

*The National Jewish*

*Passover Greetings*

# Post & Opinion

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Art by John J. Domont

## Editorial

The following by Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi is an introduction to his interpretation of the four sons in the Haggadah.

"The Torah mentions four times that it is important to share with one's child about the Exodus. The rabbis derived from Scripture something about the character of the children that suited their interpretation. But that's not the only possible way of reading the injunctions to share with our children. The rabbis also said that there are 70 facets of possible interpretations to Torah. Here then is another facet that may be closer to the way we might relate to our children in a more contemporary manner."

The interpretation below can be found on the Reb Zalman Legacy Project Web site at this address: [www.rzlp.org/wordpress/?m=200903](http://www.rzlp.org/wordpress/?m=200903).

The Torah speaks of **four children**: One a *lamden* (sharp student), one a *chossid* (high emotional quotient), one a *tamim* (good one), and one *she-ayn lo shum s'fekut u'b'eyot* (one who does not doubt or question).

When the **sharp student** asks: (Deut 6:20) "[What are the testimonies, the statutes and the laws] which *havaya* our God has commanded you?" and so you shall answer him or her according to the capacity of his or her sharpness of wit.

When the **high emotional quotient one** asks: (Exodus 12: 26) "[What is] this service to you?" So you will make an effort to reign in his or her longings, for he or she also wants to be a part of the integrity and perfection that comes with meaningful rituals. If you are loving, then he or she will understand *devekut* (cleaving), and he or she will get a taste of what it means to feel close to God.

When the **good one** asks: (Exodus 13:14) "What is this?" and so you shall bear witness to him or her from your own experience, that *hashem yitbarach* is assisting you with 'a strong hand,' to take you out and to take him or her out of *Mitzrayim*.

For the **one who does not question**, you will feed him or her some *maror* (horse radish), so he or she will feel his or her friends' troubles and so that compassion will be instilled in his or her heart.

After reading this and Bernie DeKoven's beautiful column regarding Passover being about "coliberation" verses simply collaboration and liberation (see page NAT 5), I had some thoughts relating to both. In both writings the way the game is played (the children are answered) depends on the different players.

It's interesting to note how the game changes depending on the ages of the players, their physical, mental or emotional condition at the time and many other factors. As in life, no matter how one plays the game, it is always a challenge.

## About the Cover

*The Search for Grace in the Wilderness* by artist John Domont is the primary calling of the self for a harmonious relationship with Life. The myth of Passover is a spring time ritual, as we leave the darkness of winter, of the womb, and exit through the birth canal (the Red Sea), we are born as individuals and as a people.

The primary need for relationship begins with birth. Passover is a time for union with self, body and the universe. The angel of death must be confronted at every level, whether it is cleaning yeast from the body. Microbes healthy and parasitic typify the confrontation of consciousness vs. unconsciousness, they support or thwart our wandering in the desert, the wilderness of life on our journey to divine union. We are responsible for how we survive in the wilderness, how we manage our bodies, our consciousness, and our prayers.

Passover is the howling of the energy of isolation and need, of fear and hope, and yet it demands action and faith.

### About the artist

In his late 20s, John Domont worked exclusively for conservation groups photographing threatened habitats and endangered species around the world.

(see Cover, page NAT 3)



As a young child or when one is very old, the desire to be better than the other player(s) becomes paramount. Because of this, when two of similar ages/abilities are playing, they both strive to win. However, if an adult is playing with a child or elderly person, the goal becomes different for the adult. The adult doesn't need to feel better by winning but wants to give the child or elderly person a chance to feel good about his or her ability to play. The challenge for the adult is how to let the young child or the very elderly person win the game without him or her suspecting that the adult is not giving it his or her all.

This "game" is similar if one of the players is sick, depressed, grieving a loss, handicapped, an orphan, a foreigner, and so forth, because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt and who knows when or where we may be strangers again. In other words, in the game of life, we must take note of the very young and old, and those needy in many different ways, because one day we or one of our loved ones may be in a similar situation.

My question this Passover is how to teach the children to simply do their best, not compare themselves to others, and to look out for the needs of others? I agree with DeKoven that adults need to practice "coliberation" or working (playing) together, making use of each others strengths and supporting each other's weaknesses and then we would be an example for the children to emulate.

Jennie Cohen 3-24-10. ✨

## Shabbat Shalom

By RABBI JON ADLAND

March 19, 2010, Vayikra  
(Leviticus 1:1-5:26), 4 Nisan 5770

Yesterday morning I went to get my haircut (what's left of it) at the barbershop in Greenbriar that is next to the Baskin Robbins and a few doors down from the new kosher bakery. Why am I telling you this? Because at the beginning of the haircut, Claudia, my barber, wanted to know why the kosher bakery needed to close for the week of Pesach. I explained that Jewish law mandates that no bread or any products made from grain that isn't unleavened bread be consumed during this week. A kosher bakery shouldn't be making products that are unkosher for Pesach, and the Orthodox Jewish community isn't going to patronize the bakery during that week at all.

There is always a lot of discussion at this time of year about what you can and can't eat at Pesach if you want to be faithful to tradition. What follows is from the Reform response. The Conservative position is similar.

*This Committee, in particular, in its approach to the answering of the she'elot (questions) submitted to it, has tended to uphold the standards of traditional practice except in those cases where good and sufficient cause exists to depart from them. And our movement has recognized for nearly two centuries that the prohibition of rice and legumes is just such a case. This observance, which presents a significant burden upon Jews during Pesach, has no halakhic justification: the Talmud clearly rejects the suggestion that rice and legumes are chametz, and the likelihood that our people will confuse legume dishes with chametz dishes is too remote to be taken into serious consideration.*

The responsum discuss the rise of the prohibitions that don't stand on any solid ground.

Okay, that point taken, it doesn't make it any easier for me, rationally or not, to eat these foods, but I believe that the Reform and Conservative opinions are correct; legumes and rice should not be prohibited. If you are going to take Pesach seriously and restrict your diet, it should be restricted to not eating the five grains – wheat, oat, rye, barley, and spelt – in any form other than unleavened. This means that any product that contains these grains is not permitted.

For me, I change my diet at this season for one week to feel in some small way that I, too, am on a journey with my ancestors out of Egypt. They had to pack quickly, take what they could, and eat on the run. (Not on the run like driving through McDonald's and getting a quick French fry fix.) The one week diet reminds me that the journey to freedom isn't easy and that to reach freedom, we must take a look at who we are, how we live, how we act, and how we behave. So for a week I eat fruits and veggies, eggs and matzah, meat and fish, and I don't eat bread, pasta, cereal, cake, or any of my regular diet of food. I don't eat out even though I possibly could. I eat my Pesach foods and when the week is over, the pizza is waiting.

I can only urge you to think about Pesach as a special week to think about what it means to be free. As a dear friend reminded me, freedom *isn't* just another word for nothing left to lose. Freedom is much, much more and when you aren't free to eat whatever you want, the journey has begun.

When you light your Shabbat candles this evening, light one for freedom. Light the other to remind us to never take freedom for granted, but continue to work on it each and every day.

Rabbi Adland is senior rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. ✨

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**Editorial and sales offices located at**  
238 S. Meridian St., Suite 502, Indianapolis, IN 46225  
office: (317) 972-7800 • fax: (317) 972-7807  
[jpostopinion@gmail.com](mailto:jpostopinion@gmail.com)  
**Address correspondence to:**  
238 S. Meridian St., Suite 502, Indianapolis, IN 46225

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# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

We are now in the month of Nissan, the month of redemption. Our sages said that in Nissan our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt, and in Nissan we will be redeemed from our present state of exile. We want Moshiach now. Every day we wait for Moshiach, especially now, in the month of Nissan. What can we do to make it really happen? First, we have to really want Moshiach.

The other day I approached the internal medicine ward in our local hospital. A patient called out to me: "Rabbi! I'm so happy to see you! I knew you were going to come." This warm greeting was a pleasant surprise. I looked up and saw Yaakov. Yaakov has been hospitalized several times these past two years. He is around 40 years old and seriously ill. Whenever we meet I try to help him as much as I can, to strengthen his faith and cheer him up. He started to put on tefillin every day at home, but when he is hospitalized he often needs my assistance because of an infusion in his arm or other treatments.

I helped Yaakov to put on tefillin. He read the Shema. Then he read out loud "I believe with complete faith in the coming of Moshiach, and even if he delays, I will wait every day for him to come." "Long live our master, our teacher and our Rebbe, Moshiach!" He looked at me and said "Rabbi! Where is Moshiach?" I assured him that Moshiach is coming soon. My answer did not satisfy him. "But Rabbi, I want him to come today! Now! This second!"

I was inspired, and a little embarrassed. It was quite obvious that Yaakov really wants Moshiach. I am a rabbi, and try to inspire people. Now I was being inspired. Now I was learning what Moshiach now really means. It doesn't mean soon, it means now, this second!

Yaakov understands that when Moshiach comes, he will get well. His suffering and all suffering will end. However, I also have good reasons to want Moshiach. So that Yaakov and all who are sick will get well. So that there will be no more suffering and death. All will enjoy great prosperity. There will not be war or any evil. We will find inner peace and be close to Hashem.

This is the beauty that I found in Lubavitch. The Rebbe, his followers, and the Chassidus that I learned helped me to find a degree of inner peace and come closer to Hashem. But whatever I have learned and achieved is only a taste of what will be when Moshiach comes.

Chassidus is a taste of Moshiach. Learning Chassidus is the best way to bring Moshiach. Chassidus teaches us the meaning of life, and of everything that happens in the world. We begin to understand what exile is, and why we are in exile. We learn what will be when Moshiach comes, and we get a little taste of it. Once we taste Moshiach, we want



# Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

## Nissan began March 15

This month of Nissan is the headquarters for newness. A sign that we are close to God is that everything feels new, full of wonder and possibilities. These are the precious moments in life when we may be doing what we always do, and suddenly our consciousness is lifted upward, our hearts open and we are filled with the awareness of the sanctity of life itself. We are so happy to simply be alive. This is a taste of the joy of Nissan.

The scent of Spring in the air makes us aware of the new life emerging in nature and that reminds us to pay attention to the new energies stirring within each of us as well. This is the month to leave our personal restrictions and move to greater freedom. There are significant life changes possible in Nissan. If you feel stuck in a life routine that is limiting, take heart, Passover is coming, Nissan is here. Nissan was the month when the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, it will be the month in the future when the final redemption will take place, and in every Nissan there is the hope and expectation that something new and wonderful will happen. In this month we celebrate the holiday of Passover. Many of us are already planning for where we will be for the Passover seder.

At the Passover seder we are reminded that the exodus from Egypt was not just a one time historical event. The Hagaddah says, "In every generation one should regard himself as though he personally had gone out of Egypt (Ex. 13:8). Metaphorically, we are still in Egypt. The Hebrew word for Egypt is *Mitzrayim*, which means "narrow straits" which represents all psychological, emotional, spiritual and physical constraints. While we are in the physical world, there are varying degrees of bondage that we experience. On Passover particularly and throughout the month of Nissan, it is a propitious time to free oneself from internal and external constraints, to make a personal exodus from our personal *mitzrayim*.

How do we really move forward to



more and more. Then we will do everything that we can to bring Moshiach now!

We wish everyone a kosher and a happy Pesach. We hope that this year we will all celebrate together in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, together with Moshiach. It is up to us to make it happen, to learn more Torah and do more Mitzvahs to bring Moshiach now!

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

### A visualization for greater freedom from Kabbalah Month by Month.

What does your *mitzrayim* look like? In what areas in your life do you feel constrained? Where would you like to experience greater freedom and expansion in yourself and your life. Draw a picture of a box or visualize yourself in a box. Then write or think about all the ways in which you are constrained and all the feelings you experience being in the box of your life. The way out of *mitzrayim* is to be in it and go through it. Write down what life out of the box would be like for you. Then take deep breaths and visualize that you can step out of the box. It is simple. You are out of the box. Breathe and absorb the feelings of being out of the box. Speak to God and ask for the strength to live more fully, more of the time, out of the box.

greater freedom in our lives? That is the question. The very rituals in the observance of Passover help us break through limitations and go forward in the ways that our soul yearns to do. We cannot do it alone. We need to receive divine assistance. We need to forge a stronger connection with God through prayer, meditation, and doing acts (*mitzvoth*) that place ourselves in alignment with Divine blessing. We feel most alive and vibrant when we are connected to God. Give yourself time each day in personal prayer to stand in the question. What does God want of me? Listen carefully to what opens within you.

In this month of Nissan, it is particularly important and helpful to watch your speech. The healing dimension for this month is speech. It is through our speech that we redeem or enslave ourselves. We create our reality through our speech. Be sure to take time each day to express your gratitude to God and people around you. A word, a look, a gesture of appreciation, a blessing to another person just for being in your life can be a holy passport that opens gates for greater freedom for each of you. We may never know how precious words of blessing and appreciation are to both the giver and receiver.

King Solomon said in Proverbs, "A man's belly shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth. Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Make a strong effort to increase virtuous speech and eliminate loathsome and forbidden speech such as speaking ill of others. Remember that you also have the right to limit what you hear from others as well. You do not have to listen to *loshon hara* (gossip). Note how your energy increases when you engage in virtuous speech and how your energy decreases when you speak ill of others. The therapist in me wants to remind people to make "I" statements, to take responsibility for one's feelings rather than vent one's frustrations and blame others for the feelings that are clearly your own.

(see Ribner, page NAT 15)

### COVER

(continued from page NAT 2)

He photographed so many different mammals in water habitats that water became a primary focus for his artistic endeavors.

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

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

Domont works in the Heartland, his home, where roads, pastures, fields, and forests are the essence of the landscape of the American Midwest. This countryside is both simple and nourishing. It is in the basics of the landscape that one can see and feel the beauty of the essential – the elements of land and sky, of nature and humanity coming together. Rather than portraying the realism of the country scene, Domont is in pursuit of the experimental expression. When one stands alone in a field with grain and sky, wind and color as companions, an experience of unity can occur.

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

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

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

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

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



## Torah Teachings

BY RABBI YISRAEL GETTINGER

### Tzedaka in the face of disaster fatigue

*Question: The response for assistance to victims of the earthquake in Haiti – where there were scenes of massive destruction and suffering – was overwhelming, with numerous religious organizations from Indiana sending money, food and medical teams. With a second major earthquake having occurred in Chile, how should people of faith respond and avoid giving in to a sense of “disaster fatigue”?*

First, we should try to avoid the mental callousness that requires a breaking news headline to make us respond to the very great needs in our world. The wonderful power of instant communication today should not let us forget the tragedies that happened yesterday, or even five years ago, like the Asian tsunami that left over 200,000 people dead.

