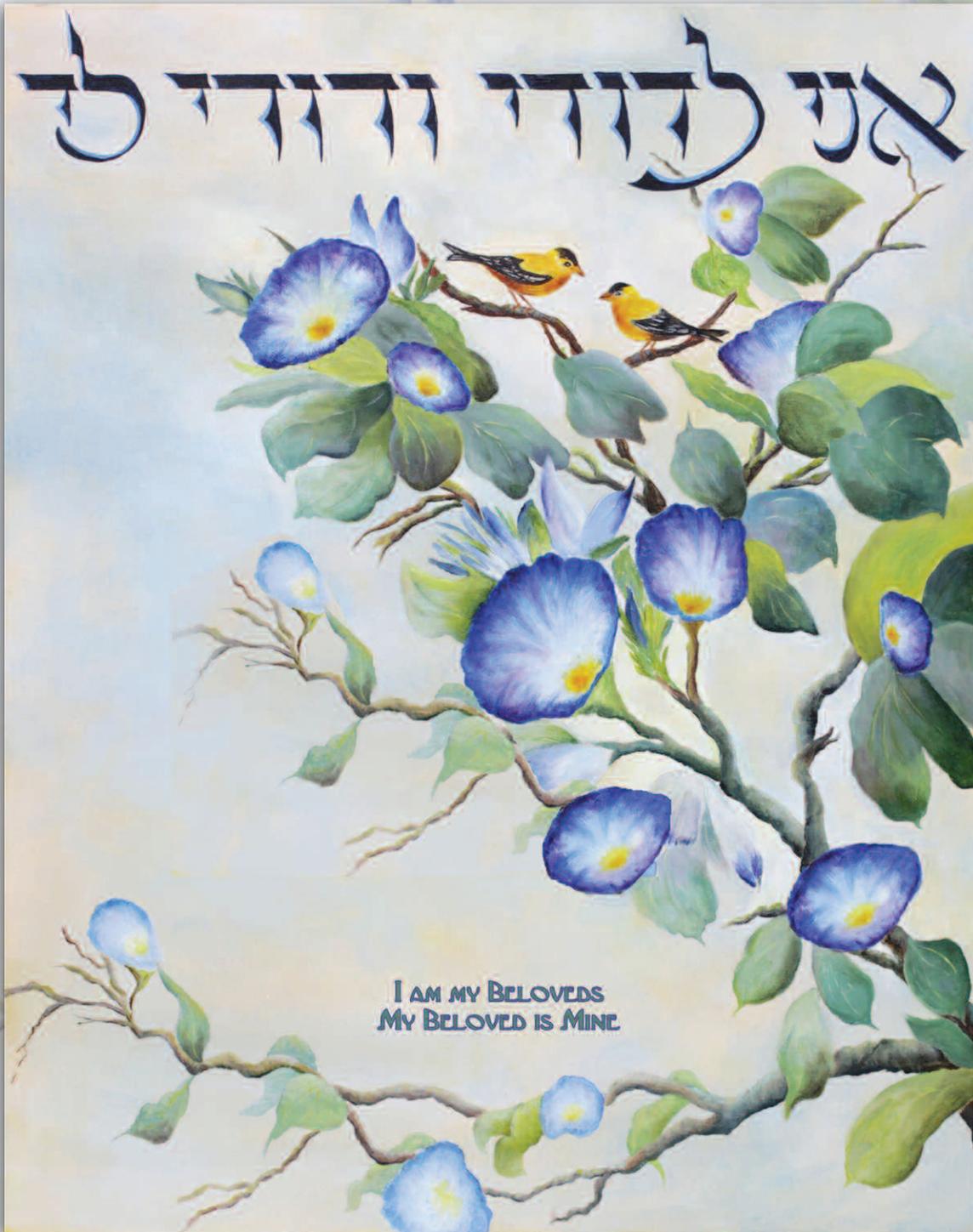


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Cover art by Jackie Olenick (see About the Cover, p.2).

Editorial

The following is part of a lecture about Purim and Pesach given by Rabbi David Zeller, z"l, at Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland, Calif. on March 22, 1987. I had taped it so I was able to write it very close to what he said. Both this and the portion on Pesach were published in previous issues of this newspaper.

Purim is about costume and dress – what we wear and don't wear. The very first Purim costume was God dressing up in the universe.



Rabbi David Zeller, z"l

It says in the psalms, "He puts the light on like a garment and puts the heavens on like a cloth."

In all the pictures you see of wizards in the Middle Ages, they are always dressed in coats with stars and crescent moons because they are going to be doing magic and they are hoping to create as God did. God put on the universe, and they wanted to dress like God. These wizards also say, *ahbra cadahbra*, which is Aramaic for *habara cadahbara*, which translates in English to, "I will create according to my word."

In fact we address God in every blessing, "King of the Universe." In personal prayer we call God "*Ribbono shel olam*" (Master of the world). What does that mean? The word "*olam*" (world) comes from the word "*ne'alam*," which means hidden or concealed. Our word for the "world," which is all that we can see, means "that which is hidden."

This shows that deeply embedded or encoded in Judaism is the understanding that everything we connect with in the tangible world is simply a concealment of what is beyond us – God. When we call God *Melech haolam* (King of the world), what we are really saying is the "King of Concealment" or the "Master of Hiddenness" or "Master of Illusion."

Every time we say "*Ribbono shel olam*," it is a little bit of a prayer meaning: "I'm lost in world of material stuff. Please, I'm begging you to reveal yourself to me a little bit. It's so hard to see you. All I see is the physical world." Similarly with each person we see only the outer shell and we ask, "*Ribbono Shel Olam*, who is hidden inside there, who is this person really, what's going on in his or her life?"

And that is the theme of Purim – the hidden of the hidden. It was bad enough that God has hidden Himself completely in the world, then the Temple was destroyed, and the Jews were in exile. If that wasn't bad enough, there was then a

About the Cover

"I am my Beloveds"

by Jackie Olenick

This romantic image of morning glories and two lovebirds is a beautiful gift for a wedding, or anniversary, and shows how love is continually renewed with each new day. This fine art giclee print is 12" x 14".

Olenick creates Judaic illuminations in several mediums based upon her favorite Torah text, psalms and prayers. She also designs personalized, illuminated ketubot for the bride and groom. The images created are joyful, contemporary, inspirational and speak to issues that guide us on our day-to-day journey. They are intended to bring blessing and holy reminders to every Jewish home. She also creates beautiful spiritual jewelry appropriate for men, women and teens. All jewelry is designed



Jackie Olenick

(see About the Cover, page 15)



decree to kill all the Jews. People wanted to give up on God. They thought maybe they should try another religion.

Mordechai did not give up. He knew the deep Hasidic teaching that Rebbe Nachman has taught us, "Never give up!" Even in the darkest moment, Mordechai went out in the marketplace and cried out, "Where are you, where is the place of your glory?"

God's name isn't mentioned even once in the entire *Megillah*, but *Megillat Esther* is a revelation of the hidden. "*Megillah*" comes from the root word meaning "to reveal," and "*Esther*" means "hidden." It is a story that doesn't mention God, but deeply hidden in it is how God works in the world. And the whole point is, you cannot see it, you cannot know it, you simply have to have faith. It's a different way of knowing.

At Purim we absolutely don't see any trace of God. During Pesach miracles are all over the place. God's name is mentioned everywhere in the *Haggadah*. Moses isn't mentioned in it because one shouldn't think for a moment that the miracles were at the hands of coincidence and people, as opposed to Purim where it only looks like it's simply people doing their thing. So we go from absolute hiddenness (Purim) to the holiday that is the beginning of the revelation (Pesach), the uncovering of God showing himself in the world.

Rabbi Zeller, of Blessed Memory, was an internationally known musician, lecturer, and workshop leader in Jewish mysticism,

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spirituality and meditation, as well as in transpersonal psychology. Learn more about him and his accomplishments at www.davidzeller.org.

Jennie Cohen, February 13, 2013 ✪

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

The First Commandment

The first commandment in the Torah is to get married. “Be fruitful and multiply”. How does one fulfill this commandment? By getting married and having children. If you do this *mitzvah* right, you are well on the way to having a good life. A happy marriage is very special. You can give and get a lot of love, support, companionship and many other benefits. Children and grandchildren are also very precious. (I don’t have any great-grandchildren yet).

However, there is a catch. How do you build a happy home, a marriage that lasts a lifetime and gets better all the time? So many marriages fail today. How do we create a successful marriage? What is the secret?

The first commandment is to get married. This is followed by 612 more commandments. In order to do the first commandment right you have to do all of the others.

Learning Torah and doing mitzvahs changes our outlook and priorities. The Torah teaches us that we were created to make this world better and holy. We are not here to take, and run after material pleasures. We are here to give, and run after spiritual pleasures.

I grew up rather secular. My priorities were to take from the world whatever I could – to have a good time and to have material pleasures. When two people get married, if each is thinking about what they will take from the relationship, and about everything their partner is going to give them and do for them, they are heading for disaster.

When I was 18, I started learning Torah in Kfar Chabad. I learned the importance of giving. If you help someone, if you cheer someone up, it warms their heart – and your heart also. This is a spiritual pleasure. Once you learn to appreciate spiritual pleasures, you are ready to get married.

Marriage offers many spiritual pleasures such as endless opportunities to love and help your spouse, your children and grandchildren. When you give love to members of your family, it warms their heart – and yours also. What happens next? They give you back even more. This is an endless cycle of more and more love, more and more spiritual pleasure.

The bottom line? The secret of a good life is a good marriage. The secret of a good marriage? Go to your local Chabad House and learn how to be a better person and a better spouse. Do more mitzvahs and learn more Torah.

A new start for our hopes and dreams

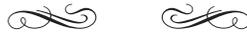
BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO



January has been a month of beginnings, the start of a year, a newly elected Congress, inaugurations of the governor and the president. Every new beginning brings with it both trepidation and hope.

We fear the unknown, the possibility that forces beyond our control will make tomorrow bleaker and darker than today. If our favored candidates lost the election, we despair that new leadership will not match our dreams. Even if our preferred candidate won, we wonder whether in a contentious, polarized atmosphere any promises can really be kept.

Yet doubt is also matched with hope. There are new opportunities, lessons learned, a better future envisioned. We can



What will be the final result of all of this love, and all of the other mitzvahs that we do? The whole world will be full of love and holiness. For thousands of years the nations of the world made war with each other. The strong nations conquered the weaker ones and built up empires. The Persian empire, the Greek empire, the Roman empire, and so forth.

What is happening today? Wonder of wonders. The strong nations are helping the weaker nations. Much less war, much more love. When one country is struck by a disaster, many countries send aide.

L’Chaim, to Life! This past week we celebrated the completion of the daily study cycle of the Rambam (Maimonides). Now we are starting to learn the teachings of the Rambam from the beginning. We invite all of you to join in this daily learning. You can find the daily portion to learn at www.Chabad.org. The last two chapters of the Rambam deal with the coming of *Moshiach*. Here are the final paragraphs:

“In that era, there will be neither famine or war, envy or competition for good will flow in abundance and all the delights will be freely available as dust. The occupation of the entire world will be solely to know G-d.”

“Therefore, the Jews will be great sages and know the hidden matters, grasping the knowledge of their Creator according to the full extent of human potential, as Isaiah 11:9 states: ‘The world will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.’”

(see Benzion, page 4)

start again.

It is, of course, possible to be cynical, to believe that government will never rise above self – interest and political bickering, that party takes precedence over principle, controversy over common goals.

But it is also possible – and, I believe, far better – to be optimistic, to believe that leaders can learn wisdom, put public good over private interest and can broaden vision to embrace the well-being of all citizens.

Theodore Herzl, a Jewish visionary, once said, “If you will it, it is no dream.” However, will is not enough. First you have to dream it.

I share with you the words of hope and the dream that were part of my benediction at the inauguration of Gov. Mike Pence:

“We join with citizens across the State of Indiana, diverse in culture and faith, yet united by a common destiny, and by the understanding that the good of all depends on the good of each and every citizen.”

May the One who is the Source of all Blessings, bless our governor with strength of mind and vigor of body and guide him with wisdom and humility.

May Gov. Pence make the word Hoosier mean not only hospitality but also vision, that our state be a heartland flourishing with arts and culture, a crossroads where jobs are plentiful, education superior, the environment protected and the health of all citizens a priority.

May our leaders be strong enough to stand for principle and wise enough to seek compromise; may they embrace the public good and affirm individual freedoms; may they affirm what is right and just in a spirit of caring and compassion.

From the banks of the Wabash to the star atop the flame of the torch of liberty, from the limestone quarries to the fields of corn, from cheers for our sport teams to applause for our symphony and theater, from the halls of our museums to the classrooms and laboratories of our schools and universities, from business offices to factory floors, may we all be proud to call Indiana our home.

May we who have been blessed to come to this time and place, now go forth and be a blessing.”

The quote popularly attributed to the famous German writer, Goethe, reminds us: “Are you in earnest? Seize this very moment. Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”

We are in earnest. This is the very moment to hold our elected officials accountable to the dream of America and to partner with them in making magic for the year ahead.

Rabbi Sasso and her husband Dennis C. Sasso have been senior rabbis at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis since 1977. This is reprinted with permission from The Indianapolis Star Jan. 29, 2013. ✨



Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Purim

Several things come to mind when the holiday of *Purim* peeks through the maze of calendar days and dates.

For example, there is the understanding that it is unique in the Jewish experience. Nowhere in our celebrations do we commemorate victory with merriment. In fact, we are taught that we have a duty, an obligation, to not rejoice over the misfortune of others. Yet, here we are, rejoicing over the demise of villains whose only concentration was to destroy us.

