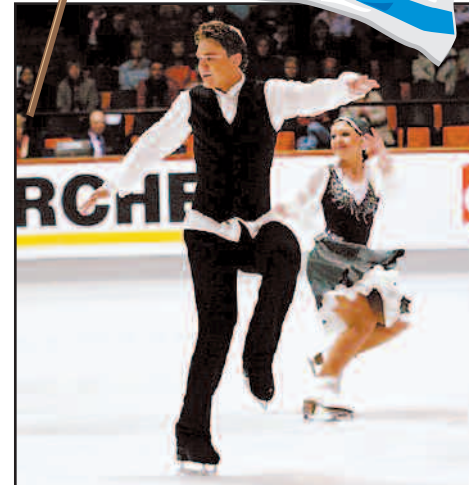
And don't forget the simplest solution for the man who doesn't want to sit next to a woman on the bus...stand. Yes, I'm serious, and I've told men to sit together to free seats for women.

There are two very important elements ignored on the *mehadrin*, women-to-the-back buses. One is *derech eretz* (proper behavior between human beings), and the other is old-fashioned common sense. On these buses, a man can't help his mother, nor can a woman help her father, nor a husband a wife.

Whether the "personal mehitzas" is a joke or not, there are men who live as if they're wearing a lampshade on their head for many years. I can never forget how some young *chareidi* men sat on the bus when a very pregnant me (almost 27 years ago) stood uncomfortably. An old woman got up to give me her seat. Very loudly, I told her that she needed to sit, too, but those young boys should be getting up for me.

I admit that I'm no rabbi, not all that learned in Torah, but there's no doubt in my mind that it's a greater mitzvah to do *chesed* (good deeds to other people) than to cut yourself off and ignore others.

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



Roman and Alexandra Zaretsky (siblings) of Israel skate to *Hava Nagila* in the Original Dance portion of the Ice Dancing competition at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada finishing tenth in all phases of competition and scoring a new personal best of 180.26 points.

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