I officiate at funerals, and I see the devastating impact of the tragic loss of one person on a family and a community, a loss that does not diminish quickly, or because there is another funeral the next day. It is hard for us to fully comprehend the impact of so many lost lives and the loss of whole communities. The need for our compassion and our charity dollars, our time, our kind words and our helping hands is everywhere, in the world and in our own communities.

It is also not natural disasters that should be our greatest fear. Our greatest fear is human evil – people without a conscience who can commit acts of terrorism or destroy lives for their own selfish agenda. Human beings are capable of great goodness, as we see in the response to Haiti, and of unspeakable evil, as Jews have experienced firsthand.

For Jews, charity is not a choice, but an obligation. The word *tzedaka* in Hebrew means not just “charity,” but “justice” or “righteousness.” Every Jewish family is obligated to give what they can, and it is a custom to keep a *tzedaka* box in the home, where spare coins are dropped for charity. The Talmud teaches “Even a poor man who himself survives on charity should give charity.” It is therefore not surprising that Israel was one of the first countries to respond with aid to the disaster in Haiti, including a field hospital and a search-and-rescue team, and that numerous Jewish organizations are continuing with relief efforts there. Israel and Jewish organizations have also responded to the earthquake in Chile.

How do we avoid “disaster fatigue”? Do emergency room doctors give up when they are exhausted, even though more accident victims are on the way? As long as the need is there, we are called to



## Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

### Next year in Jerusalem: The Jewish mantra for hope and action

Passover in Israel is a magical time of year. The winter rains and chilly air are replaced by a flurry of activity and sense of renewal that is unequal to any other season. Flaming poppies, black-eyed Susans and Queen Anne’s lace fill the fields, while birds travel back to the Hula Valley to build their nests. In the north the Baniyas River, swollen with winter rains, tempts even the most timid nature lover to take off her shoes and socks and feel the springtime mud squish between her toes.

But it is not just winter waking up to spring that intrigues me. It is the transition of a country moving from *chametz* to *matzah*, a country in the process of cleansing itself that makes me marvel at the power of Jewish tradition and faith.

On the eve of Passover during the year I lived in Israel, I walked with my husband for more than three miles from our apartment in Baka to Mea Shearim, Jerusalem’s famous religious neighborhood. The city was working double-time to get itself ready for Passover and Shabbat, which fell on the first seder night. The clanging of pots and dishes resonated as restaurants and bakeries frantically labored to convert their kitchens for Passover. A symphony of sounds accompanied us as we moved through the streets. People laughing, babies crying, closet doors banging, horns blasting; the air was charged with energy and purpose. But the smell was what got to me. The dense



respond, to do what is right, and not let our emotions get in the way. We can even harness our feelings of frustration or despair and channel them into energetic and compassionate acts that make a difference. Our sages teach, “You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.”

We should also take time to recognize our obligations to G-d and to our loved ones, to count our blessings, and to say “thank you.” We must pause and recognize that our own lives are fleeting in a greater universe of time and space. Even when the earth moves and oceans swell, we are reminded that the world is G-d’s creation, and it is a masterpiece.

*Reprinted with permission from the Indianapolis Star March 13, 2010.*

*Rabbi Yisrael Gettinger serves as the rabbi of Congregation B’nai Torah and also as the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Rabbi Naftali Riff Yeshiva, both in Indianapolis, Ind. ✨*

smell of the last vestiges of burning bread products hovered over us like a cloud, reminding me of fall leaf burning in New Jersey when I was a child.

Huge cauldrons of boiling water lined Strauss Street so that people could *kasher* their pans and utensils for the holiday. I thought of our tiny Jerusalem kitchen and how, earlier in the morning, my family and I had spent hours soaping down the counter tops and washing out the cabinets. We felt so clean and tidy afterward, “all spic and span” as my mother would say. There was something deeply gratifying about the process of cleaning up our home, as if we had lined our nest with downy, new feathers. We put our house in order, just as the seder creates an order to the telling of the Passover story.

As we walked home along King George St., we watched the city in its closing moments of cleansing; a community making its way from winter to spring, dark to light, *chametz* to *matzah*. The streets were hushed; the smells of burning bread and cake all but gone.

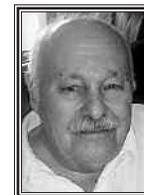
I understood for the first time the longing that for centuries has dominated the Jewish heart and spirit. *Next year in Jerusalem* is not only a physical call to bring people from all over the globe to the most holy city in the world. It is a call to inspire all Jews, as a community of people, to work together to bring a sense of order and renewal, a sense of purpose and optimism to our lives, our future and our world.

This year as we sit at our Passover table and retell the story of Jewish redemption from slavery to freedom, let us remember not only our history as Jews but our obligation to act with justice and compassion within it. Let us recall not only our treacherous escape from Egypt (*Mitzrayim* in Hebrew, which also means narrow straits), but our own fight to escape the narrowness, prejudice and bigotry that can enslave our own thoughts and actions today.

And when we close our seder singing the words “next year in Jerusalem,” may they inspire us to continue to fight to protect the people, land and values that throughout history have imbued the Jewish people to endure at all costs. Because if the spirit of “next year in Jerusalem” loses its hold on us, then terrorism, political strife and economic hardship will not be the reason we do not succeed. We will have done it to ourselves.

*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. ✨*

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## Secondhand blogs

BY ED WEILAND

### Memories of seders past with Uncle Lou and Aunt Dora

Of all the holidays I remember from my childhood, seders at Uncle Lou’s and Aunt Dora’s Cincinnati home for the many members of the Weiland family fill a special place in my heart. Their spacious home was blessed with the festive holiday, the incredible bounty of traditional seder foods and the aroma that dominates Jewish homes everywhere throughout the world during Passover week.

Nothing can compare with chicken soup simmering in the pot with *matzah* balls and carrots swimming in a sea of greens, a variety of veggies complementing tender pot roast with deep brown gravy. And seltzer water to wash the good food down.

It’s impossible to recall how many joined in the seder observance and the endless flow of Passover delights, cakes and assorted sweets – almost none catered or commercially prepared – created by Aunt Dora’s pastry chefs throughout the seven days of Passover.

Passover, a time to meet, to greet, to eat, to thank God for the bounty for which we are blessed, to read and repeat the stories in the Haggadah of our ancestors’ struggles to be free to live and worship God as did their forefathers in centuries past. It is similar in many ways to the American Thanksgiving that celebrates what America and religious freedom in a land of equality sometimes take too much for granted.

Of course, Uncle and Aunt Dora and members of their immediate family have passed away, and the Weilands and many of their heirs have migrated to cities near and far from their Cincinnati roots.

Uncle Lou’s home probably no longer is filled with the Passover perfume of chicken soup and *matzoh* balls, the highlights of seder delights, the joy and the cheer, the oft repeated prayers shared by Jews everywhere, in homes, in congregations, in America and in nations far and near.

And the voice of Uncle Lou still echoes in the hearts and minds of Weilands everywhere – “Next year in the holy land of Israel.”

*Ed Weiland of Indianapolis, Ind. lives in MorningSide, a senior living community. After nearly 50 years as a newspaper reporter and editor he retired from daily journalism and became the editor of a Florida magazine for several years until it went bust. Now he has returned full-time to his first love, poetry, and has developed a unique new style of verse, which he calls Rhyme on Rhyme on Rhyme. He has written nearly 1,000 verses on a wide range of topics – go to: wegads.blogspot.com. ✨*



## Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

### A seder fit for a prince

Everybody wanted the Prince to stay with them for Passover. He was coming with his friend, Elijah. After years of anticipation, he announced his first visit to the district. Everyone from the mayor to the girl who swept out the bakery shop knew and admired his Highness – but only by reputation. No one had met him, but everyone had heard stories of his courage and his sense of justice; how he defended the people of the district from bandits, predators, and government tax collectors, how he would give a hearing to the poorest of his subjects if he suspected that wrong prevailed over right.

It had long been rumored that one day, in early Spring when the river was ice-free, when the apple trees bloomed like pink clover, when the young lambs skipped on the hillsides, that HE, the Prince, would come for the holidays.

**“The main course at the Pesach meal will be boiled potatoes!”**  
**But the prince looks up, and he indicates a desire to inspect the home of Yankel the wood chopper.**

But “where would he stay?” one hundred villagers milling around his house, shouted at the mayor. “With me, of course,” replied the mayor. “He wants luxurious surroundings and a seder with rich, well-cooked food and proper ceremony. And where in this crummy town would you find such a festive but proper Passover, except at my house?” Several of the town’s bankers and merchants were quick to answer the mayor’s rhetorical questions. “IN MY PALACE,” they all shouted at once. And it was true. Their homes on the outskirts of the village, high in the hills, were fit for royalty. And their luxurious Passover seders were the envy of the district.

“A prince needs a palace,” they declared. He would only be happy in a palace. “If we put him up with some peasant – sharing a bed with two aunts and a goat and three chickens, eating matzah and borscht three meals a day – he would never return to our village.”

Well, the mayor and the leading citizens

of the town were not unreasonable. And everyone desired to please the prince. So, finally they decided to show their royal guest the various accommodations and let him choose.

The very next day when the sky and the crocuses along the road blazed in a shade of blue rarely seen on the palettes of artists, the prince – with his friend, Elijah – strolled into town. A crocus was in his buttonhole. “I couldn’t resist, such a glorious day. And so many more to come,” he said with a wink. Whereupon the children of the village, who seemed to recognize him, ran to the roadside and picked armfuls of blue to please their visitor.

After a welcoming speech of many words by the mayor (in which he unfairly lingered over the comforts of his home) the royal visitor was escorted to the home of the mayor. You should know that his wife – like all of our wives – had prepared for the inspection with scrubbing and soaping and sweeping that had not left a crumb on the floor or a dust mote floating in the air. The guest of honor inspected it thoroughly, as the mayor and his family nervously watched. After 30 minutes of poking in corners, inspecting his fingertips for dust and bouncing on the 100%, not rag, but cotton mattress, he wrinkled his brow. “No good,” he stated softly, but clearly. With the mistress of the house looking on in horror, the prince added a brief explanation, “Not clean enough for our seder.”

The merchants grinned with glee and steered the prince, almost hastily, to their stately palaces. Chandeliers sparkled and the fireplaces perfumed the air with roasting oxen such as that Abraham had prepared for his angelic guests. The heavy and expensive cherry wood divans and armchairs gleamed with fresh wax. Upstairs, the featherbeds, like soft clouds, waited to comfort the guest. This haven had been prepared not by a housewife, but an army of servants.

Still, after a most careful examination the prince rejected the palace. And the next one, too. By way of explanation he announced that they were not clean.

The crowd that followed the prince moaned with grief. There was no fit habitation for him – he would return to his homeland.

But David, the Hochem, the wisest man in the district, had an inspiration – an idea. “Wait, my friends,” – speaking to the townspeople as well as the prince – “He hasn’t seen the home of Yankel, the wood chopper who lives besides the road to Litovsk.” The last part of his statement was drowned out in groans and whistles and shouts of disapproval.

“He lives like an animal,” shouted someone.

“My goats live in a barn cleaner than Yankel’s hut.”

“Yankel’s shack is so overcrowded with poor relatives that last week three cousins fell out the windows.”

“The main course at the Pesach meal will be boiled potatoes!”

But the prince looks up, and he



## Funsmith

BY BERNIE DEKOVEN

### Free to be together

Dear Mr. Funsmith,

I was reading your excellent *Deep Fun* site ([deepfun.com](http://deepfun.com)) and came across your idea of “coliberation.” Thinking of Passover, as I have been for the last several months, it occurred to me that you might have something to say about the Exodus. It seemed to me that the kind of freedom the Israelites came to rediscover is much more accurately described by what you talk about when you say coliberation. So, nu? Israel Tsochek

Dear Mr. Tsochek,

What a wonderful connection! I never, until now, thought about coliberation in connection to the Exodus and Pesach. Maybe it’s because I sometimes get too serious about the holidays, and probably overly concerned that some people might



indicates a desire to inspect the home of Yankel the wood chopper.

In fact, the crowd was correct. The wood chopper’s home was terribly overcrowded because the soft-hearted Yankel could refuse a bed to no one. Relatives, the homeless, itinerant holy men who traveled the road by his front door. With him, it was Pesach all year ‘round. He could not feed them meat cakes and gravy, but there was always a roaring fireplace and plenty of thick porridge and, in truth, only one cousin had ever fallen out of the bedroom window.

The prince marched down the dusty road to the humble cottage. David, the hopeful wise man, led the way. Behind them hundreds of peasants muttering, “Oy, oy, oy. The mayor’s home and two palaces were not good enough and now we show him this home for roaches.”

But the minute the prince saw the cottage by the roadside he smiled for the first time. He entered and carefully inspected the dirt floor, the cobwebbed walls, the fleeing roaches as he entered the rooms.

“How clean, how pure. Here, I will stay.”

David, who was as pious as he was wise, felt the hair on the back of his neck bristle and later he swore to friends that he could hear the singing of angels. He knew the *Moshiach* had come to spend his Pesach in this house by the side of the road.

Ted Roberts, a Rockover 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](http://www.wonderwordworks.com). His collected works *The Scribbler on The Roof* can be bought at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [lulu.com/content/127641](http://lulu.com/content/127641). ★

think I’m being disrespectful with all this fun stuff.

I first understood the idea of coliberation when I was playing a game of ping pong. So you can understand why the ping pong/Pesach connection might not have been immediately apparent to me.

My friend Bill was so much better of a player than I that there was actually no reason for us to even try to play a “real” game. Playing for points was clearly pointless. So we decided instead just to see how long we could keep the ball from falling off the table. It was a perfect challenge for each of us. For Bill, just getting the ball to hit my paddle was an exercise worthy of his years of “pongish” mastery. And for me, it felt like I was really playing something very much like ping pong with something very similar to actual competence. After half the night of this, we managed to sustain an almost infinite volley, hitting the ball back and forth that we actually lost count. I remember how the ball seemed to get brighter, to take on its own life; how our playing seemed to take on an intimacy, an encompassing wholeness.

Something happened to us during that game. There was some kind of shared transcendence that made us each feel just about as big, ME-wise and WE-wise, as we could get. Larger than life. Enlarged by each other’s largesse. Beyond time.

Let me draw you a picture.



On one axis we have ME. On the other axis, WE.

The higher or farther out we go on each axis, the more fun it becomes to be a ME or WE. The closer in, the less.

When the WE and ME are in balance, there is what you might call an experience of “mutual empowerment,” what I call “coliberation.” This is indicated by a channel, diagonally equidistant between ME and WE. Here the fun things happen. And here, when we’re really playing and really together, when collaboration is at its best, so are we.

I like the word – “coliberation.” It’s cute, because it almost sounds like something beyond “collaboration.” But “liberation” is only part of the truth. It’s about freeing each other from whatever constraints we usually impose on each other, and on ourselves.