A *Midrash* describes the salvation of the Israelites from the clutches of Pharaoh when they are cornered at the Sea. There is nowhere to turn, no retreat, and only death in front. The Bible tells us that Moses lifted his hands over the water and it parted. The Israelites are spared but the Egyptians drown in pursuit. Then the angels cry out to God as to why there should not be celebrating and rejoicing to which God replies that the Egyptians are also His children. Certainly, no cause for jubilation.

While many think of us as different, none went so far as to wish us harm for that reason alone. When Pharaoh decides to enslave the Hebrews it is because he feared that we were becoming too numerous and lived in the most fertile part of the Nile delta. When the Israelites journeyed to their promise, Amalek did not want us to falter because of our belief in the One God, but because they were concerned about their survival at being overwhelmed by our numbers.

Even when the mighty Roman Empire destroyed the lands of Judea and Samaria, it was because of insurrection and rebellion. They had a great deal of respect for our culture and religious practices. History tells us that many soldiers converted to Judaism for its element of connection and the value of life. It was our hate for one another that contributed to our destruction. The Talmud describes it as "*Sinus Chinum*."

The equation changed when the Nazis systematically designed a "final solution" which included the indiscriminate murder of the Jewish people wherever they were located because they were Jewish. The agenda was short, simple and direct. There was no pretense of them being "too numerous" or too strong.

Haman remarks in his diatribe to the Persian King, "a certain people scattered about and dispersed among other peoples..." It

BENZION

(continued from page 3)

Do you need any special blessings in your life? We all do. The Lubavitcher Rebbe requested that everyone study Rambam every day. Join the daily learning and for sure you will see miracles. This will bring closer the great miracles of our final redemption. We want Moshiach now!

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



is an invitation to resent people who are different. How many times have we seen hatred surface when we do not understand someone or find that person or people so different that it frightens us? That is why we gravitate to like-kinds when settling somewhere or find ourselves in a controlled environment.

Another example would be that Purim gives us an opportunity to escape from reality. We dress differently, we masquerade as someone else, all in a frenzy to elude the terrible misfortune that waits as Haman and his cohorts develop a scheme to rid themselves of the Jewish presence. An ancient "Juden frei."

A legend says that during World War II, Hitler was known to repress any mention of Purim because of its reminder that evil is destroyed no matter how long it takes. Perhaps he considered that his fate was tied to Haman's having come from the same ancestry. I do not know if it is true, but it somehow has a ring of prophesy associated with it. It certainly appears that he was a student of the holiday and even took a page from Haman's determination.

The Jewish people arm themselves and fight the corruption and evil that was demonstrated. After all, does not the Talmud teach us that if someone comes to murder you, move first to kill him. Murder and killing are two different things. Our first obligation is defend ourselves. If, in the process someone is killed, it is not the same as purposely setting out to murder that person.

However, the most unique aspect of Purim is the dialogue we have regarding the purpose and supposed absence of God in things that seem to be evil. Maimonides debates this in his *Guide to the Perplexed* and in his *Mishnah Torah*. He talks about good and evil and the part played by God in both.

On the one hand, goodness is the primary purpose of creation. Each time something is completed, God says that "it is good." This is because creation was accomplished in love and goodness (Guide, III,19). Evil exists because we

(see Wiener, page 20)



Yiddish for Everyday

BY HENYA CHAIET

A Freilichen Purim

"Haynt iz Purim morgen iz ouz, git mir ah groyshen un varft mir ahroys."

("Today is Purim tomorrow it's over, so give me a penny and I'll be gone.")

Many years ago, little children would run from house to house in their little *shtetl* singing this on Purim. I heard it from my grandmother, as a little girl, and I still remember it.

Dem ershter yor ven ich hob gehcumen tzu mein haim in California, haub ich zayer gehbenkt far mein mishpokeh.

(The first year I came to my new home in California I was very lonely for my family and friends.)

Nu menschen vos tult men? (So people, what does one do?)

Meh macht zicht ah nyeh mishpokem. (You make yourself a new family.)

Ah Yid gehfint zich ah veg! (A Jew finds a way!)

Siz iz geven Purim un ich haub gehbackt hamentashen un andereh ziseh zachen, un gehbracht shalachmones tzu meineh nigheh frient. (It was Purim and I baked *hamentashen* and other goodies and I brought *shalachmones* (portions) to all my new friends.)

Ich haub gehbeten ah por froyen cumen tzoo mir un mir hauben gehleyent dee Megillah Esther un geh shlaugen Hamen mit unzereh gragers. (I asked some women to come to my home and we all read the *Megillah Esther* and made noise with our groggers when we heard Hamen's name.)

Ah zeh macht men nigheh frient ahz meh vil hauben frient, muz men zein ah frient. (This is the way I made new friends. To have a friend you must first be a friend.)

Nu fargest nit braingen shalachmones tzu ayereh alteh frient, un macht nigheh frient. (So don't forget, bring *shalachmones* to your old friends and make new friends.)

Ah gooter frient is ah mahtoneh fun Gaut. (A good friend is a gift from God.)

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



Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

A Purim story

On a cloudless, heavenly morning, well before the Almighty turned the dust of the earth into man, he announced the Holydays to the assembled Heavenly Hosts. The angels listened solemnly, especially to *Yom Kippur*. And after a few moments of meditation they burst into a perfectly sublime harmonious Hallelujah. The Holydays were fashioned; a string of pearls to decorate creation.

There was *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* for the pious and meditative; *Tu B'Shevat* for the nature lovers. *Simchas Torah* for the joyous *Chasids*; *Chanukah* for the *chauvinists*. Passover pleased several groups; the bright eyed lovers of *matzoh* balls, and the historically minded.

Yes, all the angels and cherubim and sages yet to be, thundered a mighty "Amen" as the Almighty announced the holiday lineup. All except one that is. One of the younger angels – his wings still fluffy with down.

"What about the children?" he blurted out. "What about a holiday for the children? It should be a happy day of games and of course, some special delectable food. And most of all, NOISE. It should be the one day in the year when kids may shout to their hearts content without a giant, adult hand muffling their mouths."

The Holy One listened with compassionate attention. Then he pronounced, "Yes, I shall invent a happy day just for the children. I shall create a historical situation that seems destined for tragedy, but at the last minute dissolves into deliverance. ("Just like the Red Sea and the Exodus," whispered the excited Heavenly Hosts in unison.) There shall be the essence of evil in the form of a tyrant. (Good, thought the angels – even children must know about evil.) And the young shall eat triangular cakes and shout as loud as they like at the evil name." "If they're going to be loud and noisy, they may as well holler at evil," said the Hallelujah Chorus.)

So, on the festival *Megillah* – the great scroll of the holidays, HE who made time itself, inscribed *Purim*. A holiday for children.

My friend, Herb, a childlike celebrant who'd swap two Passovers and a Chanukah for one Purim, says that if Purim occurred daily, he'd attend *Shul* – all year round – as faithfully as the *Ner Tamid* – the eternal light that shines on the



The Art of Observation

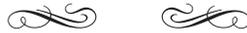
BY RABBI ALLEN H. PODET

Poppysed or fruit?

Among the most treasured "Gifts of the Jews" to the world, not counting the Bible and other trivialities, not counting the new concept of time* that we taught the world, not counting the idea of a God who treasures ethical behavior above clan or race, not counting the messianic idea so central to some other religion, ... not counting all these things, the really influential gift we gave the world is...Jewish food!

There is no Westerner, be he rich or poor, philo-semitic or anti-semitic, who has not enjoyed the old Yiddish bagel. Especially when it comes with lox and cream cheese, and maybe a slice of onion.

Less well known but still cursed by Weight Watchers are *kosher* chicken soup,



Bema. Purim's got it all, says Herb. "A love story like Ruth, but spiced with suspense. And all the joy of Simchas Torah, with a plot line."

Herb may be right. Esther is one of the great triumvirate of Jewish heroines. Her two sister heroines are, who else? The militant Yael and Judith. The latter two you'll recall, dispatch two of Israel's enemies to that special *Gehenna* where *Amalekites* sing *Hatikvah* on our holidays. This daring, dynamic duo were simple straight shooters like Annie Oakley. But Esther – ah there's a woman of subtlety as well as valor. You won't find Hadassah ruining her manicure with tent pegs or swords. She's behind the scenes orchestrating, scheming, directing. Totally invisible to her antagonists, she's the ghostess with the mostest, you might say.

Once cousin Mordechai alerts her to the peril facing her people, she swings into action. Two lavish banquets – not one, but two – she throws for the king; and Hamen of all people. It's the first *Purim Oneg*. And although the *Megillah* does not spell out the menu, I'm sure Esther laid out a nice *Kosher* spread with plenty of Persian *slivovitz* and followed by platters of those crisp little layered honeycakes.

Esther's eyes caress the King – those succulent cakes melt in his mouth. They're eating high on the *challah*, so to speak.

Hamen, the quintessential Amalekite – Hitler, in a warp of time, sits in a corner

(see Roberts, page 9)

also known as Jewish penicillin, good for all ailments especially with a *matzo* ball; *gefilte* fish with hot red *khraim* (horseradish); *kharoset* on Passover to remind us of the mortar we used to build store cities in Egypt; and of course, ever-popular *matzah*, the tasty unleavened bread used by Jesus in his last supper, which may be your last supper too if you eat too much of it without prunes or other lubricants.

My Christian friends, unable or unwilling to read the recipe for real *matzah*, feed their people at Communion little circles of dried library paste, although how anyone could suppose Jesus or any other Jew would willingly eat that stuff is beyond me. Maybe it is supposed to be a test of faith.

A latecomer to the Holy Food list dates back to the Book of Esther, the story of Purim. The evil genius of that tale, Haman, was Prime Minister of Persia under King Ahasuerus (= Xerxes). Puffed up with his own greatness, Haman conceived a plot to murder the Jews of Persia, but was foiled by the noble Mordecai and the gorgeous Queen Esther, real name = Hadassah. We will read the *Megillah* with the whole story in the Temple.

After the salvation of the Jews, it became our custom to celebrate by eating sweet triangular cookies into which was baked – according to my mommie's tradition – a sweet poppy seed confection. These we called *Hamantaschen*, or Haman's Pockets. Israelis call them *Oznei Haman*, Haman's Ears. Too bloodthirsty for my taste.

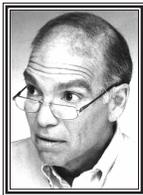
Eventually we came to America, the land of the free, and our kids started making changes in the sacred tradition: not poppyseed filling, but – horrors! – fruit. Marmalade. Jam. Even chocolate.

Today you can get what they call *hamantaschen* in any flavor you wish. But for us purists, nothing will do but real historic poppyseeds. Serious arguments, even sober academic debates, have been had over this serious issue.

In fact, I am thinking of doing a PhD dissertation on the subject. We will have a chance to discuss it together, and take a vote on the subject. And of course eat them so as to have a sound opinion. Start thinking about it. Marshal your arguments.

*new concept of time...Before the Hebrew Bible, the Egyptians like the Hindus and virtually all other ancient civilizations thought of time as a circle, ever repeating itself, an idea even preserved in the writings of King Solomon, who said "There is nothing new under the sun." The Jews taught that time is a one-way street. You had better do the best you can because we only go around once. Today the bulk of the Western world accepts this idea, but the Bible is where it was taught.

Comments? apodet@yahoo.com ✨



Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

A stiff necked people

God him/herself supposedly called the Jews “A Stiff Necked People”. In modern terms: Don’t push us around. We have had to demonstrate that trait time and time again over the centuries. We should have just plain disappeared centuries ago. We didn’t.

We outlasted the barbarian tribes of Israel, the Romans, the Crusaders, the wrath of the Catholic Church, the Nazis and interminable Anti-Semitism. We have done this in spite of the fact that never, never have we agreed among ourselves. Ah, but there is one huge exception: When threatened with our existence, suddenly the differences seem to disappear and we stand together as one.

In America, we seem to have entered the mainstream. Overt Anti-Semitism seems to have pretty well become unfashionable. Jews sit at the heads of major corporations, we have no problem in entering the most prestigious colleges and universities.

Sure, there are the mouth breathers who come out of their rat holes from time to time seeking a voice or sometimes even brandishing weapons – and using them. But for the most part, we are doing just fine: on the domestic front. Has the hateful rhetoric disappeared? Have the haters pretty well gone away? Don’t kid yourself.

It is harder to attack Jews in the main press, in political speeches or in mainstream American life. But. Go to YouTube. Try to watch a series of Yiddish videos. Suddenly – right into the frame comes choices. Old timey Yiddish stars, brand new ones, from Russia of all places. And there, in the middle, Anti-Israel, Anti-Jewish talk meisters, sophisticated Anti-Semitic videos sponsored and produced by Arab interests.

It’s interesting. Obama is often profiled as a “Jew Lover”. But in other YouTube contexts as well as scores of web sites – he is a Nazi, a Fascist (and at the same time a Socialist – ah, well). Free speech is wonderful. Yeah, it can become frightening. In the past month some of the rhetoric from the fringes of the gun lobby could scare you to death. It is even more frightening to see the same fury, the same jingoism that the “Survivalists” and other overt Anti-Semitic groups use.

Today, you can substitute the word Israel

for Anti-Semitism. Not that all criticism of the Jewish State comes from these fringe groups. Hey! We’ve got organized American Jewish organizations who criticize Israel and get very low down about it. They take stands on the Israeli elections, on the very foundations of the State of Israel.