The experience of coliberation becomes more powerful as each participant becomes more thoroughly engaged, more

(see DeKoven, page NAT 15)

## Parsha Perspective



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

### Why keep kosher – what's the point?

We read in the Torah, "...Adonai spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them: Speak to the children of Israel, saying: These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are living on the earth" (Leviticus 11:1-2).

The text then goes on to list all the permitted and forbidden animals.

We learn that permitted animals must have a split hoof and chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales. Elsewhere in the Torah we learn that we must not boil a kid in its mother's milk, which the rabbis interpreted to mean that we must not mix meat and dairy products (Deuteronomy 14:21). And, of course, we know that rabbinic law sets stringent standards for the slaughtering of animals and the *kashrut* (ritual fitness) of cooking utensils.

There is a rather surreal quality to these commandments and rabbinic ordinances, since probably more than 80 percent of American Jews ignore them. We often hear their reactions: "It's an outdated tradition." "It's an irrational law that I see no need to subject myself to." "It would place unreasonable limits on my lifestyle." "It would create distance between my family and friends and me." "Why keep *kosher* – what's the point?"

It's that last reaction that's probably the most revealing, because the overwhelming majority of Jews who don't keep *kosher* misunderstand the point of *kashrut* – the regimen of dietary laws specifying what is fit for Jews to eat.

The most common misunderstanding is that the purpose of *kashrut* is to foster health and hygiene, so of course keeping *kosher* is no longer necessary.

Apart from misunderstandings about *kashrut* that explain its disfavor among modern Jews, we also need to acknowledge that it's inherently problematic as a *ritual commandment*.

Those two words – "ritual" and "commandment" – have an extraordinary amount of baggage in the modern world. The last half-century, especially, has witnessed a sharp decline in the understanding and acceptance of ritual. Likewise, there has been an increasing resistance to the idea of commandment – the "you-can't-make-me" mindset that venerates personal autonomy, material and sensual satisfactions, and emotional and physical comfort above *everything* else.

It reminds Rabbi Moshe of a conversation he had many years ago on an airplane while waiting for his flight to take off. He

was sitting next to a couple; they were in their late thirties and had two teenage children. Several minutes into the conversation they asked him what he did for a living, and he answered that he was a rabbinical student. They were obviously incredulous, with expressions that seemed to say, "Funny, you don't look like a religious fanatic." That led to talk in which they revealed their impatience and irritation with commandments and ritual.

It prompted Rabbi Moshe to tell a hypothetical story about a group of employees flying to Europe on a company tour. Their plane crashed in the Atlantic Ocean and, as it turned out, it took five days before they were rescued. A few died, but most survived. After they were rescued and all the survivors had recovered, the company held a special ceremony, which was led by clergy from several faith traditions. There was an outpouring of thanks to God in song and prayer by and for the survivors. Those who died were remembered and memorialized. Those who had acted selflessly and courageously were honored. And every year afterward the company held a special memorial ceremony that all employees were strongly encouraged to attend.

Not surprisingly, none of what Rabbi Moshe related was offensive to his traveling companions.

Certainly it was a narrative about ritual, even commanded in the sense that it became company policy, but they and probably we too find it acceptable – possibly even uplifting – because we understand its connection to our lives.

It uplifts us by allowing us to confront and express our feelings and thoughts about the ineffable, that which ordinarily we cannot describe or express. We accept that in a sense we are commanded to participate, not because we can't refuse – that option is obviously available to us – but because on some level we understand the consequences of ignoring the ineffable, of becoming spiritually bereft.

Rituals may be understood as communal investments through which we symbolically communicate with ourselves about what we value, and how as a community we are to practice and protect those things. As such, ritual plays a central role in nurturing and sustaining spirituality. It's interesting to note that "ritual" is literally at the center of "*spirituality*."

Most of us, however we regard the religious tradition of the Jewish people, want to have a "spiritual dimension" in our lives, a palpable connection to the ineffable. However, many contemporary Jews attempt to satisfy that desire by shifting their spiritual pathway from the communal life of the synagogue to their individual, privatized inner life. When we make that shift en masse, our notion of religious empowerment is no longer to practice our faith as a *people*, but to regularly reinvent it according to our *individual* inclinations. It has the advantage of allowing us to satisfy our personal predilections, but it also prevents us from imagining and fulfilling

much loftier aspirations as a *people*, accomplishing much more than we ever could individually.

Catering to our penchant for personal autonomy has produced what Robert Wuthnow refers to as "low-maintenance spirituality," one that demands little and replaces religious guidance for the sake of moral society and community with feelings of individual emotional contentment. Spirituality then becomes connected and committed to autonomous self-acceptance rather than self-transformation in the Torah's image of a compassionate and just God. Another byproduct is a shattering of commitment to *covenantal* Torah community, replacing it with congregational participation based largely on cultural and social interests.

What does all this have to do with *kashrut*?

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**The most common misunderstanding is that the purpose of *kashrut* is to foster health and hygiene, so of course keeping *kosher* is no longer necessary.**

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In Leviticus 11:44-45 we read: "I am Adonai your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy...."

Judaism's goal is to transform basic human drives, hunger in this instance, from narrowly personal purposes to the nation's service of God – as it does with the need for shelter or sex. We sanctify the everyday activity by doing it in a way that has us consciously striving upwards to God. Ordinarily we see a sharp boundary between the one holy day in the week and the other six nonreligious days. But Judaism seeks to integrate those two worlds, to hallow and sanctify what is ordinarily only our everyday experience.

The root meaning of *kosher* is "to prepare," "to connect properly." Almost nothing is more ordinary, yet more essential, than eating. By choosing to eat only *kosher* food, by limiting the source of our energy, we prepare and ritualize the aspiration of using that source of energy to connect to God. Every day we make a direct connection between our energy and its source, between the food we consume and using our energy to serve God. In effect, the purpose of keeping *kosher* is that together we prepare our physical bodies through a spiritual discipline. By keeping *kosher* we separate ourselves out from the other nations and into the purposes of the Jewish people.

Thus we become holy, sanctifying our bodies, by hallowing that which is ordinary, for which the *mitzvot* (commandments) are our guides. The root meaning of the Hebrew word *kadosh* (holy) is separation

or withdrawal, to be separated out for a special purpose and to forgo other purposes. We thus remind ourselves everyday that by keeping *kosher* we choose holiness not as individuals, but to join the historic mission of the Jewish people to be doers of righteousness and justice, keepers of sacred time and space, propagators of the Torah's vision and path – and thereby a light to the other nations and to ourselves. Contrary to popular misconceptions, then, the laws of *kashrut* have nothing to do with physical bodily health, but are aimed to energize our free-willed moral spiritual powers, raising us up as *humankind* from the morally un-free animal world.

How does *kashrut* sanctify us through our eating?

When we take care to eat *kosher* meat, we confront the reality of killing animals, and we reaffirm by our actions the need to put the animal to death as painlessly as possible. When we separate meat and dairy, day in and day out, based on the biblical injunction, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Deuteronomy 14:21), we remind ourselves to show consideration and kindness to all living creatures.

The *kosher* requirement for the removal of blood, which is the most potent symbol of life, teaches us to have an active, conscious reverence for life. But possibly even more important, the tradition teaches that the blood is the bearer of the soul and, above all, we are to avoid symbolic consumption of the souls of animals, which risks increasing the likelihood of compromising our own free-willed moral spirituality.

Similarly, when we consume only permitted animals, we avoid symbolically inculcating in ourselves the characteristics of predators and lower animals. It is a commonplace cultural belief in virtually every time and place that "we are what we eat." Human predators often fancy themselves empowered by consuming the flesh of their animal kindred. Insofar as permitted animals, however, it is not the qualifying signs of *kashrut*, but the animals' characteristics – that they are receptive and not antagonistic to human influence – that ensures they are suitable to be assimilated *morally*, and thus for us to avoid the degrading and deranging effects of certain foods on the human psyche, such as insects and predators. Withal, it's not the physiological effects of such animals that are problematic, but their *symbolic* meaning.

Skeptics often argue that there is no symbolism attached to the food they consume, and thus it has no effect on their attitudes or actions. But when we consider the most extreme form of consumption, cannibalism – it doesn't matter whether we're the imagined consumers or consumed – the symbolic potency of what we consume emerges in stark relief. What is most repulsive to us is the loss of human dignity – in effect, that we're treated or treat others as if no

(see ben Asher/bat Sarah, page NAT 15)



## Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### American Jewish journalism and Zionism

*To my readers: I have focused on sending material to the North American Jewish newspapers for the past 40 years – the first 10 years from Israel; the next 28 years from Chicago, Kansas City, Missouri and Overland Park, Kansas; and the past 17 1/2 months from Jerusalem.*

#### A look at American Jewish journalism by American Jewish history authority

Professor Jonathan D. Sarna is the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and chairs the Academic Board of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Author and editor of more than 20 books on American Jewish history and life, he also is chief historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and of the 350th commemoration of Jewish life in America.

Today he was the guest speaker in the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs' series on "Changing Jewish Communal Policies and Attitudes," speaking on American Jewish Journalism: Past, Present and Future.

Professor Sarna initially began his talk saying he would answer: (1) what is the mission of Jewish journalism? (2) what are the responsibilities of Jewish journalism; and (3) what compromises should Jewish newspapers be prepared to make in order to continue to survive?

"It is an appropriate moment to revisit the subject of American Jewish journalism," he said, saying that in the 1990s there was a sense that Jewish journalism was on an upsurge and "stronger than it had been in many decades. Nobody could have predicted how things could have developed."

Scholars date Jewish journalism to 17th-century Amsterdam, but Jewish journalism, as we know it, emerges in the 1840s in the United States, England, Germany and France. This emergence was no less a response to the technological change with printing and paper. After this period, mass journalism also emerged.

He then cited April 1943 and *The Occident*, a monthly magazine started by Isaac Leeser from Philadelphia, a religious leader "who understood the power of the press as a vehicle for strengthening Jewish life, who created a print community." Although a quality publication, there were limits to what he would publish.

"One of the longest problems in the field is whether the Jewish journalist is a reporter or a shaper of the community, a publicist of the community or a mirror of the community," asked Professor Sarna.

There was no Jewish forum for Jews who wanted to debate controversial subjects. There then occurred a movement toward local or regional papers, which has continued until the last couple of decades. The weeklies were modeled as American religious and family papers.

Professor Sarna cited the *Cincinnati Israelite*, later known as the *American Israelite* founded by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Weiss in 1854 and the oldest continually appearing Jewish newspaper. Originally founded to promote the ideology of Reform Judaism, it is no longer that official organ, however, in its footsteps came journals sponsored by groups that had particular aims such as the Reconstructionist movement, Jewish Frontier (Labor Zionists), Genesis Two, and such.



Sybil with Professor Jonathan D. Sarna.

In the 20th century the Anglo-Jewish press had "increases in circulation but decreases in quality." The three major issues affecting Jewish journalism were: (1) a proliferation of local Jewish papers, moving away from national issues into "boosterism," promoting their community; (2) financial pressures resulting in their being unable to break even and coming under the auspices of financial backers such as Federations. "Jewish newspapers became dependent not independent. The editors justified their compromises to keep the Jewish newspapers alive." And (3) Anti-Semitism – the newspapers became frightened of controversy and scandal and promoted an image of consensus and of sobriety. "The press exercised a lot of self-censorship."

The Jewish Telegraphic Agency founded in 1917, was designed to cover the world as a dominant provider of world Jewish news.

With the ownership of the *New York Times* by Adolph Ochs, it paid a lot of attention to the news of Jewish interest.

"Newspapers that knew how to market themselves did very well, the quality rose and a sense of a new era emerged, but technology conspired to undermine all journalism and the World Wide Web undermined the fundamental of journalism."

Readership began to fall, young people were getting their news from the web, circulation figures began to drop, advertising fell and the average age of readers rose year by year. Large-scale advertising shifted their dollars from the papers to the web and revenue plummeted. The best of the Jewish papers developed websites and almost everything became available free of charge.

The Great Recession further battered Jewish newspapers, the Jewish community is at least 20 percent poorer, some newspapers shifted to web, some went out of business, many dropped the JTA and there were fewer sponsors from Jewish papers.

They decided to focus exclusively on local news.

Where is American Jewish journalism today? (1) Jewish journalists never enjoyed so many readers as they have now; (2) the average American Jew has unprecedented journalism available and American Jews are getting news from Israel and being influenced by it and an array of diverse options.

The JTA has daily briefings and it is free. The most exciting new development in Jewish journalism is *Tablet*, launched in June 2009 as a daily online magazine of Jewish news, ideas and culture subsidized by the not-for-profit Nextbook, Inc. and *Jewish Ideas Daily*.

The independent Jewish journalism is living hand to mouth. "I don't think there is a single Jewish paper that is turning profit," declared Professor Sarna. "American Jewish journalism is a mile wide and an inch thick. Many are no longer covering Jewish news abroad. You cover America and Israel and everything else is a vast desert. The American Jewish press is becoming increasingly localized and parochial."

In closing Professor Sarna returned to his initial questions and modified them as: What is the mission of Jewish journalism? What are the responsibilities of Jewish journalism? What are the responsibilities of the Jewish community toward Jewish journalists and the Jewish press? What compromises should Jewish journalism be prepared to make in order to guarantee its survival?

"These are the questions we will be wrestling with over the next decade."

#### The Story of Zionism is racism – Its rise, fall and resurgence (Background based on lecture by Dr. Yohanan Manor at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

Recently, I had the experience of listening to Dr. Yohanan Manor, former lecturer at the Hebrew University, former director-general of the Information Department of the World Zionist Organization. Currently he is chairman of IMPACT-SE, which surveys school curricula and textbooks to check their conformity with international standards.

In 1975 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution equating Zionism with racism. In 1991, the resolution was overturned. In recent years it has gained renewed strength.

Dr. Manor related that the idea of having Zionism condemned came from the Soviet Union before the Six-Day War. The Soviets would not condemn anti-Semitism, and the demand to condemn Zionism as a form of racism had the quasi-backing of the PLO, which had strongholds in the Middle East in Syria and Egypt on the way to becoming Soviet "colonies."

The PLO-Soviet plan was to bring about an expulsion of Israel from the UN with the PLO taking its place.

They tried to expel Israel from the UN during 1974 and 1975.

Then the resolution in July 1975 was explicitly condemned at the UN as part of the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico, calling for the "elimination of Zionism."

The actual resolution in October/November 1975 said that it "determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."

When this occurred, Dr. Manor says, "You could feel the hatred and joy." The U.S., Australia and Western European nations tried to get a postponement of resolution #3379 but there was no Israel or Jewish attempt to do its overturn. "Israel expected the nonsense would go away by itself."

Between 1976 and 1984, there were 14 Zionism resolutions adopted by international forums.

In 1982, there were 44 anti-Israel resolutions in the UN. Israel was being deprived of its basic rights as a member state, making Israel irrelevant.

Israel did not fight directly and openly to overturn the resolution. Israel saw initiating action counterproductive, and felt it was impossible to over turn the resolution.

But the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the World Zionist Organization set up a committee to prevent a way to undermine the validity and legitimization of the Zionism is racism resolution.

There was a petition to the UN and a series of parliamentary resolutions to present its reiteration.

There was direct involvement of the U.S. and pressure by the U.S. Congress on the administration that 72 countries had voted in favor of the resolution, and the majority were receiving aid from the U.S.

Congress resolution 246 calls for the repeal of the General Assembly's resolution 3379. From 1991 there were massive appeals, sponsored by 86 states until it was passed by 111 states.

Israel has regained full membership with full participation.

In 1994 anti-Semitism was condemned by 55 members of the Human Rights Commission. The same year, Dr. Manor published his book *To Right a Wrong*, analyzing the revocation of the resolution.

In 2005 an annual Holocaust memorial day was created by the UN.

In 2007 a resolution condemning any denial of the Holocaust was passed.

Still, there has been a series of biased and one-sided resolutions against Israel by Arab and Muslim countries, and there are still attempts to use the UN to bash Israel and undermine its legitimacy.

We have to use our position with allies at the UN to develop new educational and political instruments to strengthen our legitimacy.

*Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, book reviewer, food columnist and feature writer She's lived in Jerusalem since September 2008. ✪*



## Holocaust Educator

By MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN

### Relationships between Jews and Germans today

What happens when today's Jews and Germans encounter each other face to face? What restraints cripple both parties in their attempts to communicate? Is there the proverbial elephant in the room that no one engages directly? Perhaps the different generations handle the awkwardness differently. What rights do contemporary Jews have to invoke the memory of the Holocaust? What rights do Germans have to move on?

Conversational German 802, Wednesday nights at College of San Mateo. For the third time in my life, I have enrolled in German language instruction. Feb. 17, 2010: I am too embarrassed to participate in the informal chatting *auf Deutsch* between the instructor and the students prior to each class. My *Deutsch* is not that fluent. Despite my past immersion in German classes, I am unable to speak but the most basic sentences. Growing up, all things German were *verboten* in my household.

Few of the students attend the course to fulfill their undergraduate language requirement. Most are older adults taking the class for their own self-improvement. Some are of German descent. On the night of Feb. 17, they remained indifferent to my suppressed elation. I wanted to share with my fellow classmates and my professor that I was in the *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* twice in one week. But I lacked the words.

"Wie so?" I can imagine the incredulous Professor Raney asking. I would respond that the day before, I accompanied my daughter Rebecca to obtain her *Einbürgerungsurkunde*, that is, her naturalization certificate from the German consulate in San Francisco. One must do so in person; it cannot be mailed.

The next day, wearing my *mütze* (cap) as a journalist, I returned to interview Consul General Peter Rothem. Embassies and consulates are thought to be on the soil of the country they represent and not in their host country. Thus, on a perhaps symbolic level, I was in Germany twice in one week.

Seated comfortably in the office of the Consul General with its panoramic view of Alcatraz and San Francisco Bay, I sipped coffee and explained my mission: to acquaint my readers with Herr Rothem's vision of his post in San Francisco. "I write for a national Jewish readership, so I am sure they would be interested in German-Jewish relations," I added.

Perhaps it was a conversation stopper. Unlike his predecessor Herr Rolf Schütte

who had served in the German Consulate in Tel Aviv and taken a sabbatical with the American Jewish Committee to conduct research on German-Jewish relations (see P&O March 4, 2009), Herr Rothem had a more conventional background.

The diplomat spent a year at Harvard University as a Fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, according to the Consulate's website bio. "He has worked extensively on multilateral issues, his most recent assignment being director for International Human Rights Policy at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin."

He held previous appointments as "head of the Political Department of Germany's Permanent Representation at the United Nations' Office in Geneva/Switzerland (from 1999-2003), deputy director at the Foreign Ministry's Directorate-General for European Union Affairs (1995-1999). Earlier postings were in the foreign minister's Press Office and at the German Embassies in London/UK, Pretoria/South Africa and Prague/Czech Republic." An impressive CV, available for all to see at [www.sanfrancisco.diplo.de](http://www.sanfrancisco.diplo.de).

We chatted about our adult children. His two sons attend university in Germany; his daughter lives with him and his wife in the German Residence. He was very interested in my daughter Leah and her husband, choosing to live and work in Germany as academics. A proud mother, I violated the cardinal principle of journalistic interviewing by talking as much about my children as about his. My notes were scant.

On the drive home, I rued my missed opportunity. In chatting about Leah's Ph.D. research in photon science at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and her husband's appointment as an assistant professor at the same university, I did not ask my predetermined questions about "Holocaust fatigue" or about how Germans feel about having so many Holocaust memorials throughout Germany. How do Germans feel about Jews today in Germany?

Perhaps he answered my questions indirectly by his graciousness, his inquiries about my children, even by his willingness to meet with me. We are both 2nd generation, born after World War II. The Consul General invoked the "special relationship" that exists between Germany and the Jewish people.

I decided to ask Leah my question: "When people in Germany find out that you are Jewish, does it feel as if there is now something unspoken between you (i.e., the Holocaust), especially if they find out you are a German citizen because your Opa, z"l, lost his citizenship during the Third Reich?"

Her emailed response: "That is a very good question. And a very hard one to answer, but I will try my best. For my part, I am quite aware of the implications of saying that my grandfather escaped Nazi Germany because he was Jewish. This is just an assumption, but putting myself in their shoes, I wouldn't know how to respond to that casually. They could say,

'Oh, that's interesting.' Or, 'Really? That must have been hard on your family. What do you think of the current relationship between Jews and Germans these days?'

"I think the problem really lies in when this topic comes up. It hasn't, for a long time, and that's because people usually ask me why I chose to move to Germany upon a first introduction, and that usually occurs at a party or some other social event. At that point, I usually mention that my grandfather was German, but I don't always say why he left. Honestly, and I hope you don't lose respect for me, I often say 'World War II' instead of 'the Holocaust,' whenever that time period comes up. I'm not really sure why, but I think it has to do with an extreme desire not to discuss taboo subjects or offend my hosts in any way.

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### What rights do contemporary Jews have to invoke the memory of the Holocaust? What rights do Germans have to move on?

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"With the few Germans with whom I have discussed the Holocaust, I've found that there is an underlying feeling of guilt about the whole thing, and I am talking about people my own age. However, the reunification of East and West Germany was a profound event that happened in their lifetimes, and so is much more real and important to them. I never really understood [that] the deep impact and psychological implications of living in such a dichotomous state had on the German population....

"By the way, sometimes I see an older man who reminds me of Opa. I wonder if he may be a long-lost relative, but I don't have the nerve to ask."

I did not judge my daughter's answer. My response to her follows: "I did not lose respect for you in any manner, my darling daughter. I relate your reframe of 'Holocaust' to 'World War II' as a way of creating a safe boundary. It is nobody's business that you are a repatriated Jew. If you wish to become closer with someone, then that is the time to share such information. Respect is not the relevant issue, at least to me.

"It is a question of boundaries, degrees of intimacy, and how you want to be perceived by others. This aspect is only a small piece of the totality that is Leah Z. Sharp. If that is all you talk about, your grandfather and his reasons for leaving Germany or your reasons for living in Germany, then that will become a filter for other people that does not do justice to the total Leah."

Our exchange indicated to me that the next generation, too, must cope with the

elephant of the Holocaust in everyday relationships between Jews and Germans.

A recent email that circulated among the Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) community placed the issue into a religious context. Please note that although retired from full-time teaching, I continue to teach the Holocaust class at NDNU as an adjunct and thus receive all emails to faculty and staff. The following email caused much consternation, concern, and restraint.

From Sister Roseanne Murphy: "NDNU will be offering a trip to the famous Passion Play in Oberammergau from June 21-July 1. It is open to all members of the community and their friends. It includes the 'Alpine Tour' of Heidelberg, Rhine Valley, Lucerne, Innsbruck, Salzburg, Munich and Rothenburg. The famous Passion Play is given only every ten years. Brochures of the trip will be available in about a week. Please refer people to me for further information. Thank you." - Sr. Roseanne Murphy, SND, Executive Director of Planned Giving.

My Holocaust class begins with the history of Church-sanctioned anti-Judaism, the curriculum sanctioned by the National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education at Seton Hill University. We discuss the Passion Plays from the Middle Ages, and the resulting Passover blood libels, which sparked so many pogroms and tragedies for the Jewish people.

Although not the cause of the Holocaust, both Catholic and Jewish scholars agree that the anti-Jewish legacy of the Roman Catholic Church provided a context that allowed the Holocaust to happen. Unfortunately, the gains made in the papacy of Pope John Paul II who fostered substantial improvement in Catholic-Jewish relations a priority, seem to be reversing under the current Pope.

For example, Pope Benedict XVI has reinstated the Good Friday prayer for the "perfidious Jews" that they might be converted to the truth, a prayer dropped from the Easter liturgy in 1960 by Pope John XXIII. According to the Catholic News Agency online, on Feb 5, 2008, the Vatican's Secretary of State issued the new prayer for the Jews to be used in the Good Friday Liturgy. It "is a simple prayer for the Jewish people, that they may discover the salvation brought by Jesus." I agree with the Anti-Defamation League, which has declared that proselytizing Jews is an anti-Semitic act.

I stifled the impulse to respond immediately to Sr. Roseanne's email with a plea for some sort of educational addition to the program that would address this unfortunate history. Without such a plea, I am certain that her group will enjoy their trip without the troubling reminder of the Passion Play's gory aftermath for so many Jewish communities throughout history. Who am I to diminish what for many might be the trip of a lifetime?

I felt the same restraint that I felt when conversing with Herr Rothem, the same

(see Zimmerman, page NAT 15)



## Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### More Passover thoughts

The month of March (Nissan) brings with it springtime. It is a beautiful season of the year. Trees begin waking from their winter sleep, flowers start to bloom and the tilt of the Earth in the northern hemisphere brings warmth. Even the birds start singing for they too know that nature is coming alive. It is a time of renewal. Passover occurs at this time of the year.

Redemption, the ultimate definition of the holiday, is commemorated with a festive meal called the seder. This annual ritual, the re-telling of the Exodus from slavery and bondage to freedom and salvation, expresses the feelings and aspirations of people throughout history, as we attempt to determine our future and reach out to meet our destiny. We become a people whose primary responsibility includes understanding and sharing the Revelation experienced at Sinai.

We are told about this tremendous encounter with depictions of thunder and lightening and majestic splendor as God endeavors to connect with us and solidify the Covenant made with our ancestors. The words that were uttered and speak to all of us even today are reminders of this special relationship and the obligations inherent in this bond.

The Exodus was preceded by episodes that really boggle the imagination. From the blood in the Nile to the destruction of Pharaoh's army, the narrative explains, in great detail, the occurrences that led to the ultimate determination of man's yearnings for equality and purpose.

At Sinai we reached the hour of fulfillment. Not only were we liberated but we knew, at that moment, the reason for our being. We understood that life without reason has no meaning. We witnessed the value of creation and our part in the process. We realized that by escaping tyranny we were obligated to prevent the distortion of God's will and to acknowledge the existence of God and the significance of being witnesses to God's grandeur.

The Ten Commandments, the final part of the drama, instructs us about duty to God and duty to each other. The first five Commandments are designed to teach us respect and love of God and the last five are dedicated to our relationship with one another. The lesson is rather simple: You cannot claim to be lovers of God or profess to believe in God and at the same time loathe each other. You can't be Godlike and be hateful to another human being also created by this same God.

The Ten Commandments are also written in the singular. The message is profound and is explained in great detail

by the Ramban in his Torah commentary. He writes that each of us is responsible for our words and deeds. We cannot care for each other if we are not willing to hold ourselves accountable for our conduct and we must be willing to accept the consequences.

The observance of Passover also includes many religious customs and laws. For example: We are prohibited from eating anything containing leaven because we need to remember that cleansing ourselves of the old is a prerequisite to accepting things that are new. We can't start a new life if we hold onto the old one and make no room for growth and development. Leaving Egypt in a hurry was a clear indication that the people were ready to shed the old and begin the new.

We continually read the story of our deliverance because it is essential that we remain aware of our past in order to continue to build a future. It also helps us realize that to move forward we have to break the shackles of domination that kept us bent over, unable to stand erect. We experienced not only physical distress but emotional submission and that dragged us even further into the abyss with no sign of escape.

All these expressions are brought together in one grand moment called Passover. We rejoice and we remember, but we are also saddened by events that shaped our destiny and required untold sacrifices. However, we understand that sometimes we must go through ordeals in order to achieve fulfillment. And as the rabbis have taught us, we don't gloat over the misfortune of others while rejoicing in our emancipation.

Perhaps the wishes and desires for a world of togetherness and gratefulness and appreciation can best be summed up in an essay written by Rev. Dr. Herbert Brokering, a Christian minister:

*Lord, give us tomorrow.*

*Give us*

*Spring at the end of winter,*

*Love at the end of strife,*

*Peace at the end of war, and*

*A home at the end of the exile.*

*Give us*

*Rain to end draught,*

*A song to end the sorrow,*

*A harvest to end the hunger.*

*Send fruit after the pruning.*

*Send tomorrow*

*With its feel of the softness of soil,*

*The grease of engines,*

*The splatter of paint,*

*The sound of music,*

*The joy of debate, and*

*The calmness of forgiveness.*

*Give us tomorrow*

*And its new work,*

*New smell,*

*New touch,*

*New thoughts*

*New hopes.*

*Lord,*

*Tomorrow*

*Give us a new day.*



## An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

### What's with the fours?

Despite the late hour and exhaustion (not to mention wine), many a Jewish mind has wondered long and hard during a Passover Seder about all the Haggadah's "fours." Four questions, four sons, four expressions of redemption, four cups. There's clearly a numerical theme here.

While some may superficially dismiss the Haggadah as a mere collection of random verses and songs, it is in truth a subtle and wondrous educational tool, with profound Jewish ideas layered through its seemingly simple text. The rabbis who formulated its core, already extant in pre-Talmudic times, wanted it to serve to plant important concepts in the hearts and minds of its readers – especially its younger ones, toward whom the Seder, our tradition teaches, is aimed. And so the author of the Haggadah employed an array of pedagogical methods, including songs, riddles and puzzles, as means of conveying deeper understandings. And he left us some clues, too.

When it comes to the ubiquitous "fours," we might begin by considering the essential fact that Passover is when the Jewish people's identity is solemnly perpetuated; the Seder, the ritual instrument through which each Jewish generation inculcates our collective history and essence to the next. Which is likely a large part of the reason so many Jewish parents who are alienated from virtually every other Jewish observance still feel compelled to have at least some sort of Seder, to read a Haggadah, or even – if they have strayed too far from their heritage to comfortably confront the original – to compose their own. (I once joked before an audience that a "Vegetarian Haggadah" would likely appear any year now, and someone in attendance later showed me precisely such a book – though it lacked the "Paschal Turnip" I had imagined.)