And now, according to Blumberg News and not denied by the White House, the President of the United States has gotten into the fray. Now, it is not exactly a secret that President Obama and Bibi Netanyahu are not exactly dancing partners. But, dude, you cannot take sides in a foreign country’s election. Bibi might have bitten his lip, tongue and even his wrist during the recent election campaign; but outside of entertaining his one time colleague Mitt Romney – not a word.

Obama apparently believes that Netanyahu does not “Know what the best interests of Israel are.” This apparently came about because after the U.S. backed Israel in its counterattack on Hamas in Gaza, Netanyahu announced the plan to build homes adjacent to Mahlei Adumim in East Jerusalem. Well, if in life timing is everything –Obama’s sucks. Israel is like less than a week away from an election. While not endorsing any opponent (who you gonna trust?) it is definitely a shot across the bow of Israeli elections.

While Obama will fight no more elections, his party needs a ton more representation in Washington. The Jews represent a tiny portion of the electorate, but the support for Israel runs far and wide. It is more than the testy relationship between the two national leaders. There is now the case of Chuck Hagel. A decorated war hero who likes no belligerent national leader. Not just in the U.S.

I’ve read Mr. Hagel’s statements, seen the reason he acts and speaks as he does. He hates war. Okay – the war he fought in, the ones he despised and still does are fought thousands of miles from U.S. shores. Our interests are muddled in Afghanistan, in Pakistan and elsewhere.

What Mr. Hagel does not understand is that Israel’s enemies are a 15 minute drone of plane flight from Tel Aviv, or God forbid, Jerusalem. I really believe that if Al Qaeda mounted an attack on Lincoln, Nebraska, Chuck Hagel might just pull out that old uniform. It is a matter of perspective.

As Secretary of Defense for the United States, it will be his job to deploy troops, order munitions and determine military priorities for the United States. He will be there as we leave Afghanistan and watch chaos return. He will watch, from a distance, why the Iraq war was such a waste. He will have to decide, with the President’s advice and consent, as well as that of the Congress – where our military strength is needed.



Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

All news has a short life

The necessary decision of the *National Jewish Post & Opinion* to publish monthly rather than bi-weekly has been especially hard on columnists who attempt to be current, and so it was very interesting for me to receive my latest copy. Although the headlines were “old news,” the matters that it covered, for example the changes in Egypt and the importance of that for the world and Israel, are not.

The news has definitely moved on. We are no longer talking about Hillary Clinton popping into Israel to help stop the Gaza Incursion, and not even the debacle in Libya, we are now talking about the election of 2016, and whether she will want to run for president. Barring some terrible calamity, I would bet she would. She definitely wants to be the first woman President of the United States. She has lived through trying times in history, in her marriage, and I cannot imagine that she will not want to make the race.

But back to the news that is still unresolved. What is happening in Egypt and what is going to happen? Prominent Egypt watchers are suggesting that the United States government is not fully informed on the will of the Egyptian people not to go from one dictatorship to another. It you follow the stories, the only thing that has not happened yet is for the government to use the Army as a dominant tool of rule.

Revolutions can change to dictatorships. Remember Castro in Cuba for one example of how quickly revolutionary (see Karsh, page 7)



But Chuck – watch how you handle Israel. We are indeed as stiff necked people. You and our president have no idea. As a leading Evangelical leader from the upper Midwest said to me years ago “Mess with the supporters of that Holy Land – you’re messing with a badger!” I guess Badgers also have stiff necks.

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



Opinion

BY PROFESSOR ARNOLD AGES

Inconvenient truths about “The Peninsula” otherwise known as Al Jazeera

The news released in the United States recently that Current TV has been sold to Al Jazeera, the Qatar sponsored newspaper and television facility has raised more than a few eyebrows.

The reason? The whopping price paid for the so called progressive network (with an estimated 40 million viewers) – \$100 million (U.S.) and the fact that one time presidential candidate Al Gore is a major shareholder in the network, which suggests that his environmental preaching stands second to his economic interests.

Only a few demurrers have been offered about the real reason American should be concerned about the morality of the sale. The transaction makes it theoretically possible for Al Jazeera to piggy back on an existing American TV platform and enable it to circulate the Arab point of view to those hitherto exposed only to the conventional English language news sources.

It must be some ingrown masochism on my part but I have been an avid reader of Al Jazeera’s English language newspaper for several years now, prompted, in part, by Voltaire’s observation that “when you go to court it is useful to know what your adversary has in his files.” I have not watched Al Jazeera’s television service except for the videos featured in its newspaper editions. About this latter material I will have something to say later.

With regard to its print journalism – which I am limiting to its coverage of the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli conflict – one of Voltaire’s other favorite words – execrable – describes it perfectly. Both in its editorial commentary and straight news coverage it packs huge dollops of toxic anti-Israel rhetoric. This, of course, is not unexpected given the paper’s mandate to present the Arab point of view, but many of the purveyors of the editorial bashing of Israel are Jews.

Two in particular stand out. M.J. Rosenberg, an American left wing journalist and Richard Falk, the UN’s “rapporteur” on Palestinian Human Rights (I knew of Falk as a brilliant professor of law at The Ohio State University during

my graduate study days at that university) have been regular contributors, along with diverse other critics of Israel, to the active dumping on Israel exercise in which Al Jazeera participates.

If one were to draw a chart illustrating the major targets of Al Jazeera, Israel is way ahead in the demonizing tableau, followed at some considerable distance by the United States for its “criminal” support of Israel and its alleged impermissible violation of Muslim civil rights as well as the bogus hunt for Muslim terrorists in the country.

Al Jazeera’s darkest chapter pivots on its coverage of egregious examples of terrorism perpetrated by Arab and Muslim extremists. When Sami Kuntar, the Palestinian terrorist who killed an Israeli family during a savage foray into Israel, was released, Al Jazeera was rhapsodic in its benedictions for the newly liberated ex-prisoner and in a later article on the same individual, celebrated his birthday!

Guided by the principle that people are generally better than the worst thing they have done, I have endeavored to find in Al Jazeera lapses into occasional journalistic objectivity and lucidity. I did not find them in the print news but wonder of wonders I did find something startling in their hour long videos.

One was a biographical study of Norman Finklestein, the notorious son of Holocaust survivors who has honed his anti-Israel rhetoric somewhat more sharply than the average run of the mill Israel-hater. (Even Toronto’s Michael Coren had a problem contesting some of Finklestein’s outrageous remarks during his, Michael’s TV interview program in Toronto, Canada.) In the Al Jazeera video, Finklestein’s addresses on television, to university audiences and other forums convey his deeply held convictions – which inevitably reflect the same kind of biases against Israel advertised in Al Jazeera.

However, towards the end of the video in question, Finklestein is shown in a London, England studio interviewed by a young man who tried to goad Finklestein into expressing support for the Palestinian “right to return.” Astonishingly Finklestein rebuffed the interviewer by saying that the advocacy and implementation of that right were nonsensical and that it was clearly intended to destroy the State of Israel! Finklestein got it right and on Al Jazeera.

But the best hope for Al Jazeera was the video released in late 2012 of David Frost interviewing Israeli President Shimon Peres. In this remarkable video, which, to my best knowledge, has not been shown anywhere else, Frost asks tough questions and permits Peres long and persuasive answers. Peres’s best

KARSH

(continued from page 6)

governments can become repressive, and if we need more examples, there are many in Central and South America. The U.S. is now going to aid the French in Mali. The idea of backing up the French is fraught with historical danger. They opposed the Germans for about an “historical hour” then gave up the country and helped the Nazis round up Jews. History demands review and caution, but now it moves so quickly that we can hardly stop to notice.

Keep your eyes on Egypt, Afghanistan, and Mali. I will too. I am asking Jennie Cohen, my Editor, to post my columns as I write them (www.jewishpostopinion.com) for those of you who check in, and then publish them as one continuing commentary in the monthly edition.

As life would have it, I was in Israel for the national elections. I came for two *simchas*, a *Bar Mitzvah* and a wedding, but the election was a plus. The issues were neighborhood by neighborhood. In the neighborhoods where my children and grandchildren live, the dominant issue was saving religious rights, and, interestingly, they were not comfortable with either political party, right, center or left. They voted for Netanyahu, but only as the lesser of poor choices.

In other neighborhoods, the attention was on the economy, the high price of housing, and the high price of everything. There are no bargains in Israel today. To survive, you need two jobs per household and good credit. The new government, if and when they form, will only rule until some charismatic leader can bridge all of the real issues that divide Israel. There is a great deal of noise, and not much project.

Regardless of how often, I come, there is only one deduction I can make as to how Israel survives, G-d’s love and patience.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc., and can be reached at hkarsh@gmail.com. He is a community columnist for the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. Submitted Jan. 27, 2013. ★



answer pivoted on Frost’s query about the “victimization” of the Palestinians – to which the Israeli president replied “Yes but it is self-victimization.”

If Al Jazeera wants to make it in North America, it should concentrate on videos like this rather than on the ritualistic condemnation of Israel that suffuses throughout its print version.

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

Gather the People



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

Keeping Torah at the center

Why does a congregation allow one or more of its members or leaders to undermine the unity and comity of its communal life?

It's a nagging question if one has witnessed or been victimized by the devastation such people can wreak on a congregational community. And our history is replete with examples of congregations that were trashed, devastated by factions and fifth columns, because members and leaders took exception in destructive ways to their synagogue's policies or practices.

What they did was of course forbidden by *mitzvot* (commandments) and *halakhah* (rabbinic law), in addition to ordinary notions of fair play and common decency.

So how are we to analyze such behavior? There are endless and complex explanations of the behavior of congregants who engage in character assassination, malicious gossip, self-serving manipulation, or a host of other inappropriate and destructive behaviors in congregational life. We may learn that their childhood was a nightmare of abuse or abandonment, that they had terrible failures and pressures in adult life, or that they suffer from physical or mental disorders and diseases.

The critical question, however, is not why individuals go off the path of righteousness to become destructive to their congregations and themselves, but why so many of their fellow congregational members remain passive and thus vulnerable to them. Why are those who have lost their way permitted to *continue* their destructiveness, especially after so many others see and even personally experience the damage they are causing?

An answer to this question is suggested in Exodus (25:16): "And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give to you."

The ark in its golden splendor, the repository of the Torah, was created from the heartfelt offerings of every Israelite woman and man. (Exodus 35:22) It was, literally, the treasured possession of a whole people, and so it resided at the physical and spiritual center of the

community: the Torah guided the life of the people, their day-to-day decisions and direction. Not individual comfort or convenience, but the good of the community and its continuity, measured by the physical *and* spiritual health of its members, present and future, were the guiding criteria.

When Torah ceases to be at the center of our lives, no longer the measure by which we decide and act, which has been the norm in modernity, even among those of us who are congregationally affiliated, then each one of us – and ultimately our whole congregational community – becomes subject to the whim and scheme of every lost or misguided soul. The rationale allowing this perversion is that *individual* preferences should comprise the centerpiece of community life, which reflects the contemporary ranking of personal autonomy as the highest social value.

What is the price of not keeping Torah at the center of congregational community life?

One of the common results is that we countenance those who seek to divide and subvert for their private purposes (often by our misconstruing the requirements of maintaining "*shalom bayit*," i.e., peace of the house). In doing so, we unwittingly empower an unaccountable faction that covertly rejects and ridicules the authority of congregational leaders, implicitly disdaining the democratic electoral process. For the sake of keeping the "*peace*," we mandate a group that sabotages sub rosa the legitimate mission and methods of the congregation.

Those of us either seeking spiritual solace, a religious foundation for justice and righteousness, or social fellowship in congregational life, are alienated by the painful divisiveness that eventuates. Those who imagine themselves to be future beneficiaries when current policies and practices are covertly undermined are motivated to join the ranks of the unaccountable. And those who rely on the anesthetizing hope that temporary fixes and diversions will relieve the crisis, resisting the painful but needed reunifying remedies, find that, after applying organizational band aids, the internal corruption returns with a vengeance when they or their successors least expect it.

The downward spiral of unchecked conflict and disunity – driven by distortion, exaggeration, misrepresentation, and mischaracterization – has an inevitable outcome. The only question is how long it will take to reach the denouement. As with all prevarication, the truth will ultimately emerge, because, as we're taught, the seal of God is truth: the rule of creation is that we cannot

B'nai B'rith International Mourns the Loss of Ed Koch

WASHINGTON, D.C., Feb. 1, 2013—We mourn the loss of Ed Koch, who died Feb. 1 at the age of 88. Known for his plainspoken nature and charisma, Koch was mayor of New York City during a particularly troubled time and became the face of New York around the world.

During three terms as mayor, serving from 1978–1989, Koch connected with New Yorkers of every background. His eager query to New Yorkers, "How'm I doing?" became his signature. Before his storied tenure as mayor, Koch served in the U.S. Congress from 1969–1977.



Ed Koch

His forthright support for Israel, and his great pride in his Jewish faith, were always part of his persona.

So connected to New York that he insisted on being buried there, five years ago, he purchased a burial plot at Trinity Church Cemetery, the only cemetery in the city that had space. He even ordered and inscribed his tombstone, which features the final words said by Daniel Pearl, the murdered Wall Street Journal reporter: "My father is Jewish, my mother is Jewish, I am Jewish."

B'nai B'rith International, the Global Voice of the Jewish Community, is the oldest and most widely known Jewish humanitarian, human rights and advocacy organization. Since 1843 – now in our 170th year – B'nai B'rith International has worked for Jewish unity, security, continuity and tolerance. Visit www.bnaibrith.org. ★



permanently suppress the truth. But before we finally have an opening to affirm the truth, lives may be needlessly damaged or destroyed, or whole communities shattered. And as we learn in childhood, the longer we avoid telling the truth, the more damaging are the consequences when it ultimately and inevitably comes to light.

The ancient wooden ark was covered with gold not only on the outside, but also on the inside. Our Sages taught that our inside must be like our outside – our intentions must be matched by our actions – to lead our people effectively and unify our congregational communities.

Israel's tribal founders were told by their father (Genesis 49:1), "Gather yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you..." Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888)

(see Ben Asher/Bat Sarah, page 9)



Jewish Educator

By AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Volunteering: You get more than you give

The year was 1976: America celebrated its 200th birthday, Alex Haley published *Roots*, the Dow Jones closed at 1004 and I arrived in Tucson with a backpack, a college degree and \$80 in my pocket. My parents were less than thrilled with my post-grad decision to hitchhike across the country to “find myself,” and my mother’s parting words summed up her anxiety: “When you stick out your thumb to get a ride, my face will be at the end of it.” Predictably, I never used my thumb but found a unique way of flagging down cars with a bandana.

Tucson was, and still is, a truly welcoming community and it didn’t take long to feel at home. The mountains and desert air intoxicated me in a way I hadn’t felt since my junior year in Israel. Everyone I met offered help and suggestions about places to live, jobs to find and the best places to eat under \$3.

But it didn’t take long before my wanderlust turned to wonder-lust. I wondered, long and hard, about what I would actually *do* with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and no real skills other than waitressing tables and acquiring a serious tan.

I don’t remember much from my 20s (not because I didn’t inhale, but because my memory is getting hazy), but one thing stands out: volunteering did more to positively direct and influence my choices than almost anything else. It may be the best kept secret of all time, one which deserves a great big shout out for most of us who struggle to figure out who we want to be “when we grow up,” but it’s true.

I started with what I knew and felt most comfortable with – food. As I shelved and bagged organic products at the Food Co-op, I met wonderful people and learned more about Tucson than any guidebook could ever tell me. Next I volunteered during the summer at the Second Street School where I heard about another volunteer opportunity working with kids at a counseling center. That position actually led to a paying job when a parent asked me to work privately with her disabled daughter. We didn’t call it

networking in those days, but that’s exactly what it was: a pathway to the people, places, and opportunities that would indelibly affect my efforts to define myself and determine a career.

The most significant experience was my volunteer stint as an intake-receiving officer at the Juvenile Court Center. This required extensive training from some of the finest professionals in the juvenile system and while the hours were long and the work demanding, the rewards were great. It was in those offices in the fall of 1976 that I decided to apply to law school so I could better understand the legal system, with the hope that one day I might help those who found themselves tangled up within it.

The concept of helping others, of giving of our time, resources, talents and money to those in need, is one of the pillars of Judaism, based upon core values like *chesed* (compassion), *tzedek* (justice) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world.). The idea that we are partners with God in the continuing creation of the world and therefore have an obligation to repair what is broken, informs much of the work of Jewish philanthropy.

At a time when funding for so many of our community needs – from healthcare and education to employment and housing – is being cut, resulting in serious staff and service reductions, it is more important than ever to volunteer. Yet, according to a recent study by the National Conference on Citizenship, 72 percent of Americans report that they have reduced the time they spend volunteering, largely as the result of the recession and a need to look out for themselves. The findings amount to what the report’s authors called “a civic depression.”

The paradox of volunteering is this: the more you give, the more you are given – personally, psychologically and professionally. Helping others who have problems or needs greater than your own can provide a perspective about your own life that contributes to a more positive attitude or sense of self-worth. Informal networking can lead you into new directions and open doors you never knew existed. It is truly a win-win situation as everyone, from the giver to the recipient to those who are inspired by your efforts and decide to volunteer as a result, comes out ahead.

Winston Churchill said it beautifully with these words: “We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.” Today, more than ever before, we should heed his message.

Amy Hirshberg Lederman is an author, Jewish educator, public speaker and attorney who lives in Tucson. Her columns

ROBERTS

(continued from page 5)

daydreaming of the gibbet for the Jew, Mordechai. Esther, the supplicant who fantasizes a special gehenna for Hamen in which he eternally grates potatoes for all the Chanukahs yet to come, pleads with the king for her people, Israel. She gazes tearfully at the king like he’s a titanic honeycake. In the background, we can almost hear a silvery “Taps” – with a Klezmer lilt – for Hamen the Aagegite.

My good friend, Herb, loves to hear this Megillah. As I say, he’s a Purim regular. There he is – every year with his own grogger – just like the Minyon Club members have their own *Tallis* and *Tefillum*. And he’s carrying one of those neat, silvery hip flasks just to make sure he obeys the Talmudic injunction to be sufficiently zonked so you can’t tell Hamen from Mordechai. Over the whole year – 613 mitzvah opportunities available to him – this is Herb’s finest moment of observance.

Well, I love Purim as much as Herb. On what other holiday can you make obnoxious noises and even talk more than the rabbi without being shushed. I guess, like Herb, I’m a Purim Jew.

Ted Roberts, a Rockower Award winner, is a syndicated Jewish columnist who looks at Jewish life with rare wit and insight. Check out his Web site: www.wonderwordworks.com. Blogsite: www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com His collected works The Scribbler on The Roof can be bought at Amazon.com or lulu.com/content/127641 ★



BEN ASHER/BAT SARAH

(continued from page 8)

teaches that the Hebrew root for “gather” means “to bring something from the place... where it does not really belong, to where it does belong.” So the Hebrew tells us to “break away from everything to which you really do not belong, and find yourselves united in one common purpose” – Torah.

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



in the AJP have won awards from the American Jewish Press Association, the Arizona Newspapers Association and the Arizona Press Club for excellence in commentary. Visit her website at amyhirshberglederman.com. ★



Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Our third wedding in Israel

It was with much anticipation and excitement when we received an invitation to the wedding of the daughter of American Christian friends marrying a Messianic Israeli.

The Baptist minister and his wife (our close friends), a visiting professor and his wife and Barry and I – plus the minister's daughters and a friend – filled the van as we drove to the industrial part of the suburb of Talpiot and a wedding hall.

The guests were Christians from the Baptist church and the Messianic church, secular and religious Israelis and some Americans. The reception area had numerous stations with wonderful Middle Eastern hors d'oeuvres and veggies and hot and cold drinks as we ate and drank and visited for an hour and a half.

As we noticed at other weddings, only a few chairs were set up – not enough for all the guests. These were by steps leading to a stage with white floor covering, flowers and a white chiffon-like *chuppah*.

Finally, a man wearing a *keepah* (an elder of the Messianic church) called everyone together. The groom, in suit, white shirt and tie, came up the steps with his parents. Then the bride's mother came with her son. Next was the beautiful bride in a strapless gown with a long train (and later she showed off the tennis shoes she was wearing!) on her father's arm. The groom came to meet them and took the veil which was attached to her hair and covered her face. The parents stood under the *chuppah* with the bride and groom and the bride's father welcomed everyone. The elder explained what was to happen in Hebrew and English and did so for the entire ceremony.

The wedding ceremony was basically Jewish with blessings and rings and a kiss. The *ketubah* was explained but not read or given to the bride. Then friends and relatives of the groom came forward to recite the "*sheva brachot*."

The elder then told the guests to go into the dining room and the couple would join them in 15 minutes. The dining room tables were beautifully set, the disc jockey was loud with lots of fast music, and the appetizers were served.

When the bride and groom came in, many of their friends were on the dance

floor, dancing to Israeli and Middle Eastern music. This continued for quite a while with everyone dancing, the bride and groom being elevated on chairs and more dancing. After about half an hour of dancing, choice of fish or chicken were served but this was not the entree, just a hot appetizer. Around 10 p.m., the entree of hot and delicious steak and a small piece of stuffed chicken were served along with rice, roasted white and sweet potatoes and vegetables. And the dancing continued.

Finally chocolate soufflé and pareve ice cream were served, and the dancing continued, even including a favorite of mine, "the electric slide." It was such a lively, enjoyable, fun evening, and we were among the last to leave – way after midnight.

Our first Bar Mitzvah at the Wall with Barry Kaplan

Sybil: When we saw the weather forecast, we were certainly disheartened. Rain. Rabbi Mandl, our rabbi in Overland Park, Kansas, had invited us to the *Bar Mitzvah* of his grandson, Sammy, son of Aaron and Chaya, at the Western Wall.

We left our apartment before eight to grab a taxi, and it was a nice rain. By the time the cab arrived as close as he could get to the Western Wall, it was hailing and there were snowflakes.

We recognized Seth and Osnat Mandl, the rabbi's son and daughter-in-law from New York, with their two girls, and proceeded to the shelter area where the men were whisked away. I soon found Barbara, the rabbi's wife, with Chaya, the Bar Mitzvah boy's mom (from Houston), her four other children, her mother and more women.

We were led through a tunnel to a small room with prayer books and chairs. At one end was a curtained wall. One peek showed a sea of *talitot* and no way to distinguish who was under them.

Barry: The room was packed with worshippers due to the rain outside. Even though it looked and sounded like chaos, if you stopped a moment, you saw that all of the *bimahs* were conducting individual services. Families were clustered around each, and were *davening* the *Shacharit* service.

Men were coming in and out, but we were lucky enough to be by the first *bimah* – with the family and friends of the Mandls all standing there and the children standing up close to hear. The *bimah* was positioned above the underground tunnel so you could see through part of the floor that was made of thick, light glass.

A Torah was brought out at the appropriate time.

We moved the *bimah* a few feet so that maybe the women could see the ceremony. (I found out later, they saw the men with *talitot*, but could hear the Bar Mitzvah boy read the Torah.

With the Wall in front of the *bimah*, the chanting of the Torah and services, I know this will be a wonderful memory for all.

Sybil: After some time, we heard a young voice and Chaya and others went up to the curtains to hear her son. When he was done, she threw bags of candy over the wall and we hoped he received them. More time and then we went back through the tunnel and out of doors to meet the men and walk in the rain to the street where the family had hired a bus to take us to Mamilla Mall and Cafe Cafe where a nice private room upstairs held food for brunch.

Election Week with the Kaplans

When we came to the States a few months ago, we brought our U.S. absentee ballots which we mailed before U.S. election day. Last evening, we watched U.S. President Barack Obama's inauguration and address before going to our synagogue to hear Professor Gil Troy lecture on "The U.S. & Israel in 2013: Close Friends or a Bad Date?"

This morning, we headed for the polls for Israel's 19th general election.

Last week a complete "ultimate citizen's guide to the 2013 Knesset elections" appeared on Janglo (Jerusalem Anglo-Saxon web site). Anglos or anglo-saxonim is the term used for anyone whose native language is English, and this web site offers jobs, housing, events and many informative articles and translations from the Hebrew press.

All Israeli citizens (5,656,705) can vote in Israel's general election (and there is no such thing as voter registration). In general, three weeks before elections, voters receive a voter notification listing their polling place (10,132 nationwide). By one week before, we had not received our cards, so Janglo provided a link, in Hebrew, where I plugged in my Israel identity number and received the address of the polling place and the group number.

This morning, election day, we took a bus one stop to the major street, Derech Bethlehem, walked down to the address we had, which was a school, were directed around the courtyard and down steps to another entrance and then to the room where our group number was listed.

There were people all along the way offering assistance of where to go. After showing them our identity cards, we were handed envelopes, one at a time, and directed behind a cardboard stand. There on a table were boxes with the symbols of all the 32 parties from which to choose a paper, insert it into the envelope, seal the envelope, emerge from the closed-in area and drop the ballot into a box.

When we left, we discovered we were only one bus stop past the area where we live.

It felt good to vote as a citizen of Israel.

Professor/Columnist Lectures on U.S. & Israel Relationship

Gil Troy is Professor of History at McGill University and a Shalom Hartman Institute Engaging Israel Research Fellow in Jerusalem. He has written eight books and his latest, *Moynihan's Moment: America's Fight against Zionism as Racism* was recently published by Oxford University Press.

On the evening of the U.S. presidential inauguration and the night before Israel's elections, he spoke at a synagogue in Jerusalem on the "U.S.-Israel relationship – Close Friends or a Bad Date?"

One of Professor Troy's opening statements reflected his theme of the evening's lecture – "Whatever tensions there are, there is a deep friendship between the U.S. and Israel and enduring bonds are here to stay." This dynamic, he stated, is reoccurring going back to 1948.

He then recounted the relationship of the presidents from 1948 to the present in light of Israel's wars, emphasizing the strong sense that "Israel is in the best interests of the U.S.," and the "sentiment, lobbying, interest and conscience" issues which guided the presidents.

He began citing the 1948 meeting between Harry Truman and his former business partner Eddy Jacobson; proceeded to 1956 and Eisenhower when because of Sinai, "the relationship was at its weakest." During the Kennedy administration, the U.S. sold weapons to Israel which was "a new dimension in the Israel-U.S. relationship."

During the Six-Day War in 1967, Lyndon Johnson supported Israel "because it was right." The defeat of the Arab armies was seen as a defeat of the Soviet Union, and the U.S. became a main supplier of arms to Israel. "This was a unique relationship because Israel had heavy dependence on the U.S."

By the 1973 Yom Kippur War and Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger was deeply involved with his shuttle diplomacy, and it became a "national security imperative" to solve the problems in Israel.