And so the role we adults play on Pesach night, *vis a vis* the younger Jews with whom we share the experience, is a very specific one. We are teachers, to be sure, but it is not information that we are communicating; it is identity.



Isn't this what Passover is all about? Isn't this the dream of all humanity as expressed by Passover in so many ways? Yes, these are my thoughts at Passover. Passover miracles, as I wrote about in the last issue, can also be found in the asking and the giving and the receiving.

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

At the Seder, in other words, we seek to instill in our children the realization that they are not mere individuals but rather parts of a people, members of a nation unconstrained by geographical boundaries but linked by history and destiny. We impress them with the fact that they are links in a shimmering, ethereal chain stretching back to birth of the Jewish nation, to when our people was divinely redeemed from mundane slavery in Egypt and entered a sublime servitude of a very different sort – to God – at Sinai.

So, on Passover, as we celebrate the birth of the Jewish nation and plant the seed of Jewish identity in the minds of smaller Jews, we are giving life – giving birth, one might say – to the Jewish future. And, while it may be the father who traditionally leads the Seder, he is acting not as teacher but rather in something more akin to a maternal role, as a spiritual nurturer of the children present.

In Jewish religious law, Jewish identity is in fact dependent on mothers. According to *halacha*, or Jewish religious tradition, while a Jew's tribal genealogy follows the paternal line, whether a child is a member of the Jewish people or not depends entirely on the status of his or her mother.

It's only speculation, but the recurrent numerical theme in our exquisite Haggadah, employed each year to instill Jewish identity might be reminding us of that. After all, the book has its own number-decoder built right in, toward its end, where most good books' keys and indexes are found. We're a little hazy once it's reached, after four cups of wine, but it's unmistakably there: "Echad Mi Yodea" or "Who Knows One?" – the song that provides Jewish associations with numbers.

"Who knows four?"

If you don't, you can look it up.

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

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## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### Engage in the world around us

One of my favorite hosts of the *Tonight Show* was Steve Allen. He was a multitalented entertainer, bright, comedic and a musician of note; he provided many wonderful late nights of entertainment with a cast of fellow comedians, who each in their own right was special, and all together, spectacular.

One of the routines that Allen did was reading "Letters to the Editor." He would appear at a desk, and there was a tree of hats, which he skillfully used to portray the different writers. What Allen's premise implied was that people who wrote these letters were usually enraged, and to understand them, you simply had to add the emotion. I remember laughing a lot, but, as well, it became a tool when I read the letters. I understood that they were written and sent in the height of passion.

I wonder today how passionate we are as readers. In order to become moved by what we read, we have to feel that our ideas and feeling count, and for whatever reason, most of us have become more comfortable as voyeurs. We simply watch or read and pass it by.

The earthquakes, first in Haiti, now in Chile, the assassination in Abu Dhabi, the healthcare debate, the meltdown of the business in Washington, the weather, and recently the Winter Olympics. Many people that I know see all of the above as distractions, but I was raised by a father who took everything happening in the world with a great deal of seriousness, and as he read the *Denver Post* every evening, from front to back, you could hear him commenting, debating, sometimes taking pleasure, often commiserating about the state of the world.

I am my father's son. I watched the Olympics every chance I had. I was less interested in curling, never understood what skeleton skiing was all about, but I put in time. I was unabashedly nationalistic. I listened to the sad stories, marveled at the incredible dedication to sport, and, as always, wondered about what happened to these disciplined performers after they quit their sport.

We always hear about how many of our leaders were Eagle Scouts in their youth, and how it shaped their lives, but sports seem more personal. And it seems that this great dedication does not always express itself on the slope or the mat or the ice.

Within the coverage of Vancouver's successes and failures was a curious statistic. They had supplied over 100,000 condoms to the participants, an average of 14 per sportsman, and felt successful because in the last games at Torino, where the sponsors had supplied only 80,000,

they had run 20,000 short, and had to run back to the supplier. I am still wondering why we had to know that. It made the special tribute song played at the opening and the closing more understandable, "Let's Party."

It raised a number of issues. If our athletes were this busy being intimate, what exactly happened to their training rigor? Weren't we led to believe that intimacy saps physical strength? And since this seems to be an ingredient of the games, wouldn't you expect the participants to come prepared. At one time the articles were about the obsession of exchanging national pins. Apparently the "collecting" has changed.

And was this perk to the athletes a comment on the moral level of the world, or was it just good business? I want to give you a moment to think about that. Good business? Well think about it for a moment. They see the co-habiting as a reality, but if there as a post-Olympic breakout of transmitted venereal disease, that might just leave a bad message about Vancouver and British Columbia; especially if it was your children who wanted to go there for a vacation. Today, everything is worthy of discussion, even free condoms.

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**In order to become moved by what we read, we have to feel that our ideas and feeling count, and for whatever reason, most of us have become more comfortable as voyeurs.**

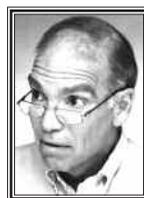
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Then there was the massive expense of the production. There was the necessary expense of facilities, but all of the expense for the final production could have purchased lots of food and medicine for the people of Haiti and Chile. Unless I missed it, there was not mention of Haiti, or charity, or personal responsibility. This was party time.

Tiger Woods has received calls of encouragement from Bill Clinton. Wouldn't you have paid to hear that conversation? There is a new "tell all" book about Senator John Edwards; Governor Patterson has reluctantly decided not to seek election to the governorship of New York.

How are we supposed to feel about the news? Should we watch it? Does it affect us when we don't like the affect?

I listened to a short tape this morning about the significance of G-d's question to Adam, "Where are you?" which came after he had eaten of the tree of knowledge. In defiance of G-d's command, Adam responds that he is



## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### Tempest in a Teapot

Okay, the timing was stupid. The communication inside the prime minister's office was awful. Sorry. Your bad. Now, let's move on.

What do I think? I think Netanyahu got blind-sided by his ultra religious partners in the Likud coalition. Now he is in the hot seat. He cannot appear to bow to the will of the United States, even though we are the best friend Israel has in the world.

On the other hand, he has to play it cool with Shas, which controls the Housing and Construction Ministry. Although Shas has only eleven members in the Knesset, it is enough to bring down the government if they decide to. I truly believe that Minister Ariel Atias stuck it to Netanyahu and the U.S. What? He didn't know that Joe Biden was in town? He couldn't wait two days to make the announcement of 1,600 new housing units going up? Nonsense.

The mayor of Jerusalem, Nir Barkat, has a vision for his city. He wants the most historic city in the world to become a world-class city. He wants an urban renewal project of massive proportions. He believes it will help all the citizens of his city – Jews, Christians and Muslims; black, white and brown.

Arabs don't like it. They don't like anything that the government does – locally or nationally. There are literally hundreds of illegal housing units in Jerusalem. Almost 100 percent of them erected by Arabs in the eastern part of the city. That area needs an overall urban plan. It needs new sewers; it needs a plan to make it livable for its citizens. Arabs don't want that.

As I wrote in an earlier column, they want Israel gone. They don't want a capitol in East Jerusalem, they want all of Jerusalem. Last week there was a reopening of a synagogue destroyed by the Arabs in the 1948 war. The Arabs rioted. They do not want Jews in the Jewish nation.

If you look at the exact location of these new apartments about which all the fuss is being generated, they are technically not in "East Jerusalem." They are north of that, in an area of the old city. That happens to be an ideal spot to start the



hiding in the bushes, because he has recognized that he is naked. Our commentators suggest that G-d is really asking Adam that given what had just happened, what he is going to do now?

We are constantly facing the same question even if many people don't identify the sender of the question. "What are you going to do now?"

(see Karsh, page NAT 15)

urban renewal the mayor wants.

The dirty little secret of what the Arabs are doing in the Middle East is about the Christians. Bethlehem, which used to be about 80 percent Christian, now has less than a 20 percent Christian population. It is not the Jewish settlements that have driven them out, it is the Muslim Arabs. Iraq's Christian population, which held steady even during the reign of Saddam Hussein, is now close to zero thanks to Shia Muslims.

If the Caliphate is to be successful, Jews and Christians must be driven out of the Middle East. Above all, they cannot stay in Jerusalem. Well, Jerusalem is the City of David. It is the site of the Holy of Holies. It is the capitol of the sovereign State of Israel. And as we all know, it is not even mentioned in the Koran.

All that having been said, it still was stupid to throw 1,600 new housing units in Joe Biden's face. As Tom Friedman wrote in the *New York Times*, the vice president should have slammed his brief case shut, climbed on board Air Force Two and left, leaving behind regrets to the Netanyahus for missing dinner and telling them that in the real world, this is not good strategy.

But truthfully, in overall scheme of things, what does it mean? What does it matter? The facts on the ground state that since the barrier went up along the West Bank, there have been hardly any suicide bombings in Israel. Since the offensive into Gaza, the people of Sderot live in relative peace. If the prime responsibility of the president of the United States is to keep the people of America safe, then this responsibility is also true of the prime minister of Israel.

As this is being written, the so-called insult is still burning in the belly of the U.S. government. Secretary of State Clinton spent 43 minutes on the phone the other day giving the prime minister a telephonic trip to the woodshed. The pundits have written it to death here in the U.S. as well as in Israel. America has more important issues on its plate right now than a few new houses in the old city. You would think a bright guy like the president would read enough history – even recent history to know that the Palestinians will take any excuse, even invent a crisis so as to not accept any reasonable attitude from Israel.

America needs Israel in the Middle East, strong and independent. Israel needs American support. If Siamese twins get in a spat, it behooves them both to settle it as quickly as possible. A few statements from Israel would help. A little less rhetoric from the Obama administration would, too. C'mon kids, shake hands and make up. We need *Shalom B'Bayeit* – peace in the house.

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



## Jewish Theater

REVIEWED BY IRENE BACKALENICK

### Looking back to the Spanish Inquisition

All the ingredients are there, all the makings for a deeply moving and relevant drama! Israeli Oren Neeman's play *Conviction* deals with the Spanish Inquisition, with Jewish persecution, and with tracing one's ancestors. The tale moves back and forth in time, from Salamanca in 1486 to Franco Spain in 1962. The cast of characters range from modern-day Israeli professors and Spanish bureaucrats to long-gone Jewish "Conversos." It deals with the martyrdom of Jews, forced to convert or be exiled or burned at the stake. (And even conversion did not necessarily save the Jews of that era, many of whom practiced Judaism in secret.)

So why doesn't this drama (now playing at 59E59 Theaters off-Broadway) work on stage? The story itself, based on Yonatan Ben-Nachum's novel *Confession*, is potentially absorbing. A young Israeli professor, Professor Chaim Tal, has stolen an ancient document from the Spanish National Archives. Before he is thrown into prison for this crime, he is questioned by the Archives' director. Gradually it comes to light that the stolen document focuses on a Catholic priest, one Andres Gonzales, who is secretly married to the beautiful Jewess, Isabel. And this Gonzales may or may not be the professor's direct ancestor.

In this current era of DNA, many of us are caught up in the genealogy craze, and

Professor Tal's search is indeed intriguing. But dramatic punch is another matter. The major problem is that the work is structured as a play within a play within a play. It is three times removed from the here and now. Professor Tal looks back at Gonzales' story, while Gonzales, in turn, looks back on his love affair as he confesses to his priest/mentor Juan De Salamanca.

Hence, there is no forward movement and no building of dramatic tension as the story unfolds. One might do better to read this tale on the printed page. Nor does the competent but hardly dynamic cast add the needed punch. Though Kevin Hart is competent as both the director and Juan, and Catherine Pilafas lends a lyrical touch to her portrayal of Isabel, Ami Dayan tends to tamp down his leading roles as the professor and Gonzales.

Yet *Conviction* has an impressive international history, traveling in varied format from a successful run in Israel to Chicago to California to Colorado to its current staging in New York City. Ami Dayan (a cousin of the one-time Israeli General Moshe Dayan) certainly has a stake in the piece, beyond his performance. He has played it as a one-man show and ultimately (with playwright Neeman's approval) turned it into its current form.

We would hope that *Conviction* might undergo further change, bringing out a potential, which might yet wow New York audiences.

#### Slouching toward Jerusalem

Good thing is that we Jews can laugh at a joke, even when the joke is on us. We're talking about *Circumcise Me*, a one-man show now running off-Broadway (at the Bleecker Street Theatre). Yisrael Campbell is the writer, storyteller, performer, all in one. Through it all, he gently tweaks the Jewish faith and practices, but comes down on the plus side of Judaism.



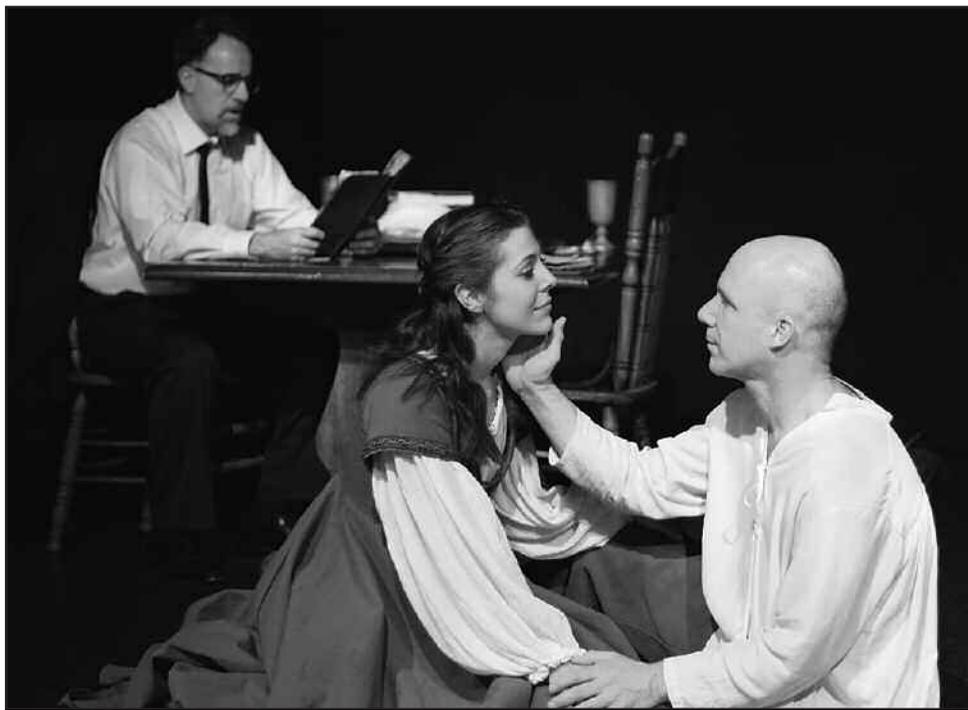
Yisrael Campbell in *Circumcise Me*. Photo by: Carol Rosegg.

It is an amazing tale, full of startling, contradictory turns, all the more so because it is Campbell's own true story. Campbell comes on stage, looking for all the world like an Orthodox Jew – which he is – bearded, bespectacled, and clad in traditional black coat and broad hat. "Is it hot in here," he asks the audience, "or am I the only one dressed for Poland in the 1700s?"

Whereupon he slides into a series of one-liners, some funny, some not so funny. Okay, we think, we have here a stand-up comic, but one who falls short of the best Jewish comics. This is no Jerry Seinfeld. Yet as we begin to realize that this is Campbell's reality, the captivating tale takes over, becoming steadily more endearing and ultimately deeply moving.

What is his tale? It is a tale that involves Catholicism, drugs, alcohol, a career in acting, a move to Israel, three conversions to Judaism, and three circumcisions. He was born Christopher Campbell in a Philadelphia suburb, son of Catholic (Italian-Irish) parents. He began drinking at the age of nine, moving on to drugs and alcohol – but finally gaining sobriety at age 16. After high school he moved to Florida, for work in a rehab center. It was there that a young Jewish woman gave him a book that changed his life. It was Leon Uris' novel *Exodus*. He was drawn to the heroics, to the spiritual message, to a life in Israel. But it was still a boyish dream, and he moved back to New York to pursue another interest – theater, studying at Circle in the Square Drama School.

On moving to California for his career, he also pursued his interest in Judaism. Signing up for a basic Judaism course, he assumed that more knowledge of Judaism would turn him off, just as Catholicism had done. He was, after all, not religious, but spiritual, he reasoned. The Judaism course had the opposite effect. The Jewish God, he felt, was one with whom one could argue and reason – unlike the judgmental Catholic God.



Pictured: Kevin Hart (back left), Catherine Pilafas as Isabel (center), and Ami Dayan as Gonzales. (right) in *Conviction*. Photo by: Eran Tari.

Moreover, there was no longer a likelihood of going to Hell. He had found his path.

With his steadily growing commitment to Judaism, he moved from Reform to Conservative to Orthodox Judaism. Campbell had been circumcised, like many non-Jewish Americans, as an infant, but it was not a religious rite. Thus each move entailed a new circumcision (more symbolic than actual, but requiring blood from the involved body part). None of it was easy, as Jews do not accept converts easily. (How much easier to convert to Islam, he told the audience. No wonder there are millions of Moslems and so many fewer Jews!)

But ultimately, Campbell did realize his dream, moving to Israel, where he married, had children, and now lives. His one-man show has proved highly successful in his adopted country, and he continues an acting career. As Campbell finished his moving tale, many of us sat in the audience, moved to tears and, somehow, grateful that we were Jews.

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](mailto:IreneBack@sbcglobal.net) and invites you to visit her website: [nytheater.scene.com](http://nytheater.scene.com) or at: [jewish-theatre.com](http://jewish-theatre.com). ★

### On this date in Jewish history

On March 24, 1564

Printing of Talmud permitted in Italy.

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

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## As I Heard It

BY MORTON GOLD

### Relish the voice of the cantor

I suppose that given the current state of finances that it had to happen sooner or later. To what am I referring? The dean of the Cantor's Institute (affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary) has been "let go," and the school will somehow merge with the seminary. Finances aside (and mind you, this is a big aside), money or the lack of it is only a part of the problem.

In Reform temples, cantors, even where they exist have little to sing during the service. Often, a cantorial soloist is used when needed and he needn't always be Jewish either. Where there is a professional cantor, the more significant part of his or her duties involves the preparation of bar/bat mitzvah youngsters. The cantor may even be involved with the Hebrew school, if not with actual teaching, then perhaps even as the principal. Many cantors often train choral groups and give and/or prepare musical programs for constituencies within the temple. Often, the cantor will accompany him- or herself on the guitar, eliminating the position of organist.

This versatility has been born of necessity, since the services are often in the vicinity of an hour and leave little time for any extensive solo work. Where there is no cantor in Reform temples, the rabbi will assume the role and duties of the cantor in addition to his or her rabbinical responsibilities. This dual role is similar to that of the priest in a Catholic church where the priest sings the few lines that he needs to and often accompanies himself on the guitar. Especially in smaller churches, the organist is already an endangered species.

In Orthodox Jewish congregations, if there is no professional *hazzan*, any (male) member of the congregation may assume the role of the cantor, often with less than agreeable results! In Reconstructionist congregations, since egalitarianism counts for as much as anything else, members of the congregation often assume the role of song leader and chant the few lines between congregational melodies. In Conservative congregations, there has been the equivalent of a perfect storm.

On one hand, and especially in smaller congregations, the practice in the last several decades has witnessed the erosion of the position of the cantor. Once upon a time, and not too long ago either, Jews would go from one shul to another to hear different cantors. There singing was as much of an attraction as the sermon of the rabbi, if not even more so.

As worshippers became less and less versed with the service (and reading Hebrew as well) and with the attendant dwindling of attendance at services and

temple membership. One solution that was advanced was to somehow involve the congregation more actively in the service. There was also a movement toward less formality in attire that involved the clergy as much as it did the congregation. The result of this attitude meant that whereas the cantor was formerly expected to sing various prayers alone (or with choir) and even improvise many of them, these were dramatically scaled back and even eliminated.

The cantor increasingly became the leader of congregational melodies during the service. Whereas the responsibility of the cantor was simply to *daven*, increasingly he or she assumed other duties (i.e., reading the torah, preparing bar/bat mitzvah, acting as principal of the Hebrew school, and being an entertainer as well).

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**Thus in one fell swoop,...**  
**the traditional role of**  
**the cantor, namely**  
**singing of compositions**  
**either by composers**  
**or cantor/composers,**  
**was effectively reduced**  
**or even eliminated.**

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Thus in one fell swoop, the cantor where he or she existed at all now occupied multiple positions where the traditional role of the cantor, namely singing of compositions either by composers or cantor/composers, was effectively reduced or even eliminated. Some 40 years ago, Cantor Samuel Rosenberg sounded the alarm, but his words were not heeded. It was easier and more prudent to go along with the wishes of the congregation than fight a fight that really could not be won. So, it has come to this.

One has to eventually recognize realities. Fewer cantorial students study at the Institute, and the school has increasingly become a financial burden difficult to sustain. The cause of this situation was not the cantors. They have consistently done more and more with less and less, that means time, people and money.

The cause of Jewish music, of the worth, dignity and beauty of music in the temple (synagogue) has been devalued. The problem is us. We want to feel good; we want to discuss (talk); we want this and we want that. However, we do not or do not care to put our money where our aesthetic and religious sense and duty ought to be. For more than a decade, I have maintained that in the pursuit of attendance and participation, we have pursued and are still pursuing a course that has not yielded results.

Years ago, a spin doctor suggested we ought to "let Reagan be Reagan." My  
(see Gold, page NAT 15)



## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### Inglourious Basterds

Beware of films that coin their own spellings in their titles. They will do anything to get your attention. Beware of Holocaust films, however well intentioned, whose Nazis are more charismatic than the Jews are. They will give evil a charming face, even while graphically depicting evil.

We all know that Quentin Tarantino is clever, and that his films will hold our attention. At will, he can make us laugh, even cry, and sit at the edges of our seats, or fulminate in anger or in righteous indignation.

He achieved some of this in *Inglourious Basterds*. The film did, after all, receive an Academy Award nomination. As a creative experiment, the film deserves some respect. The script is literate and even cultured. The directing and acting are consistently fine, sometimes bordering on the exquisite.

It is not surprising that Austrian actor Christopher Waltz was honored with the Best Actor Oscar. When I first saw the film several months ago, I scribbled in the theater: "Beware of Holocaust films, however well-intentioned, where the Nazis are more charismatic than the Jews, films that prompt you, as an audience member, to personally want to present an Oscar to a murderous character out of sheer admiration." I added in my notes: "In such cases, either the actor is too good or the writing and direction are morally ambiguous."

Waltz's character, Colonel Hans Landa, is called "The Jew Hunter." He prides himself on being a good detective. He compares Jews to rats. The film begins with his hunting down a Jewish family in the home of a French farmer and his family, good Christians, who are hiding them, and then exterminating most of that Jewish family. The teenage daughter, Shoshanna (Melanie Laurent), escapes. She survives and succeeds at establishing a high-class Parisian theater, which is chosen by the German high command as the place to screen their major propaganda movie. Shoshanna then plots to burn down her theater with all the Nazi elite officers, including Hitler himself, in it.

Shoshanna fulfills every one of Tarantino's film fantasies, or, rather, fantasies about film. She is smoked out, as it were, from hiding as the director pays tribute to spaghetti Westerns. She plans to use film as a flamethrower against the Nazis even as they use propaganda movies as weapons – all a tribute to the power and usefulness of film. Her last name, Dreyfus, may even be a tribute to *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937) and *I Accuse!* (1958), which depicted the infamous anti-Semitic Alfred Dreyfus

trial in France. And who knows the significance of her assumed name in Paris, Emmanuelle Mimieux?

Tarantino asks the audience to re-imagine history, or at least to be open to such re-imagination, to the "What if?" Perhaps that is the reason why he spells his movie's name so creatively, taking the (conventionally spelled) title of Enzo Castellari's 1978 World War II romp and cajoling, "Think revision."

I had a feeling that despite the re-imagining of history, Shoshanna was destined not to survive her own plot. She dies bravely, trading gun shots with the soulless Nazi "hero" who is the subject of the propaganda film and has been pursuing the beautiful hiding Jew.

Yet Shoshanna is no Queen Esther. Nor is she even a Carrie, who is a better survivor. She is destined by Tarantino to double-die here. What is more, her plot turns out to be rather superfluous, anyway. She is like an avenging moth heading to her own flames. She is a survivor who does not survive, who thinks only of death for the evil criminals and for the avenging victims. Indeed, a German actress double-agent (Diane Kruger) dies more sensibly (and courageously?) than Shoshanna does.

There is also a platoon of American Jewish soldiers, the "Basterds," led by a sympathetic red neck, Lt. Aldo Raine, played by Brad Pitt (who demonstrates broad comedic talent in this role). These gentlemen are presented as well-intentioned but rather uncouth prototype of suicide bombers. One of them, "Bear Jew" Donni Donowitz (Eli Roth, who directed the film within this film), uses a baseball bat to personally pulverize Nazis.

Their non-Jewish leader, Raine, insists that they scalp every Nazi that they capture, calling for one hundred each. But they are not much better at survival than the Jewish woman. Is there some symbolic reason that Tarantino has his male Jewish avengers taking scalps, a practice that Native Americans adopted from their white persecutors? Are his Jews made, and marked, solely by the evil perpetrated upon them? I'm not sure that Tarantino has considered this question. He does take every opportunity to make the point that the scalping stuff puts fear into Nazi hearts.

The film does foster awareness of the Holocaust, and it is a worthy effort. It is not slapstick or parody, though it is ironic and playful in an intellectual sense. It is comedic drama or dramatic comedy. But it is morally ambiguous in at least three ways:

1. Visually if not thematically, it proposes an equivalency between Nazi barbarity and Jewish retribution. While I don't think that this was the writer's goal, the denouement does suggest that Shoshanna and her German suitor cancel each other out, as it were, with the hatred (not to mention the weapons) that each holds.

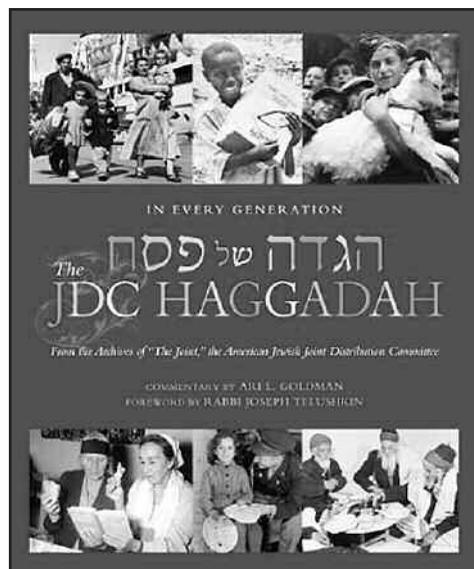
2. The film suggests that the Jewish brigade uses terrorist methods in order to resist the Nazis, and invokes the  
(see Gertel, page NAT 15)

# Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

## American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Haggadah

*In Every Generation: The JDC Haggadah.* Commentary by Ari L. Goldman and Foreword by Joseph Telushkin. New York and Jerusalem: Devora Publishing, 2010. 92 Pages. \$24.95.



This new addition to the 3,500 to 5,000 editions of the Haggadah is discordantly different from all the others in that it is primarily a tribute to the work of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, known as JDC or the "Joint." Founded during World War I by American Jews, it provided relief to thousands of East European Jews who were trapped in the zone of conflict. Soup kitchens and clinics served Jews in the Polish-Ukrainian-Russian battle areas. When the war ended and the Communists took over, Jews in the former Pale of Settlement needed further help. The Joint raised millions of dollars to support Jewish farmers in the Ukraine. By 1938, this project failed because of agricultural collectivization, Ukrainian anti-Semitism, and Stalin's industrialization that attracted Jews to the towns.

The Joint went on to help Polish Jews during the Great Depression, as well as Jewish refugees in Shanghai, Spain, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Italy during World War II. It later worked in North Africa, Western Europe, and helped Russian Jews when they were allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Many parts of this valiant story are told in this Haggadah even though there is a difficult struggle to establish the connection between the Exodus and the activities of the Joint.

Existing Haggadoth do not glorify a particular organization. They often represent a point of view – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Chassidic, Sephardic, feminist, Lubavitch, vegetarian, liberal, traditional, egalitarianism,

and New Age. Haggadoth are designed for scholars, art lovers, children, collectors, and gift-givers. Some use archaic language that is hard to follow. Others are contemporary, clear, and poetic.

Commentaries also represent considerable diversity. They include: simple explanations geared to children; tribute to the *kibbutz*; modern interpretations of the Passover story; history and symbolism of the seder; connections to Israel; civil rights; commemoration of the Holocaust; implications of the Exodus story; halachic issues; midrashim; and anthologies of commentators. There are wide differences among Haggadoth with respect to price, point of view, translations, and attractiveness.

Widely used and well known, the Haggadah was separated from the general prayer book some time between the 12th and 15th centuries in Spain. Once it became a free-standing book, variety flourished and artistic ingenuity blossomed. The text was richly decorated with ornamental design. Wealthy and influential patrons commissioned the production of Haggadoth to be written by skilled calligraphers with illuminations by accomplished artists. These masters gave full rein to their imaginations as they created Haggadoth of great beauty.