Under Gerald Ford, there was a major reassessment of the American policy in Israel, and then the Zionism is racism resolution in November 1975 was passed by the United Nations. Chaim Herzog was Israel Ambassador to the UN and became friendly with the U.S. Ambassador, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was standing up for Israel despite the anti-semitic U.S. State Department. Under George W. Bush the UN repealed this infamous act in December 1991.

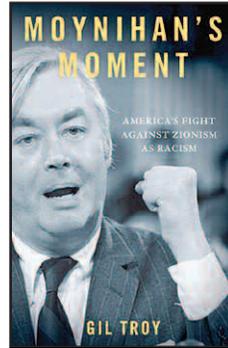
The Clinton years were fraught with tensions and fights. By the current Obama administration, there was a commitment because of sentiment, interest, lobbying and conscience.

Professor Troy concluded that "when we see the toxic way in which Israel is discussed in a wider sense and narrow the band of conversation, we appreciate the enduring ties."

About his new book:

Moynihan's Moment: America's Fight against Zionism as Racism. By Gil Troy. Oxford University Press. Dec. 2012. 383 pp. \$29.95 hardcover.

Moynihan's Moment traces the events leading up to the UN resolution, and the condemnation and its aftermath by Moynihan – "the respected but eccentric Harvard professor, policy wonk, and White House adviser to presidents John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford."



His position forced Moynihan to resign as ambassador after only eight months. "Moynihan recognized the attack on Zionism as a totalitarian assault against democracy itself, motivated by anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism." He subsequently served four terms as New York's Democratic Senator. He died at the age of 76 in 2003 – "with the Zionism is racism resolution repealed but the libel still living and the new Islamist totalitarian threat still raging."

Professor Troy admits his fascination with Moynihan, "the scholar-politician, the activist intellectual, the Thomas Jefferson of the late twentieth century."

This scholarly work covers American history, particularly the Reagan Revolution, and the history of Zionism. It presents original research and interviews with key figures, including Moynihan's former assistant, Suzanne Weaver Garment; his UN colleague, Len Garment; his mentor and friend, Norman Podhoretz; his ideological ally, Carl Gershman; and his wife, Elizabeth Moynihan. This is truly the first major work about Moynihan and the "Zionism is Racism" resolution.

All inclusive Jewish wedding book

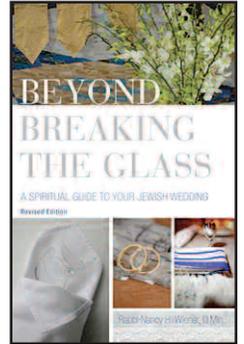
Beyond Breaking the Glass. By Rabbi Nancy H. Wiener. CCAR Press. July 2012. 192 pp. \$18 paperback.

Ten years ago, this book was first published, but since then, "American society and the American Jewish community have experienced significant changes," writes Rabbi Wiener. She cites the increase in rabbis officiating at interfaith marriages and changes in views

toward sexual orientation and gender identity as the two examples of changes.

Rather than just being, "A Spiritual Guide to your Jewish Wedding," this book is a very user-friendly, informative guide with a wide variety of options discussed.

The sections are varied and complete. "Working Together to Create a Holy Context" includes planning with intention, Jewish history and customs, exercises to frame decision making, remarriage and more. "Jewish Wedding Rituals"



encompasses their history, the ceremony, the *chuppah*, the betrothal, *ketubah*, clergy, recessional and more. "A Holy Process" discusses the months and weeks of pre-wedding rituals and celebrations. "Non-ritual Elements" deal with the rabbi, date, location, reception and more.

"Making Your Home a Holy Space" is a lovely postscript. Appendices include: a wedding rituals checklist, planning timeline and information on a wedding booklet, chuppah, ketubah, *birkat erusin* variations, *Sheva brachot* variations and resources.

Rabbi Wiener does a very good job of including information of a spiritual and practical nature for all couples planning a Jewish wedding whether they be heterosexual, same sex, interfaith or remarriage.

Although Rabbi Wiener is Reform and part of a same-sex relationship personally, she is very careful to include all aspects of various rituals – even some primarily observed by Orthodox but adopted by others today. Examples are fasting on the day of the wedding, *bedeken* (a ceremony where the groom covers the bride's face with a veil prior to the ceremony) and *yichud* (private time for couple after the ceremony and before the party).

If you know someone newly engaged, this would be an excellent gift because it is so informative, so warmly written, and inclusive. Black and white photographs of diverse couples appear throughout the book.

Rabbi Nancy H. Wiener is Clinical Director of the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Center for Pastoral Counseling of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. She is also rabbi of Pound Ridge, New York Jewish Community Reform Chavurah.

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



Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

Good Purim!

The energy of *Purim* can transform our lives as demonstrated in this wonderful important story that I heard from Reb Shlomo Carlebach. Good Purim!

Pinchas was the poorest disciple of the Kosnitzer Maggid, a great rebbe in Poland in the 1800's. On Purim, it was the custom to line up and present a holy gift to the Maggid. Picture this scene. Pinchas, the holy *shlepper*, stooped over and looking at the floor, is in line with everyone else but he is dejected and sad for he has no gift for the rebbe. The Rebbe says to him "Pinchas why did you not bring me a gift for Purim."

"Rebbe, I have a wife and seven children. We have nothing to eat. I do not have money to buy you *shalachmonis*."

"Pinchas, you know what your problem is. You do not know how to say 'Good Purim'. The rebbe demonstrates how one should say, Good Purim. Good Purim. The rebbe yells Good Purim holy Pinchas.

He tells Pinchas to stand up tall, as tall as he can and yell back to him "Good Purim. They yell Good Purim to each other several times. Each time the rebbe yells "Good Purim holy Pinchas, Pinchas feels as if he is receiving an injection of strength.

Finally the rebbe tells him, "Pinchas, go out and get me *shalachmonis*."

Pinchas leaves and goes directly to the one neighborhood grocery store in the *shtetl*. Usually, in the past, Pinchas would stand by the door of the store on Friday before Shabbat, people would give him various foods as they left the store and from this his family would live from week to week.

But now on Purim he actually walks into the store. He says "Good Purim, Good Purim. Give me the biggest cake and the finest bottle of wine. I have to bring *shalachmonis* to my rebbe. I'll pay you tomorrow."

If he had said this before, he would have been thrown out of the store. But now the owner brings him the cake and wine he requested. Pinchas returns to the Holy Maggid and as soon as he approaches the rebbe, he yells to him, Good Purim, Holy Maggid. And the rebbe yells back, Good Purim holy Pinchas. Pinchas gives the rebbe the *shalachmonis*.

And the rebbe then says, "I want to give you *shalachmonis* back. I am giving you

the gift that Purim should be with you all year long. The strength of Purim should be with you forever.

Pinchas walks away a new person. He goes back to the grocery store and says again to the owner, Good Purim, my family has nothing to eat. Give me some food and I will pay you tomorrow. The owner brings out the most extraordinary box of delicacies.

Pinchas then goes to a clothing store and says "Good Purim. I need clothes for my children, I will pay you after Purim. And they give him beautiful clothes. He passes by a women's boutique. He thinks of his wife, reflecting on how beautiful she used to be. He goes into the store, "Good Purim. Please give me some nice dresses for my wife"

Carrying all his bundles of goodies, he enters his home and yells, Good Purim. Good Purim to all his children and his wife. In the past so ashamed of not providing adequately for his children and wife, he could barely say hello to them when he entered the house.

Now he looks them straight in the eye and says, "I have not been a good father or husband, but now I promise I will be better. The Holy Rebbe blessed me with the strength of Purim, everything will change now.

The first thing I want to teach you is to say "Good Purim". He tells his children to stand up straight and he yells, "Good Purim, wonderful children." The children yell back, "Good Purim". He yells to his wife, "Good Purim, beautiful wife." She yells back, "Good Purim!" They do this several times. There is such a feeling of love, blessing and abundance in their home.

After Purim, Pinchas goes to the richest Jew in town and says to him, "The Holy Maggid blessed me with the strength of Purim. Would you lend me ten thousand rubles? I will give it back in four weeks."

God was surely with Pinchas, for with this loan, he started a business and he soon became the richest Jew in Poland. Not only did he provide for his family and the poor, he supported all the Chassidic dynasties."

This story is printed in Kabbalah Month by Month.

Melinda (Mindy) Ribner, L.C.S.W. is a spiritual psychotherapist and healer in private practice (www.kabbalahoftheheart.com). She is a teacher of Jewish meditation and Kabbalah for more than 25 years. Author of Kabbalah Month by Month, New Age Judaism, and Everyday Kabbalah, she is also the founder and director of Beit Miriam (www.Beitmiriam.org). Her new book, The Secret Legacy of Biblical Women is available on amazon.com. She can be reached by email at Beitmiriam@msn.com or Miriam@kabbalahoftheheart.com. ✨



An Observant Eye

BY RABBI AVI SHAFRAN

Purim present

On the first day of the Jewish month *Adar*, the Talmud enjoins us to "increase happiness." It is, after all, the month that holds *Purim*, when we express our gratitude to G-d for delivering the Jews in ancient Persia from their enemies, and when we give alms to the poor and gifts of food to one another.

In 2003, the first day of *Adar* brought us an early Purim present. It wasn't food, but rather food for thought.

The previous day had been the 50th anniversary of the death of Iosef Vissarionovich Dzugashvili, better known as Joseph Stalin. A new book on the Soviet dictator and mass murderer, *Stalin's Last Crime*, was about to be published, and *The New York Times* ran a lengthy article that day about the book, including its suggestion that Stalin may have been poisoned. The Soviet leader had collapsed after an all-night dinner with four members of his Politburo at Blizhnaya, a north Moscow dacha, and he languished for several days before dying. If indeed he was done in, as the book's authors suspect, the likely culprit, they say, was Lavrenti P. Beria, the chief of the Soviet secret police.

The book also recounts the story of the infamous "Doctors' Plot," a fabricated collusion by Kremlin doctors to kill top Communist leaders.

"By the time Stalin disclosed the plot to a stunned Soviet populace in January 1953," the article noted, "he had spun it into a vast conspiracy, led by Jews under the United States' secret direction, to kill him and destroy the Soviet Union itself."

The article went on to relate something less widely known. "That February," it states, "the Kremlin ordered the construction of four giant prison camps in Kazakhstan, Siberia and the Arctic north, apparently in preparation for a second great terror – this time directed at the millions of Soviet citizens of Jewish descent."

That terror, however, thankfully never unfolded. Two weeks after the camps were ordered built, Stalin attended the Blizhnaya dinner and, four days later, was dead at the age of 73.

The gift that *Adar* in 2003 brought was the knowledge of that theretofore unrecognized salvation, of what the killer (see Shafran, page 13)



As I Heard It

BY MORTON GOLD

Pet peeves

Few things really tic me off, although some things get me irritated. "Like what?" you might ask. Well, people singing or playing out of tune is near the top of the list. Sloppy rhythm is another, people (or actors) slurring their words together at too fast a speed are others. At the very top of the list is the mangling of our national anthem. The "Star Spangled Banner" is just that, our national anthem.

Admittedly it is difficult to sing. I suspect that it was chosen by an act of congress in 1931 more for the words than for the tune. The range at an octave and a half is challenging for most people. For those with high pitched voices (sopranos or tenors) it is too low and for the average voice (baritone or alto) it goes too high. Certainly there are other more melodic anthems. The Canadian anthem, for example is more melodious, the English more dignified, and the French or Russian more stirring. Our melody is taken from an old German drinking song called Anacreon in Heaven. (I'll bet you did not know that!)

It is the words that make our anthem as significant as it is. The words were written by Francis Scott Key who was aboard a British warship (in 1812) as it and a host of other ships bombarded Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor. After an all night bombardment the large American flag at the fort was still waving.

While not many folks even remember that we fought a war back in 1812, most Americans are still stirred today by the words "O say does that Star Spangled Banner still wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" It has become a custom, even a tradition that the national anthem be sung before football games and at other athletic events. I surely have no quarrel with that. What really sets me off is the attitude that the national anthem is merely a song that may be "interpreted" as the performer wishes. I maintain that it is not.

An event occurred prior to the fourth game of the world series in Detroit. The success of performers in the world of commercial music is subject to the approval of the public. This is as it should be. If folks enjoy listening to people sing through their noses, sliding from note to note, often screaming instead of singing, and so forth, that is their right. After all

SHAFRAN

(continued from page 12)

of millions of his countrymen had apparently planned for the Jews under his control but which never came to pass. That Stalin met his fate (however that may have happened) just as he was poised to launch a post-Holocaust holocaust of his own, is something we might well add to our thoughts of gratitude at our own Purim celebrations today, more than a half century later.

And we might note something else as well, especially during this season of meaningful ironies, when G-d's hand is evident "between the lines" of history to all who are sufficiently sensitive to see it.

During the feast at which Stalin collapsed, according to his successor Nikita Khrushchev, who was present, the dictator had become thoroughly drunk. And the party, he testified, ended in the early hours of March 1. Which, in 1953, corresponded to the 14th day of Adar, otherwise known as Purim.

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Rabbi Shafnan is director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America. Communications: rabbiavishafnan42@gmail.com. His new book, It's All in the Angle (Torah Temimah Publications), is a collection of selected essays and is now available from Judaica Press. ✨



this is still nominally a free country. My point is that these vocal atrocities are not desirable in performing our national anthem.