The Haggadoth from the Middle Ages that have survived are to be found in museums where they are great treasures. Several of them have been reproduced and are available in facsimile editions. These include: the Ashkenazi Haggadah, the Rylands Haggadah, the Illuminated Haggadah, the Golden Haggadah, the Barcelona Haggadah, the Bird's Head Haggadah, the Sarajevo Haggadah; the Copenhagen Haggadah, and the Kaufmann Haggadah. Some other Haggadoth for collectors include; the Moss Haggadah, the Syzk Haggadah, the Holocaust Haggadah, the Chagall Haggadah, the Amsterdam Haggadah, the Korman Haggadah, the Haggadah of the Gates, the Diaspora Haggadah, the Abecassis Haggadah, the American Heritage Haggadah, the Washington Haggadah, and the Agam Haggadah.

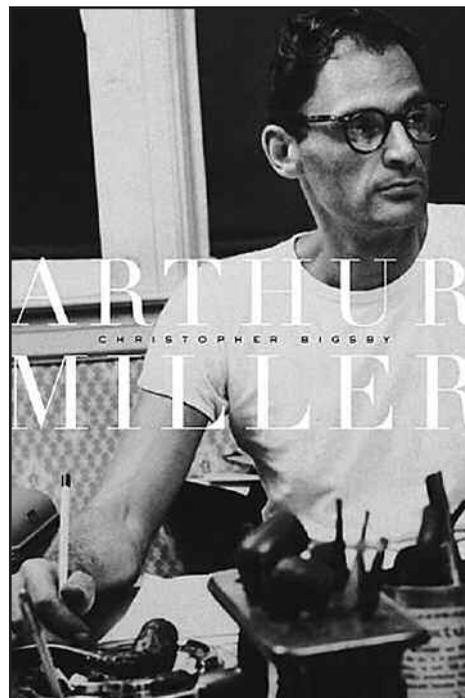
Given the fact that the Haggadoth mentioned here are just a few of the many that are available, there is little justification for a new one that highlights a particular organization, important as that one is in the Jewish community.

## Two books on Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe

*Arthur Miller.* By Christopher Bigsby. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. 776 Pages. \$35.

*The Genius and the Goddess.* By Jeffrey Meyers. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010. 384 Pages. \$29.95.

Patient readers who plow through both these books will learn more than they may want to know about Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe. Miller, a leading

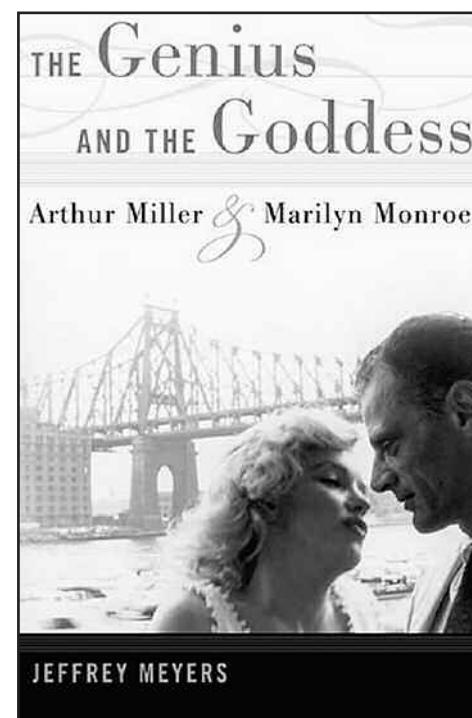


playwright of the 20th century, was born in 1915 to a wealthy family of Jewish immigrants whose money came from a successful clothes manufacturing business. Hit hard by the Great Depression, they down-graded from a posh apartment in Harlem to a modest house in Brooklyn. Miller grew up in a Jewish home, had a Jewish education and a bar mitzvah but abandoned this identity for Marxism when he was 17. He attended the University of Michigan from 1934 to 1938, choosing this school because of its cash awards for writers. He won a prize for his first play, and he wrote for the school paper. Miller met the first of his three non-Jewish wives at the University of Michigan where she shared his leftist political views.

After graduation, Miller returned for a short time to the family home in Brooklyn where he wrote plays, short stories, a novel, and radio scripts with only modest success. Miller was rejected for military service because of a college football injury. He spent most of the war years writing radio plays and working briefly in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Finally, in 1947, with the production of *All My Sons*, followed two years later by *Death of a Salesman*, Miller's career as a playwright took off.

The end of his first marriage, his romance with Marilyn Monroe, and his appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee are all described in great detail. Practically everything Miller wrote is tediously analyzed and summarized. Author Bigsby, director of the Arthur Miller Centre at the University of East Anglia, has written and edited three previous books on Miller. His undoubted expertise places him in command of every single detail about Miller's life, and he is determined to share this itemized information with his readers, regardless of their capacity for absorption. The result is a heavy, dull tome that, moreover, is filled with errors.

Lillian Wald, of the Henry Street Settlement, appears as "Lillian Walk, of the Hester Street Settlement." Beekman Place is misspelled as "Beakman Place." Townsend Harris Hall is wrongly called "Townsend Harris School" with admission dependent on the "Regents Examinations." These tests are actually given in the last years of high school, not before entrance. At the 1939 World's Fair in New York, the Futurama was presented by General Motors, not Ford, and experimental TV was exhibited by RCA, not NBC, as Bigsby mistakenly states. "Madison Square Gardens" should be Madison Square Garden.



Meyers, author of many biographies of writers and film stars as well as works of literary criticism, fully demonstrates his highly polished writing skills by offering lively portraits of Miller and Marilyn Monroe. He describes their tempestuous five years of marriage as well as their lives apart from each other. His account of Miller's appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee is far briefer and brisker than the wearisome account offered by Bigsby. Yet, Meyers conveys fully the horrors of this experience and its threat to American democracy.

Considerable emphasis is placed on the sad life of Marilyn Monroe and the number of prominent celebrities with whom she had affairs, including President John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. Her troubled relationships with Miller and with her psychiatrists are set forth, along with a persuasive account of her suicide that belies claims of accidental death. Meyers draws on his personal friendship with Miller, his extensive research and interviews with people who knew both Monroe and Miller to present an informative and fascinating narrative. The story includes an account of Monroe's "conversion" to Judaism after a two-hour interview with a Reform rabbi who later officiated at a "Jewish wedding" where the wedding meal consisted of lobster and champagne.

(see Teicher, page NAT 14)



## Kosher Kuisine

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### The Pesach symbol on a cake plate

There is no blessing, there is no special plate. There isn't even a *bracha* over it! Can you guess this well-known part of *Pesach*? It's sponge cake.

Sponge cake comes in two types: angel food and true sponge. Angel food cake has cream of tartar, an acid ingredient, which used to be combined with baking soda and salt to make a form of baking powder before baking powder was produced commercially.

Cream of tartar is what gives the angel food cake the pure white color, and it also creates an acid reaction in the batter.

Sponge cake has a more delicate cousin referred to as sunshine cake. Most people, however, refer to the Passover version as sponge cake.

Sponge cake is usually baked without shortening or butter or baking powder but with lots of eggs. Its lightness and texture comes from careful handling and the air beaten in the eggs. Recipes with nine to twelve eggs are not uncommon.

The aim of making a sponge cake is to beat the maximum amount of air into the yolks and whites while handling them as little as possible to retain the air. Egg yolks should be room temperature when beaten. An electric or rotary beater gives better results than whipping by hand. Since there is no baking powder, the main rising factor is the air plus steam.

In making a sponge cake, it is important that the yolks are beaten until light and thick, and the whites must be beaten until they are stiff but glossy. Essences such as vanilla, lemon or orange rind add special flavor to sponge cake.

The best pan for a sponge cake is a tube pan with removable rim. Thus the central tube gives support to the batter. The pan should also be ungreased. A preheated 350°F oven is the best heat for baking a sponge cake.

When the cake is done, the pan should be inverted to cool for about an hour and a half. Before removing the cake from the pan, the sides should be loosened with a knife. It is best not to try to cut a fresh sponge cake with a knife. Use a divider with prongs instead, and slide back and forth gently.

Zell Schulman in *Let My People Eat* offers these additional tips to keep your sponge cake from falling: Have the eggs at room temperature and use only large eggs; don't add sugar until the egg whites begin to hold small, soft peaks; beat the egg whites until good and stiff but not dry; and never make a sponge cake on a wet day!

When choosing a special cake for Pesach, try one of these.

#### Orange Glazed Sabra Sponge Cake

1/2 cup unsalted margarine  
2/3 cup sugar  
1 tsp. orange rind  
2 Tbsp. Sabra liqueur  
3 eggs separated  
2 Tbsp. sugar  
1/2 cup potato starch  
6 Tbsp. orange juice  
3 Tbsp. Sabra Liqueur  
4 tsp. orange rind

Preheat oven to 325°F. In a bowl, cream margarine and sugar. Add 1 tsp. orange rind. Add 2 Tbsp. Sabra and egg yolks. In another bowl, beat egg whites until stiff, gradually adding 2 Tbsp. sugar. Add to creamed mixture gently then stir in potato flour. Pour into greased tube pan and bake 45 minutes to one hour. In a bowl, combine orange juice, 3 Tbsp. Sabra and 4 tsp. orange rind. While cake is still hot, punch holes around cake with a toothpick and pour over glaze.

#### Miriam's Banana Cake

*This comes from one of my closest friends whom I left behind in Overland Park, Kan., who is a really creative cook.*

7 separated eggs  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1 cup mashed bananas  
3/4 cup potato starch  
1 cup sugar  
1 cup chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a bowl, beat egg whites until stiff but not dry then refrigerate. In another bowl, beat egg yolks until thick and lemon colored. Gradually add sugar and salt, beating continually. Fold in bananas and potato starch. Fold in egg whites then nuts. Turn into an ungreased tube pan and bake 45–50 minutes. Invert pan to cool.

#### Pan di Spagna (8–12 servings)

*This recipe comes from The Classic Cuisine of the Italian Jews by Edda Servi Machlin. Pan di Spagna (bread of Spain) is also called Pasta Reale and was made in the matzah bakery with the same flour that was used for matzot.*

6 eggs separated  
1/8 tsp. salt  
1 cup sugar  
1/4 cup fresh orange juice  
1/2 cup Passover cake meal  
1/4 cup potato starch  
Freshly grated rind of a large lemon

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a small bowl, beat the egg whites with salt until soft peaks form. In a larger bowl, place egg yolks, sugar and orange juice and beat until frothy and lemon colored. Combine the cake meal with potato starch and gradually add to the egg-yolk mixture, beating until the batter is smooth. Add the lemon rind and fold in the egg whites. Pour into an ungreased tube sponge-cake pan with removable bottom, and bake for one hour. Remove from oven and invert pan over a wire rack to cool before unmolding.



## Jews by Choice

BY MARY HOFMANN

### Moving toward vege-veganism

*Eating Animals*, by Jonathan Safran Foer, envisions a Passover without meat and provides compelling reasons why we should consider moving toward becoming vegetarians/vegans in our scary new world of factory "farming."

While Michael Pollan (*Omnivore's Dilemma* and *Food Rules*), Mark Bittman (*Food Matters*), Alan Weisman (*The World Without Us*) and others aren't as straightforward in drawing parallels between current human behavior and the roots of compassion for all creatures that originally led to kashrut, a Jewish thread certainly runs through much of the current literature urging us to change our ways of dealing with Mother Earth.

Food has been much on my mind of late. My grown granddaughter Vanessa has been a vegan for several years and my daughter Cathy recently became one as well, despite her husband's voracious appetite for meat. Her little ones still eat the occasional chicken, but I see the writing on the wall. Cathy is fearless as a cook and creates fabulous dishes...in fact, her vegan challah was an amazing hit at services (and the Jews in Merced, never having had access to store-bought challah, have been spoiled by four of the best challah bakers in California for 30 years).

Eating meat has worried me for years, and the more I learn about modern methods of "growing" and "harvesting" meat, the more concerned I become. While others have certainly exceeded Foer in describing the brutal methods of meat manufacture, I believe he has been most persuasive in forcing the reader to face his/her own emotional feelings...our ease of denial after years of seeing "meat" as a separate entity from "cow" or "chicken," and our ability to ignore that which we don't have to watch. Perhaps it's because Foer, a novelist, speaks to me as a reader rather than to the world as a reporter, that I'm putting a plan in place.

Coincidentally (for me, at least), the Reform Movement, always a force in social action, is also looking at meat consumption as a moral issue...at least in terms of amount of consumption, if not cessation. But that's a first step I took a long time ago.

*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. ★*

Pork, of course, is a non-issue. I don't eat it.

Beef is more difficult, and I find I've become more of an opportunistic beef eater. If someone serves beef, I'll eat it, but I don't cook it myself anymore.

Chicken and salmon are the hardest. Okay, chicken is the hardest. Salmon is a distant second. I've had something close to a chicken obsession all my life...chicken in almost any form. Well, in any form but alive, if I'm going to be honest with myself. I have made my peace with eggs, as I buy them (and my produce) from a local organic farm at which the chickens literally run free in the grass, and the coop is on wheels so it can follow them. Next week Cathy and I plan to visit Fresno, where there's a store where I can buy a selection of chicken substitutes in fervent hope that at least one of them will satisfy my chicken obsession well enough. Then I can let go of chicken and salmon, the last two meats I have trouble resisting.

Which would leave me a vegetarian who eats eggs and dairy. But is that really enough? My daughter has a bumper sticker that says something to the effect that veal is the meat of the dairy industry. True. You know all those baby boy calves that are born and can never provide milk? Guess what they become.

So here I am, face to face (panim al panim) with myself, unable any more to rationalize my meat eating in any form. And so, this Passover will (if I can stay strong!) be our last Passover with any kind of meat on the table, since I certainly plan to use up what's still in the freezer (oh, rationalizing hits again!).

"Think of it this way, Mom," jibes my Catherine. "It's Passover. Just pass over the meat!"

The shank bone is easy – I've used the same one for years...it has its own special place in the freezer and can keep its place of honor forever. The eggs will be easy...ours really are from happy California chickens. This year I'll use up the last salmon fillet in the freezer and perhaps the last package of chicken breasts. Cathy will make all kinds of grand vegan dishes to lure us to a land of soy and nut meats and perhaps, with the help of the local Whole Foods store and some internet sources, we really will be able to close the seder with "Next year in Jerusalem...or at least next year in Merced without meat!"

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

#### TEICHER

(continued from page NAT 13)

Taken together, these two books provide a thoroughly definitive statement about the life of Arthur Miller and his association with Marilyn Monroe.

*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. ★*

**RIBNER***(continued from page NAT 3)*

The more mindful we are of our speech, the more powerful our words are when we do speak. That is why it is said that when a *tzaddik* (righteous person) speaks, God fulfills his decree. Guard your tongue carefully. Don't waste words, and your words will be more powerful. You can actually heal people with your words.