All right, one may think, some vocalists are better than others and even good singers can have a bad day. Very well, vocal quality or vocal production is not what I am getting at. There are the printed notes on paper. To know what the anthem should sound like one can merely listen to any band from one of our armed forces play it. It was more than stirring to hear the US Marine Corps band play it at a recent concert in Springvale. One notes that they do not alter the tune or in any other way vary from it. They do not place two notes on the syllable ban from the word ban-ner where only one is indicated.

I wish there was a law to prevent the desecration of the national anthem. Just as one may not yell fire in a crowded theater where there is none, one should be required to sing the anthem just as it is written. Just as it is more than merely poor taste to drag the flag on the ground, it is more than merely poor taste to mangle the anthem in the manner that the singer did in Detroit. If it is merely up to me I would ban her singing the anthem in public for several years at a minimum.

Obituary

Rabbi Professor David Hartman, 81

One of the great Jewish philosophers of his generation and the founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute, died Sun., Feb. 10, 2013. Rabbi Hartman is considered to be one of the leaders of liberal Orthodoxy, and his philosophy influenced tens of thousands of Jews in Israel and around the world.



Rabbi Hartman founded the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem in 1976, in memory of his father. The Institute has since become a center that has established a pluralistic Jewish worldview which responds to the challenges facing contemporary Judaism. Over the course of four decades, Rabbi Hartman taught and mentored generations of students who are today at the forefront of Jewish education and thought in Israel and around the world.

Rabbi Hartman was born in Brooklyn in 1931 to an ultra-Orthodox family. He was raised and educated at the Lithuanian Lakewood yeshiva, which was considered the most important and prestigious *yeshiva* for North American Jews. In his adolescence, he was one of the most prominent students of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who ordained him as a rabbi. Rabbi Hartman completed his doctorate in philosophy at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

After serving as a pulpit rabbi at a number of important congregations in North America, Rabbi Hartman, inspired by the Six Day War, made aliya with his wife and children. For more than two decades, Rabbi Hartman served as a professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. From 1977-1984 he was an advisor to Minister

(see Obituary, page 18)



I am neither a lawyer nor a member of congress so I cannot suggest the appropriate wording. However, I would hope that someday it would become apparent that our national anthem be regarded as an extension of our flag and treated with the same degree of respect. It is not just any old tune, at least to me.

Dr. Gold is a composer/conductor and music reviewer for The Jewish Post & Opinion. He is the 2010 recipient of the Kavod Award given to him by the Cantors Assembly of North America at their convention in May 2010. ✨



Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Three comedies

Guilt Trip

Guilt Trip is lacking in laughs and insight. Barbra Streisand and Seth Rogen do their best as mother and son Joyce and Andy Brewster, but writer Dan Fogelman sidesteps the conflict that makes for real comedy with TV sitcom-type squabbles and situations. In the film, 20-something Andy, a brilliant UCLA-graduated organic chemist who has invented a non-toxic cleaning fluid, invites his mother on his sales tour from her home in New Jersey to Las Vegas and then to San Francisco. Not until they cross the country is floundering Andy able to take his mother's sales advice and to appreciate her in a new light or two.

Streisand and Rogen deliver nicely here, managing to be touching and funny at times, though left by the lacking script to their own not inconsiderable abilities to engage and to entertain. They both bring the right attitudes and tone to their roles, despite Fogelman's failure to feed them thoughtful – and appropriate – dialogue. Clearly, Rogen and Streisand figured out that there are themes in this movie that the writer himself could or would not deal with. So they did what they could with the silences as the dialogue failed them.

Early on, Streisand calls her son, "tatehle," an interesting Yiddish nickname, in a post-Freudian sort of way, for it is an affectionate term for "father." (It is the term that Hasidic masters used to address the Deity.) There are Jewish elements in this film, though nothing is made of them, and one gets the impression that Streisand and Rogen would have made more of them, had they been given the opportunity. The writer does not allow his characters to use the word, "Jew," though he does allow Joyce, after they escape hazardous snow conditions, to say "Thank God we're alive" – a *Shehechyanu* of sorts.

The only ritual that binds mother and son together centers around non-kosher foods, though Joyce comes close to confessing at one point that food is the only way that she can express love. She apologizes to her son that she had to use turkey bacon to make eggs the way Andy likes them because it was "on sale." Her moment of glory on the trip is winning a contest by consuming shrimp cocktail and pounds of steak at a Texas restaurant. Oh,



there is one (possible) reference to kosher food here, when Joyce jokes that her son might have left her as a child for a Mrs. Shapiro's cookies.

Joyce unloads a shock and awe bombshell on Andy at the beginning of the film when she tells him that he was named after his mother's first love, Andy Margolis, and that she accepted her husband's proposal because the original Andy was not ready to settle down. While Andy the *son* is relieved to know that Andy the *original* was not his biological father, that our prodigal inventor was indeed his late father's son, he responds in a passive aggressive way by looking up the original Andy Morgolis on the internet and tracking him to San Francisco. Then he invites his mother on a trip with San Francisco as the final destination. His intention all along is to force his mother to confront her old boyfriend, though he tells her the reason he wants her to travel with him is to spend time with her.

Our mother and son are named "Brewster," but they end up searching for someone named Andy Margolis, both hoping that he will somehow prove to be the wizard in their journey to Oz. Fogelman thus has them searching for someone Jewish without any kind of Jewish commentary.

If indeed the name Margolis is used here for Jewish identification purposes of some kind, of any kind, does this tatehle-saying woman marry a non-Jew on the rebound, or a Jew who has changed his name and who clearly did not establish any kind of Jewish home with her? Streisand is too respectful of Joyce to turn her into a stereotyped Jewish mother, but she does provide inflections that one would not expect from the script. Leaving the "Jewish" aspect aside, the script never gets around to recognizing that this son invited his mother not so much on a "guilt trip" as on a "Revenge Trip" after being shocked by how his mother chose his first name.

In the end, Joyce tries to put a spiritual spin on things, borrowing but not mentioning the old Jewish folk concept of *beshert*, (destiny) – with a New Age spin, of course: "I was meant to marry your father, because, if I hadn't met him, I wouldn't have had you."

By that point, the film had become

more sappy than funny. Would the film have been more honest, touching and humorous had mother and son confronted Andy's passive-aggressiveness with the help of some authentic Jewish insights somehow provided on their trip?

Parental Guidance

In *Parental Guidance*, Bette Midler and Billy Crystal play a California couple in their late 50s, Diane and Artie Decker. They are summoned to babysit for their three grandchildren in Atlanta, whom they have not seen in over a year. Their career-oriented daughter and her inventor husband must attend a convention where the young father is feted for his invention of automated, talking and computer-connected home mechanisms. Marisa Tomei and Tom Everett Scott are sweet as the young parents, and an uncharacteristically reserved Crystal and Midler are pleasing in their roles, as well. The children actors are delightful and offer performances with impressive range.

It is obvious after the first ten minutes or so that the script by Lisa Addario and Joe Syracuse and direction by Andy Fickman are going to provide rather uneven fare, with good moments followed by many flat and even grating interludes. Still, there are redeeming factors in this film, not the least of which is its faith that individuals and families are redeemable.

We never quite learn why the grandparents visit so rarely and why they feel like "the other grandparents," though it is suggested more than once that Artie's obsession with his baseball announcer career and his confrontational nature may have had a lot to do with it, so much so that Midler's character as much as tells her husband, with one of the film's best lines, that she is going to have a good relationship with her grandchildren but that *his* relationship with them is "your problem." That the line is intended affectionately makes it so much more powerful.

Parental Guidance "succeeds" at offering one of the sweetest moments of toilet humor (literally) in film history, but, sadly, forfeits all dignity for lack of a urinal. This movie dismisses high culture as a form of stress, particularly for children, but glorifies technology and political correctness (which it purports to critique) by making far too light of their effects on mind and soul, suggesting that occasional playfulness is the cure.

Neither grandparents nor parents nor children are identified as Jews here. Midler and Crystal go along with the writer and director and render Artie and Diane Decker as generically as possible. The only thing "Jewish" about the film is the field trip to the Chinese – that is, Asian natural food – restaurant, whose proprietor brags

about being Japanese with a Chinese wife, and about having North Korean kids who “go to Hebrew day school.”

What stands out here is the patent lack of guiding values and proprieties – and of worldview and meaningful perspective – in all three generations. Whether intended or not, a pretend funeral scene at which Crystal was asked by one of the grandchildren to officiate offered the most profound moment of family bond. While it would seem that the writers and director meant the funeral as a bizarre flourish with a touching aspect, it brought healing to individuals and to the family, not unlike authentic, heartfelt religious rituals. Whether subliminally or in spite of themselves, the filmmakers here made a rather moving plea for the power of religious ritual in the family dynamic, though they obviously wanted to keep their ritual and their family “generic.”

This is 40

I can't figure out what holds together the marriage in Judd Apatow's *This Is 40*, except perhaps the two daughters and some lingering physical attraction that persists for the handsome couple, Pete and Debbie, played by Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann. Writer Apatow has them already at the stage, at barely a decade and a half into marriage, where they derive some joy and comfort in imagining how they would move on after the other spouse's demise.

Pete is selfish. He is a music producer who chooses acts based solely on his own eclectic interests, and does not think of the economic well-being of his family. His chief joy is bike-riding, mainly because it gets him out of the house. Why Apatow puts him in the music business, I am not sure, unless as an excuse for unnecessary and insulting jokes about Simon and Garfunkel.

The film obsesses over two things: Jews and Christmas. That is a sure formula for either schizophrenia or for silly humor. The characters, the writing, the atmosphere, everything about his film, manifest both. As regards silly humor, Apatow can't wait to have a character observe that old Jews are the “only ones who still have hard core records because they don't like to download because they don't know what download means.”

Such “Jewish” references pop up where you least expect them. In fact, the film comes out and says that being “too Jewish” brings disabilities. When the daughters try to keep up with their baby triplet “uncles” – the newest generation has Jewish fathers – the girls come up with an excuse for their slowness, “We're Jewish.” Pete's father, Larry (Albert Brooks), keeps borrowing money from his son, whom he calls “Boychik.” Larry has

just fathered triplets with his new wife. He tells his daughter-in-law that his son is “smarter” than he and “probably a little cuter, a little less Jewy,” but that “after 50 that changes” and she can expect one day to “wake up with a rabbi.”

With all this “heavy” Jewish discussion, the family can't stop talking about Christmas and even menacing one another with it. When daughter Charlotte threatens to tattle on her father to her mother, Peter's first response is, “Try it. See what you get for Christmas.” When Debbie's doctor asks her if she has a Christmas tree and all the trimmings (an essential question in a medical exam?), she responds, “Yes.”

Why all this back-and-forth about “Jewyness” and Christmas? My own impression is that Apatow is intent on giving us a miracle here, but not the miracle of Jewish loyalty to God and Torah or the Christmas miracle of virgin birth and incarnation. He uses religions for laughs and to further complicate a difficult marriage – even though someone seems to have decided at some point that the son's daughters are Jewish but not the grandfather's newest sons.

Apatow will do anything to ensure that the marriage here survives despite all odds against it. That's the only way that many unpleasant scenes found in this film can add up to comedy rather than tragedy. And he certainly catapults forth his “Jewish” references, literally tossing them around to complicate things as much as possible. This, I suppose, is intended to glorify the miracle of love (or at least abiding physical attraction) conquering all despite the obstacles of religion.

Still, for all his faults, the Jewish grandfather does have some “family values.” He tells Peter that Peter's mother had wanted him aborted (“That's what we did in the 70s”) and would have done so had the young father-to-be not bribed her with a pizza.

The Jewish grandfather (and new father), who is content to borrow money he can never pay back, is not without warmth, and does have nice-sounding slogans like “family helps family,” especially when he is the one being helped. The wealthy Gentile grandfather (also a father again, of a troubled teenage boy), Oliver (John Lithgow) is unhappy with his new family and willing to take a second look at the virtues of the daughter from whom he has distanced himself for 15 years. It looks like he may end up helping the couple through the financial difficulties that have jeopardized their marriage.

At a key moment, the Jewish grandfather tells a Gentile in the family, “Your problem is you hate Jews.” He is then told that he can't use up the Jewish card. But of course,

ABOUT THE COVER

(continued from page 2)

with words and symbols, to bring one closer to the sacred, to lift one up and open one's heart.

Olenick presents and teaches hands-on workshops for temples, schools and organizations where participants of all ages and all levels of skill can learn about Judaic art and create their own unique pieces for their home.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi has honored Olenick as an artist and artisan in the Sacred Guild of the Disciples of Betzalel. Two of her images are included in the set of the Coen Brothers movie, *A Serious Man*.

The Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) has selected several of Olenick's images for book, CD and songbook covers. Many images adorn greeting cards, which can be purchased at fine gift and Judaica shops throughout America. This year the URJ has selected Jackie's artwork exclusively for their calendar.

The artist's work has been exhibited and extensively collected throughout America and is in private, organizational and synagogue collections.

She works in several mediums including acrylic and collage/multimedia, for which she is noted. Olenick has created bold and bright, large pieces that are appropriate for a temple or can serve as a focal point in a home.

She is married to Rabbi/Chaplain Leon Olenick and they have three grown children and nine grandchildren, from whom she constantly draws inspiration and *naches*. To see more of her artwork visit her website at www.jackieolenickart.com or email her at jackieolenick@gmail.com. Also check on Facebook and Twitter. ★



Apatow does precisely that. He literally discards in the sense of throwing out and throwing around some “Jewish” references – again, in order that true love can triumph over any possible obstacle, including ethnicity and religion.

The couple's closest moment in the film, the only time they bond emotionally, is when they engage in a boldface lie in the principal's office, ducking responsibility for hurtful behavior and leaving the victims looking like the liars and the troublemakers. In the end they bond on the ultimate excuse, “We're not mad at each other. We're mad at our parents.” But love does conquer all in this movie, even vicious irresponsibility and hostile rationalizations.

Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of Conservative Congregation Rodfei Zedek in (see Gertel, page 18)



Book Review

REVIEWED BY PROF. ARNOLD AGES

Original and refreshing

The Book of Genesis: A Biography. By Robert Hendel. Princeton University Press. New Jersey. 2012. 187 Pages.

We know who some of the great Jewish Bible/Torah commentators were; Onkelos, Rashi, Sforno, Ibn Ezra, Kimche and Leibowitz. Similarly the names of famous (or infamous) gentile commentators are also well known: Jerome, Calvin, Luther, Wellhausen and Kittel.

One of the remarkable aspects of Robert Hendel's "biography" of Genesis holds that we must be prepared to enlarge the envelope assigned to the Biblical commentary genre to include original thinkers such as Spinoza, Galileo, Rabelais, Emily Dickinson, and Eric Auerbach.

This rather bold thesis is quite logical when you realize that Hendel's eclectic approach to Genesis, by which he means primarily though not exclusively, the creation chapters, is designed to show how early and later interpreters, both among the pious and the impious, parsed the meaning and grammar of the first book in Hebrew Scripture.

Before the author introduces his own band of modern Bible commentators, Hendel quotes James Kugel's assertion that traditionally there were four different approaches to Scripture – that it was cryptic, relevant, perfect and divine. For each of these descriptive rubrics the author provides textual examples. Jacob's reference in Genesis 49:10 is indeed cryptic because the Shilo of the verse has given rise to Messianic resonance from the House of David as well as descriptions of the periodization of various Hebrew commonwealths.

For relevant, the author discourses on the various speculations with regard to the location of the Garden of Eden and the rivers whose confluence is mentioned in the text. Philo of Alexandria, the great Jewish philosopher, held that these were not geographical coordinates but symbols

of important virtues. Although Hendel is widely read, he appears to have missed Daniel Huet's *Treatise on the Location of The Terrestrial Paradise* (1691) in which the learned French bishop assured readers that the geographical coordinates of the Garden of Eden indicated Aden as the assured location of the Biblical garden.

As a perfect text the Genesis saga could not contain imperfect material. As a God-given work the Torah reflects divine perfection. Thus even repetitions and seemingly contradictory passages must be resolved through recourse to a deeper understanding of the words. Accordingly, theologians representing diverse views on the religious spectrum presented the idea that Holy Scripture was coded with hidden meanings and the vocation of the commentator was to ferret them out. The French polymath, Blaise Pascal endorsed this idea in his book *Thoughts* (1669) when he embroidered the idea of the "sens caché" – the hidden meaning – into theological filigree.

The fourth mode in entering the Biblical precincts requires respect for the divine origin of the revelation. This idea gave rise to the rabbinic notion that both the words of Scripture and their interpretation were handed down at Sinai. This idea was welcomed by the rabbinic tradition which held that it was impossible to understand everything in Scripture without recourse to the oral tradition which God communicated to Moshe.

Having presented these interesting although scarcely comprehensive categories, Hendel then proceeds to explore what he calls the "figural" sense of Scripture, a necessary expedient given the complexity, variety and obscurities of the first book of the Bible. It is in this part of his essay that Hendel expands his inquiry by adducing the wisdom of Plato, the Greek philosopher whose concept of the "divided line and the allegory of the cave" (in his famous *The Republic*) dovetailed beautifully with the figural sense. Just as the cave dwellers had only an imperfect understanding of their environment, readers of the Bible were similarly affected by the imperfections of their own cave-like domicile in this world. The meaning of life as well as the meaning of Scripture required a giant leap in order to penetrate the true picture of reality.

The author is very eclectic in his choice of those who were involved in Biblical exegesis. Luther is mentioned as one commentator who was not enamoured of the homiletical or figural sense of the Bible. In fact, he derided this type of analysis with almost the same pique as he did in his violently anti-Semitic tirades against Jews. For Luther the literal

understanding of the Bible was the preferable mode along with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Hendel's analysis becomes all the more original when he expands the category of Bible analysis to points of view widely at variance with the received wisdom. Thus he has an intriguing section on the discovery of the new world in 1492 and the impact it had on the traditional take on Scripture. That discovery prompted questions about what Genesis did not have to say about the aboriginal inhabitants of North and South America. How was it possible for Genesis to have ignored the masses of peoples that covered that land mass?

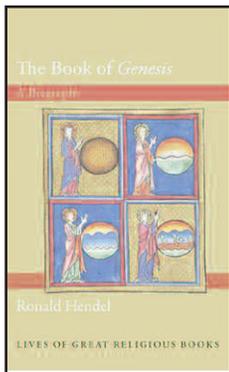
Within a century or two serious minds such as Galileo and Spinoza began to dismantle much of Genesis's pre-scientific portraiture of the cosmos. Hendel is right when he says that Hebrew Bible's view of the cosmos was an advance over contemporary pagan ideas about celestial objects representing divine beings who were to be worshiped, while Hebrew wisdom rejected these ideas. However, the astronomical observations of Galileo, actuated by his keen acuity of vision – and Spinoza's work as a lens grinder (which sharpened both his vision and mental processes) served to begin the dismantling of the old ideas about the sanctity of Genesis.

By the 20th century, having endured Darwinism and other manifestations of modernity, critics of the Bible and Genesis in particular sought new and more subtle prisms through which to explain the verses of the Pentateuch's first book. In this context Hendel alights on Emily Dickinson, the American poet and shows that some of her best verse portrays Genesis as a beautiful repository of myths and legends which is valuable as a moral paradigm.

But Hendel's best observation comes from his study of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, the marvellous book he wrote while he was in exile in Turkey as a German Jew fleeing the terrors of Nazism. Auerbach's analysis of the Akedah, the binding of Isaac, was a literary masterpiece and can only be understood, says the author, by examining the creative tension which the redactor of Genesis weaved into the narrative of Abraham's sacrificial act.

Genesis: A Biography is one of the most original and refreshing books published in 2012 and I heartily recommend it for a National Jewish Book Award.

Arnold Ages is "Distinguished Emeritus Professor," University of Waterloo, Ontario Canada. ✨



Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

Israel's sixth Prime Minister

Menachem Begin. By Avi Shilon. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. 584 Pages. \$40.

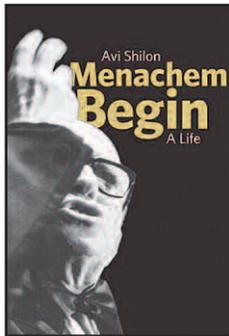
Many authorities consider James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, published in 1791, to be at the top of the list of biographies. Serious biographies since that time are inevitably compared to Boswell's *magnum opus* and this is true of Shilon's biography of Menachem Begin. Unlike Boswell, Shilon was not personally acquainted with Begin but he interviewed

many people who were, including Begin's son, Benny. He spent five years interviewing, collecting data and writing in Hebrew. The thoroughness of his research is attested to by 66 pages of footnotes.

An independent journalist, Shilon is a Ph.D. candidate at Bar Ilan University and is now working on a biography of David Ben-Gurion.

Since Begin was a public figure, the facts of his life are generally known to all who are familiar with Israel's history. Born in Poland in 1913, he received his law degree from Warsaw University in 1935. Active in Zionist youth movements, he achieved leadership positions in Betar and became a disciple of its right-wing founder, Vladimir "Ze'ev" Jabotinsky. When the Nazis invaded Poland, Begin escaped to Wilno (Vilnius) Lithuania but was then imprisoned by the Soviet Union. He was released in June 1941 and he joined the Polish army. In May, 1942, he was sent to Palestine where he left the army in December, 1942. His family died in the Holocaust.

Begin became the leader of *Irgun*, the underground organization that had split from the *Haganah*, the main Jewish military organization. Their fierce conflicts with each other and in resisting the British are described. When the State of Israel was born, this turned into political rivalry as Begin formed *Herut*, a right wing party. It remained in the opposition with Ben-Gurion severely deriding and condemning Begin. Just before the Six-Day War of 1967, a national unity government was formed under Levi Eshkol and Begin joined the cabinet as minister without portfolio. He



resigned in 1970 over an argument about a Middle East peace agreement. In the 1977 election, Begin's party won a landslide victory and he became Israel's sixth Prime Minister, ending 29 years of left-wing domination over Israeli politics.

In 1979, after Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, visited Jerusalem, the Camp David accords were signed and Begin and Sadat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Also, under Begin's rule, the Iraqi nuclear plant was destroyed and Begin stated, "We shall not let our enemies develop weapons of mass destruction," a guide for today's Israeli government confronting Iran.

During Begin's six years as Prime Minister, a major achievement was the effort to help depressed areas in Israel which Shilon refers to as the "Neighborhood Rehabilitation Project." A full description may be found in *Distant Partners: Community Change Through Project Renewal* by Ben W. Lappin and Morton I Teicher, University Press of America, 1990.

The disastrous 1982 war in Lebanon with the Sabra and Shatila massacre; the death of Begin's wife in November, 1982; and his own ill-health led him to resign from politics. He died in March, 1992.

Shilon concludes with a masterful summary, claiming that Begin put "his stamp on the Jewish character of Israel." This powerful presentation is biography in the great tradition of James Boswell, making us eager to see Shilon's book on Ben-Gurion.

Women in the IDF

The People of Forever Are Not Afraid. By Shani Boianjiu. New York: Hogarth. Crown, 2012. 339 Pages. \$24.

The Israeli author of this novel was born in Jerusalem in 1987. She has previously published several short stories but this is her first book. It is clearly based on her two years of required service in the Israeli army, resulting in the thinnest possible line between fiction and reality. Readers will come away feeling that they have been exposed to some significant aspects of what it is like for a young, Israeli woman to fulfill her obligation to spend two full years of her life in the Israel Defense Forces.

We briefly meet Yael, the first person narrator, when she is living in a small Galilee village, still in high school where she is bored, despite being friendly with

Avishag and Lea. Two years later, at the age of 19, Yael is a soldier in boot camp, missing her boyfriend, Moshe, who has completed his military service. She learns to shoot, among other things, and becomes sufficiently proficient that she trains marksmen. She is assigned to the military police, serving at the Hebron checkpoint where she is charged with making sure that the Palestinian construction workers coming into Israel for the day are not carrying weapons. One of them with whom she has become familiar attacks another Israeli checkpoint guard with disastrous results.

Other experiences are described, emphasizing the relationships among the women soldiers and between the women and the men. The end of their military service brings the three friends back together and there are some disjointed images about what they encountered. Strangest of all is the reference to what happened in Entebbe and the hijacked plane with many Israelis, rescued in an unbelievably brave feat. This story, told by Yael's mother who had some minimal connection to the event, seems out of context.

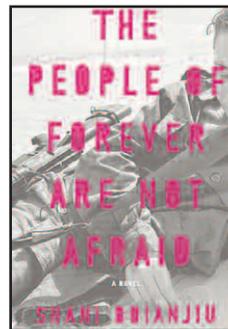
What is totally omitted from the story is the fact that the Israel army has an education program for its soldiers that contains instruction in military ethics. (During my years in the American army during World War II, the only ethics instruction provided was that triage required treating the least injured soldier first.) Israelis are taught not to hate the Palestinians and to use force only to the extent required. The objective is to make sure that Israeli soldiers complete their military service in war or in peace with a clear conscience. Unfortunately, this remarkable attitude is not included in the book. It is a serious failure, given the book's effort to capture the experiences of young Israelis as they fulfill the requirements of military service. Perhaps, Boianjiu's next publication will reflect this significant aspect of an Israeli soldier's training.

Tangled relationships

The Middlesteins. By Jami Attenberg. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2012. 274 Pages. \$24.99.

Can an author write an appealing book about a Jewish fat lady? That was what Jami Attenberg set out to do and readers will have to judge for themselves the degree of her success. One measure is the fact that this is the first of Attenberg's four books to appear on the best-seller lists.

The protagonist is Edie Middlestein, first
(see Teicher, page 19)





My Kosher Kitchen

REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Hamantaschen recipes and book on food in Israel

The most important aspect of most Purim pastries is their shape. Most Ashkenazic Jews only know of *hamantaschen*, the triangular pastries filled with prunes or other fruit fillings.

The word is taken from the German words, *mohn* (meaning poppy seeds) and *taschen* (referring to pockets). Some say the pockets refer to Haman who stuffed his pockets with bribe money.

The original name was *mohntaschen*, and the tradition of eating them may date back as far as the 12th century. Shmil Holland, the Israeli historian, caterer and cook, says when Jews fled Germany for Eastern Europe in the late Middle Ages, they took the poppy seed pastry with them and added the Yiddish prefix, “ha,” thus making it hamantashen.

My Mother’s Cookie Dough for Hamantaschen

- 2 eggs
- 1 stick margarine or 1/2 cup oil
- 2 3/4 cups flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- juice of 1/2 orange or
- 1/2 cup sour cream

Mix ingredients. Put in refrigerator for 20 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°F. Roll out dough, cut circles 1/4-inch thick, spoon on filling, fold into triangles, place on a greased cookie sheet and bake in preheated oven 20–30 minutes.

My mother told me that my grandmother always made her hamantaschen with mohn and yeast dough. My mother said when she was a child, she could remember grandma boiling the poppy seeds, draining them and then she and her brothers took turns chopping them in the brass mortar and pestle which her father had gotten from Europe. Now I have that mortar and pestle.