From Kabbalah Month by Month. *There is so much more information available in the book to guide you through Nissan.*

Melinda Ribner, L.C.S.W. is a spiritual psychotherapist and healer in private practice ([www.kabbalahoftheheart.com](http://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](http://www.Beitmiriam.org)). She can be reached at [Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com](mailto:Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com). ✨

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

wholly involved, and as the group itself becomes more unified, more totally involved. Given the wholeness of the self and the group, we approach something beyond collaboration, beyond the game itself. Some coincidence of selves that undefines the limits of our capabilities. A coincidence having almost nothing to do with the game, and everything to do with the human spirit – shared moments of unusual clarity, vivid communication, spontaneous combustions of understanding.

And should we lose our way, should we forget that we are playing for the fun of playing together, we find ourselves, on one side, feeling alienated from each other, superior or inferior, not just in connection to the game, but in connection to everything. Or we feel alienated from ourselves, as if the game was the only thing that made life worth living, that made us worth being whoever we were being.

And then there's Pesach, reminding us of when we (1) finally freed ourselves of slavery, and (2) we were free together, in our own community, under our own and only G-d.

So it seems to me, like it probably seemed to you, Israel, that the idea of coliberation is a better depiction of what Pesach is all about – not just about our managing to free ourselves from slavery, but more about our being able to free each other.

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>. ✨

**BEN ASHER/BAT SARAH***(continued from page NAT 6)*

different than the lower animals, as if without the capacity to be moral spiritual beings. We're repulsed by the idea that after death, human remains are treated as carrion. And, of course, the primary purpose of *kashrut* is to distinguish, separate, and elevate the behavior of humankind above the lower animals, which have no capacity for moral spirituality.

Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) teaches that the separation of meat and dairy is a reminder: God gives the laws of nature by virtue of *lemino* – each specie "after its kind" – allowing humankind the opportunity to lift itself up to the heights of moral spiritual freedom; so that, unlike all other animals, it is not our bodies that control our spirits, but our spirits that control our bodies.

In the words of Rabbi Samuel Dresner, "Kashrut is a systematic means of educating and refining the conscience..." But the Midrash asks: "Of what concern is it to the Holy One...whether one ritually slaughters an animal and eats it, or he stabs the animal and eats it? Or, of what concern is it to God whether one eats of permitted animals or one eats of forbidden animals?"

And the tradition answers: "Understand...that the *mitzvot* have been given only to refine and purify humankind..." (Tanhuma Shemini 8). So the goal of *kashrut* is to teach us unceasing reverence for life by raising us up from the animal nature within us to our greatest capacity for free-willed moral spirituality – and thus through dietary ritual to fulfill us by bringing us closer to God's Divine Providence for humankind with every mouthful of food we consume.

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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](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)). ✨

**ZIMMERMAN***(continued from page NAT 8)*

restraint that I believe my daughter responded to in her reframe of "Holocaust" to "World War II." The same restraint is shaping my oral assignment for my German class: Will I tell them about my efforts to reclaim German citizenship for myself and for my children, available because of my father's persecution by the Nazis? I have yet to decide.

A diverse group, the students' faces reflect the range of ethnicities in Northern California. I can imagine their surprise if I tell them in my simplistic German, that in the last two days, "*ich bin zweimal nach Deutschland gefahren. Mein Vater ist in Deutschland geboren....er kommt nach Amerika in 1937. Ich habe die deutsche Staatsbuergerschaft erhalten.*" Leah helped me with the translation.

"[In the last two days] I have been twice to Germany. My father was born in Germany. He came to America in 1937. I have obtained German citizenship." I admit even six years after obtaining my German citizenship, that my motives for doing so remain unclear.

As I prepare for Passover, with all its special cleaning and cooking requirements, I realize how recent it is that Jewish women could prepare their homes for seder without fear of persecution from their Christian neighbors. Thinking of the Holocaust as the culmination of centuries of Church-sanctioned anti-Judaism, I ponder if it will ever be possible for Germans and Jews and for Christians and Jews to have a "normal" relationship.

I will allow my daughter Leah, the voice of the 3rd generation, to have the last word: "...although the Holocaust was a poignant event in our lives, an event that still affects our people to this day, to non-Jews, the Holocaust means something very different. Perhaps for all of us to move on and nurture positive relationships, we should restrain ourselves from constantly reminding others of our persecution. It will alleviate their guilt and allow both parties to forge a relationship based on equal ground. As the relationship we are creating is between the children and grandchildren of perpetrators and victims, it is time to declare our forgiveness in the pursuit of a more peaceful world."

Dr. Miriam L. Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, Calif. She can be reached at [mzimmerman@ndnu.edu](mailto:mzimmerman@ndnu.edu). ✨

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

In truth, we wouldn't have changed anything at the Winter Olympics. It just is. But, what it does is loudly remind us of the world we live in, pluses and minuses, and gives us the opportunity to respond.

The current healthcare issue, even in all of its complexities, is simple next to the world evolving around us. Does it ever occur to you that we ought to look for the plans for the Ark?

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc. His e-mail is [howkar@wi.rr.com](mailto:howkar@wi.rr.com). ✨

**GOLD***(continued from page NAT 12)*

parting shot in this column is that we ought to let, nay insist, that *hazzanim* be allowed to do what they have done for thousands of years. They should move us and comfort us by their singing.

At one time, at a Cantors Assembly convention, the composer Sholom Secunda maintained (correctly) that the voice was the most important qualification for the position of cantor. All the other duties we have added to the position, while practically eliminating the principal, nay the *raison d'etre*, of the calling should be changed.

Our priorities need to be reversed. Just as in *neilah*, the gates are closing, and it may be almost too late to reverse this situation. I really hope that I am mistaken. I would prefer to hear a cantor sing any day, rather than listen to people drone on and on in a "discussion" coming and going and "talking of Michaelangelo" or whatever.

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

**GERTEL***(continued from page NAT 12)*

Holocaust as sanction, as it were, for such comparisons. It even suggests that vicious Nazi anti-Semitism needs to be compounded with other crimes in the face of cold-blooded Jewish resistance. So it emphasizes that the Nazis are both anti-Semitic and anti-Black. Shoshanna has a black lover, the theater projectionist, who is often insulted by Nazis and French neighbors alike. She regards him as the only person whom she can trust. She knows that he will not leave her to burn down the theater alone.

3. The villain, played by Waltz, is so slick, cultured, even multi-lingual, smart and charming, especially when set aside Pitt's American hick character (however good-hearted or justly ruthless) that he emerges as the winner here. Landa is virtually invincible. He also outsmarts the Americans (that is, Aldo) and is clearly the only survivor of the "war" crimes who has a chance at having a good life in America if he can keep his past hidden.

True, in the end, Landa is branded with a swastika on his forehead, a Basterd comeuppance, much like the biblical mark of Cain. Before I left the theater, however, it occurred to me that our villain could easily find a plastic surgeon to remove the only impediment to a charmed life commensurate with his own abundance of charisma.

One can't help thinking that the Jewish woman here is not so charmed or charming or adept at survival. She, the last member of her family, is doomed by her own all-consuming desire for revenge. While it is noble that she wants to destroy the leaders of the Nazi murder machine, her uncontrolled anger undermines her own devices. She puts her plan at risk to the same extent that she puts her own life at risk. She therefore fails at survival.

If Landa, the S.S. Colonel, is the winner here, are Shoshanna and most of the Basterds, representing the Jews and the Americans, losers?

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

### Yes, the Rabbanit (Rebbetzin, Rabbi's Wife) Yemima, Not the Rabba

I wasn't quite sure what was acceptable recently, so I only took a couple of pictures after it was over, and only one is even barely acceptable. You can see her in the distance wearing a black hat.



Strange for me, I have trouble remembering her points, even though I was mesmerized and listened to every word. But I'm very kinesthetic and feel experiences instead of memorizing verbal details.

Davka, on Shabbat we ate at neighbors and discussed the Rabbi Avi Weiss "Rabba" controversy concerning his ordaining Sara Hurwitz as a *rabba*, or female rabbi. Besides this *smicha* (ordination controversy), I know nothing about Sara Hurwitz. Her position is a job, which she shares with others. As far as I'm concerned, none of these private rabbinic *smicha* titles are all that convincing, man, woman or whatever. I don't think the testing should be by the teachers. The fact that it's Rabbi Weiss's school, *shul*, *smicha* and so forth makes it totally problematic as far as I can see. There should be checks and balances like a good government system. Hurwitz's attempt to break through that glass ceiling in the American rabbinate seems much more like a worker's problem. Since we don't have synagogue-based Jewish communities here, and I've been living in Israel two-thirds of my long-enough-to-get-some-discounts life, it's really difficult to relate to the issue.

The Rabbanit Yemima seems much happier in her *frum* female skin. Not only is she not trying to break through any glass ceiling, but she reminded us not to obsess about Passover cleaning and to give the kids fun jobs so they won't remember pre-Passover as a nightmare. It's a bit too many decades late for me and my kids, but I'm glad that my daughter was influenced by better mothers.

As I wrote in last night's post, the Rabbanit Yemima's presentation is pure "stand-up." Mary Poppins sweetened it with a spoon full of honey, and Rebbetzin Yemima with laughs. Laughing is healthy. The evening began with Tehillim, Psalms

for the sick and those in need of other types of health.

May this be for a *refuah shleimah* (complete recovery) for: Rachel bat Echyia and all others in need of our prayers

Sun., March 14, 2010

### Classroom control, what burnt me out

Well, it's small comfort to know that my problems controlling a class are international rather than personal.

I spent over two decades of my life teaching. For a total of about 15 years I was first a creative dance teacher and then a gym teacher. For the health and safety of my students, they needed to listen to me. And considering the high percentage of outdoor lessons when I taught sports, shouting supplemented by a loud whistle was the only way I could be heard. Those were the days before portable loud-speakers. No surprise I developed the reputation of a teacher always yelling.

Teaching became very difficult after the elementary school classrooms became larger, and the students got used to sitting in groups around square tables. The children faced each other, not the teacher nor the board. Eye-contact was with each other, and even when I had them all together, they had much more difficulty (than their elder sisters whom I had also taught) following instructions.

A few years after I ended that career, I reentered teaching as an EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher. At first I was more a glorified tutor helping small, highly motivated groups of high school boys. It was a pleasure and very easy. Those boys wanted to succeed, and succeed they did.

My problems began when I was "promoted" to regular classes. Gentle encouragement was perceived as weakness, and I couldn't revive the tough persona needed to keep the kids in line. They didn't accept nor understand the concept of "no." This was/is a generation raised on whispers and sweet voices, hearing things like: "Kootchy kootchy coo, sticking the lollipop stick in the baby's eye may be unpleasant."

The local child psychology gurus brainwashed parents into believing that the shout of "no, stop" would stunt something in their child's psyche.

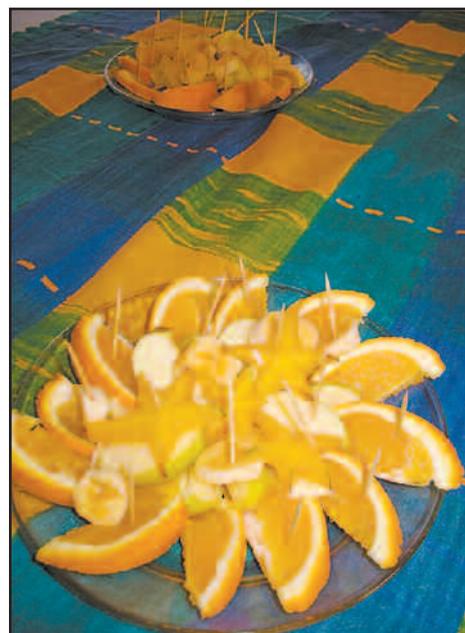
For decades now the noisy, open classroom is the norm in many countries, the countries where there are problems controlling classes. Kids aren't educated in quiet listening. The classrooms aren't arranged to maximize teacher control.

Nobody and that includes both the teachers and the students get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation causes poor concentration, short attention span, impulsivity, and memory problems. That's bad news for the classroom.

And lastly to the new teacher who realizes that with all the pedagogy and education classes he or she was required to take, there was no course with TNT (tried and true) classroom control techniques. It's because your university

professors haven't a clue. They're teaching you, not a bunch of 7- or 17-year-olds.

### Simple sliced fruit plate Healthy Entertaining Made Easy



I'm very lazy and that includes my food preparation. I can't stand doing anything difficult and complicated. So, if you need cooking and menu ideas that are easy, I'm the one to ask. Since I changed my way of eating and lost over 15 kilos (35 pounds), I've tried to stay away from serving – not only eating – cakes and cookies.

I served these fruit plates last week to the movie club. All I did was slice up apples, oranges, bananas and a "star fruit." Toothpicks were added for cleaner eating, and that's it. Whatever fruits, fresh and dry, can be served. You can provide small plates, bowls or just paper napkins. This is easier than a fruit salad, which must be served in a bowl or cup and eaten with a spoon.

I've discovered that if I eat enough fruit a day, at least three servings, I have no desire, no craving for any candies, chocolates, cake or cookies. We do need something sweet in our system, and fruit is best.

P.S. Even diabetic guests can enjoy this, since they are permitted a certain amount of fruit, and the slices can be small and savored by eating slowly.

### Reflecting, I've never considered myself a feminist



I came of age when feminism was rather new and equaled anti-motherhood. That was probably a major element that turned me off to feminism. All I had ever wanted to be was a mother.

I never saw motherhood as a second-class existence. An outside job and salary never seemed more attractive than taking care of my children. And yes, I've worked, sometimes more than a full-time job. I've had many, many different kinds of jobs over the years. Besides the short couple of years I taught creative dance, none of them really inspired me. Thirty years ago I taught creative dance in Jerusalem, and it was beginning to catch on. More schools wanted me to teach their girls than I had time to teach. Then we moved to Shiloh, and the person in charge of afterschool activities didn't understand what it was.

Hmmm...that wasn't the point of this post. Oops! Now back on topic!

Maybe it's being of the generation that has heard decades of feminist philosophy, but I do have certain expectations, okay, demands. And I do not tolerate certain slights, insults, even if they are caused by careless reading.

Yesterday afternoon, in one of my first stages of pre-Passover cleaning, I finally cut out my *National Jewish Post & Opinion* articles to file (okay just store) away. I also cut and collected, in a separate envelope, the American stamps from the envelopes the newspapers were in and sent an email to our Shiloh email list. I signed my name, Batya. One neighbor quickly replied that he was interested, so I told him to come over to get them. A short while later, another neighbor replied, addressing the note to my husband. That neighbor won't get them. Even if he had been the first to reply, he wouldn't get them.

Why should he take for granted that my husband sent the note? It's bilingual and includes my name. Usually, I tell the one who gets the stamps who else is interested, so he or she can pass on the duplicates.

I won't include the guy who wrote to my husband. Why should I put him on the list? It would be proof that I read my husband's mail, nu?

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](mailto:shilohmuse@yahoo.com). ✨