Grandma Sade’s Prune Filling

- 1 1/2 cups cut prunes
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon juice

Grandma Sade’s Poppy Seed Filling

- 1 cup ground poppy seed
- 3/4 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp. butter or margarine
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup finely chopped nuts
- 2 Tbsp. honey

Place all ingredients but vanilla in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until milk is absorbed. Add vanilla. Let cool before spooning onto dough.

Food in Israel

Breaking Bread in the Galilee. By Abbie Rosner. Hilayon Press. April, 2012. \$15 paperback.

When Abbie Rosner moved to Israel 26 years ago married to a dairy farmer to live in a farming village in the Galilee, she began a journey with many facets, but it was her culinary journey that produced this book.

“I set out on an adventure, using the local foods of the Galilee to trace the living links to the ancient past of my contemporary agricultural landscape.”

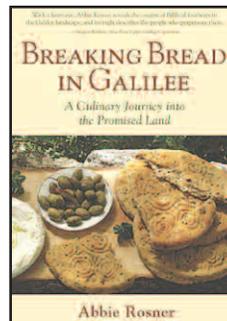
She began by marking every place in the Bible where food was mentioned. Then she began investigating culinary traditions currently practiced in various ethnic communities in the agricultural villages of the Galilee.

For Example, she learned about *hubeisa* (don’t mention this to anyone who lived in Israel in 1947–48!), the plant Israelis lived on during the 47-day siege of Jerusalem. She found the *zaatar* herb used by the Israelites in Egypt to dip in the blood to mark the doors for the angel of death to pass over.

She found the mandrakes, the inducer of fertility, and what was used to persuade Jacob to sleep with Leah. She visits the Museum of Palestinian Arab Tradition and Culture, struggles to learn Arabic from a man in his early 80s, finds a family that grows wheat to make flour, olives for oil, grapes for wine and goats for cheese.

She decides to build a *tabun*, a clay-burning oven, often used for baking special breads. She relates the time-consuming process of preparing and cooking the plants she finds. More importantly, she reaches out to make friends with Bedouin, Druze, Muslims and Christians. She shows her readers the food traditions that are vanishing.

This is really a fascinating book for people who like to learn about food in



OBITUARY

(continued from page 13)

of Education Zevulun Hammer and acted as an advisor to many prime ministers on the issues of religious pluralism in Israel and the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.

David Hartman published dozens of articles and books. His thought dealt with the intersection of the traditions of the past and the challenges of the present. At its foundation stands a request for dialogue with the tradition on one hand and with modern streams of thought on the other. ★



GERTEL

(continued from page 15)

Chicago since 1988. He is the author of two books, What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic since 1979. ★



Israel, for those interested in preservation of traditions and for those who enjoy meeting interesting women living in Israel. Although this journey is not meant to be a cookbook, here are a few of the less complex recipes readers may enjoy attempting.

When I lived in Israel in the 1970s, we didn’t have cream cheese, so I would pour sour cream into a cheese cloth, suspend it over my sink for 24 hours, add salt and scrape it into a bowl for home-made cream cheese. Now I can buy a variety of cream cheese including varieties of Kraft products. This recipe reminded me of those years.

Labaneh

Pour two cups of yogurt (at least 4.5% fat) into a cheesecloth bag. Suspend overnight to let the water drain out. The next day, collect the cheese from the cloth and put it in a bowl. Spread on a dish, top with olive oil, zaatar mixture or even a sprinkling of fresh zaatar leaves, and serve with fresh pita for dipping.

Zaatar is a popular Middle Eastern spice blend made of sumac, thyme, sesame seed, marjoram, oregano and coarse salt – put atop humus, cheese and pita.

Tabouleh

Mix 1 large bunch of finely chopped parsley, 1 small bunch of finely chopped fresh mint, 2 chopped green onions (both the green and white parts), 1/4 cup finely ground bulgur, 3 Tbsp. olive oil, lemon (see Kaplan/recipe, page 19)



Book Review

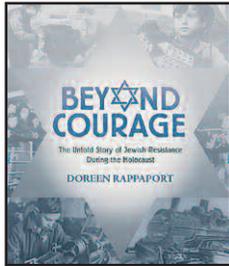
REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Extraordinary heroic resistance

Beyond Courage (The Untold Story of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust). By Doreen Rappaport. Candlewick Press. 2012. Pp.228. \$22.99.

Doreen Rappaport, prolific children's books' author and winner of the Washington Post Children's Book Guild lifetime achievement award for nonfiction, has made a welcome and unique contribution to the vast Holocaust literature with her latest inspiring volume, *Beyond Courage*. The highly attractive album style format with poignant photos honors the extraordinary heroic resistance – physically, psychologically and spirituality – under harrowing circumstances of fellow Jews during the Holocaust's devastation.

The idea for the book germinated as an attempt by the author to dispel the prevalent notion of her youth that "Jews went like lambs to the slaughter," a view conveying passive resignation and even cowardice, that interestingly, I was exposed to in the State of Israel of the 1950's.



It was also manifested by my parents being told upon our arrival in Israel in 1949 from post – Holocaust Europe, not to talk in Yiddish to me and my sister Esther for no children would play with us; for the ethos of the new state called for a new kind of Jew different from the "weak" Diaspora one, speaking the Hebrew language of Biblical Joshua and the conquering Israelites. Not till the 1961 Adolph Eichmann trial in Jerusalem did Holocaust awareness, appreciation and education take root in both Israel and the U.S.

This vital book, that makes for a special gift across the age – divide, though designed for a younger audience who surely requires proper exposure to an essential and complex theme, includes five parts: The Realization; Saving The Future; In The Ghettos; In The Camps and Partisan Warfare. My mother's relatives, the Bobrovs, were among Belorussia's partisans. One testified against a Nazi war criminal at the war's end.

TEICHER

(continued from page 17)

introduced as Edie Herzen, age 5, and "not so little." We quickly meet her many years later when she is a sick, fat old lady who practiced law for 35 years and whose husband, pharmacist Richard Middlestein, has just left her after almost 40 years of marriage. Their son, Benny, is married to Rochelle and they have twins, a boy and a girl, who are getting ready for their *b'nai mitzvah*. Their daughter, Robin, is an unmarried school teacher who is very angry with her father for leaving her mother.



Though some of the book's shared information is by now well known, such as the daring escapades of the Bielski family partisans in Belorussia's forests, the material on the saga of the Greek Jews, for example, is enlightening as well as the women's noble role in the excruciating struggle of fighting back in a variety of ways, albeit against overwhelming odds.

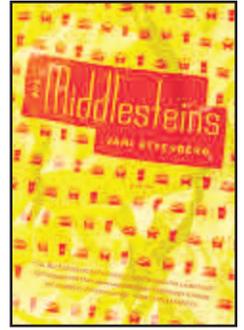
Reading the book during the Festival of *Chanukah*, I was deeply moved by its incredible celebration at the Kaufering IV labor camp in Hurlach, Germany, as survivor Israel Cohen tells of the ingenious Menorah he and fellow inmates were able to create, bringing to the darkness of their predicament the past light of sustaining hope and faith. The amazing photo taken at the Netherlands'Westerbork transit camp of lighting the Menorah on Chanukah's seventh night and the creative Chanukah card from Zionist youth at the Lodz Ghetto, are precious testimony.

Over six years in the making, the book was nourished by Rappaport's painstaking labor of love and driving commitment to the book's theme, by wide and multiple input from survivors and professionals in three continents, including the staff of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. A final critique is offered by renowned Michael Berenbaum, currently professor of Jewish Studies at The American Jewish University in Los Angeles.

Beyond Courage (how apt a title!) movingly concludes with a poem by eleven year old Franta Bass who perished in Theresienstadt. "I am a Jew and will be a Jew forever./ Even if I should die from hunger,/ never will I submit./ I will always fight for my people,/ on my honor./ I will never be ashamed of them,/ I give my word./ I am proud of my people,/ how dignified they are./ even though I am suppressed,/ I will always come back to life."

Rabbi Israel Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach, Virginia, is the son of Polish Holocaust Survivors. ★

After leaving Edie, Richard turns to the internet to find women. He goes out with many of them: divorcees, widows, and those who never married until he settles on Beverly, a half-Jewish divorcee with a British accent. He has occasional and always frustrating meetings with his son, his daughter, his daughter-in-law and his grandchildren.



Edie continues to be a compulsive eater both at home and in a Chinese restaurant where she is particularly enamored with the chef-owner. Even her illness and necessity for surgery does not stop her from her uncontrollable eating.

The setting for the novel is a Chicago suburb, not dissimilar from the one in which the author herself grew up. Also, there was a time in her life when Attenberg ate too much although not to the same extent as Edie Middlestein who is depicted as over-eating to the point of killing herself.

Attenberg excels in painting portraits of each member of the family and of some minor characters as well. She also does an excellent job of examining their tangled relationships with each other. Indeed, the book is a powerful exploration of what happens to a family as its members come into conflict. In addition, there is a useful analysis of each family member's relationship to Judaism, a topic not handled by Attenberg in her previous writing. She wrote two novels, *The Kept Man* and *The Melting Season*, as well as a collection of short stories, *Instant Love*. She has published short stories and articles on a variety of subjects in newspapers and magazines. The warm reception of *The Middlesteins* should encourage Attenberg to write more novels which her readers eagerly await.

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. ★



KAPLAN/RECIPE

(continued from page 18)

juice from 3–4 large lemons and salt to taste. Let the mixture sit until the juices soften the bulgur. For tabouleh salad, add finely chopped cucumbers, lettuce and/or tomatoes.

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



Why Faith Matters

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The Jewish Post & Opinion

1427 W. 86th St. #228
Indianapolis, IN 46260

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The Talmud recounts that one day Elijah appeared to Rabbi Baruqa, who asked if anyone in the marketplace would achieve eternal life. Elijah pointed to two men and when Rabbi Baruqa asked their occupation, they said, "We are jesters. When we see someone who is sad, we cheer him up. When we see two people quarreling, we try to make peace between them." (Ta'anit 22a). God bless those who make us laugh. ~ 2-5-13

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



WIENER

(continued from page 4)

allow it to prosper. Then, on the other hand, God does not control everything that happens. Creation gave us the ability to choose the paths we take. Evil is inflicted upon us sometimes because we have a tendency to do things to ourselves that have no rhyme of reason and, in fact, defy logic.

Purim is a holiday, the last in the Jewish sequence that allows us to examine our role in accepting that which happens or making the effort to extract form the experience the ability to allow our goodness to dominate our lives. Purim is a holiday that enables us to understand that we must take control of our destiny. Purim is a holiday that helps us comprehend the meaning of freedom as fully described in a holiday that follows just four weeks later –

Passover, the ultimate expression of self-determination.

Purim is the one exception that permits us to celebrate our deliverance in a way that enables us to escape to a world of make-believe. It is the stuff that dreams are made of. It is the coach that takes us to forever, as the stroke of midnight approaches. It is sweetness and happiness giving us the ability to enjoy every moment of our lives in goodness and love.

Dance, be merry, laugh, hide, be someone else, and then remember that Purim is there to encourage us to a brighter tomorrow with all its noisemakers and dancing. The name of evil is drowned out by the tumult. Perhaps then, we will fully understand the essence of the story, whether true or not, that, as Isaiah taught us, "Cease to do evil, and learn to do good. See justice, and relieve the oppressed." Maybe that is why we particularly distribute charity at this time in our cycle of life's journey.

Rabbi Irwin Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation. Comments to ravyitz@cox.net. His new book, Living with Faith, will be published in April, 2013. ✨



Book Excerpt

SANDY ROZELMAN

On a very windy day, a rabbi's big black hat blew off and a young man ran after it and returned it to the rabbi. The rabbi thanked the man and added, "May God bless you."

I've been blessed by a rabbi, thought the man. This must be my lucky day. He headed for the racetrack and put his money on a horse named Stetson with 20 to one odds. He won.

In the second race, he bet on a horse named Fedora at 30 to one odds. He won again.

At the end of the day, the man returned home and told his wife about the rabbi and betting his money on horses named after hats.

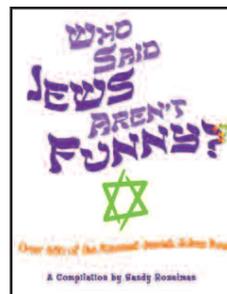
"So where's the money?" she asked.

"I lost it all in the ninth race. I bet on a horse named Château. It lost."

"You fool!" the wife screamed. Château is a house. Chapeau is a hat!"

"It doesn't matter," he said. "The winner was some Japanese horse named Yarmulke."

Sandy Rozelman, author of Who Said Jews Aren't Funny? is a wife, mother of three, grandmother of four, at the beck and call to one dog and two cats, Chronic Pain Management Coach, Facilitator for a wellness support group, collector of frogs (notice frog on the cover of the book), maker of chocolate candy, knitter for charity, volunteer, puzzle and game lover, poet, singer and retired. Please send me an email at: youregonna laugh@aol.com if you'd like me to send you an autographed copy of my book. Website: www.youregonnalough.tateauthor.com. ✨



Rabbis from Chabad/TzemaCh Tzedek, House of Love and Prayer and Mayanot yeshiva, with Muslim, Christian and Druze leaders – Ibrahim Abu El Hawa, Imam Sameer Assi and Jiries Mansour attend Abrahamic Reunion gathering at the home of Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu in Tsfat on Feb. 6. Posted on Facebook by Jerusalem Peacemaker Eliyahu McLean.