

# *The Jewish* **Post & Opinion** • *National Edition*

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*L'Shana Tova  
U'metuka*



# Editorial

I was planning to write about the Hebrew month of *Elul* and then I received a column by Rabbi Audrey Pollack (this page) that addresses what I was going to write about. Instead of repeating, I will add some additional thoughts.

I am pretty sure I first heard about these 40 days of preparing for the High Holidays from Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. He compared it to the Israelites 40 years of wandering in the desert before they could enter the Promised Land. They needed to shake off their slavery mentality before they could live in the Land as a free people.

So too with no preparation, we cannot simply walk into the synagogue at the beginning of *Rosh Hashanah* and walk out at the end of *Simchat Torah* expecting to achieve our lofty goals.

When I was growing up, I do not remember hearing about daily teachings during the month of *Elul* such as what can be found on [www.JewelsofElul.com](http://www.JewelsofElul.com) (see Rabbi Pollack's column). Is this a newer development or something similar to what has been done previously in our long history?

In the book *Mourning and Mitzvah* by Rabbi Anne Brener, she writes about wearing white on *Yom Kippur*. This is symbolic of the plain white shrouds in which a deceased person is wrapped before burial. One reason for this could be that after all the *chesbon hanefesh* (self-reflection) during *Elul*, by the end of *Yom Kippur*, it is as if the old you has gone and a new you has emerged. Also at the end of life, one ritual, like *Yom Kippur*, is to recite the *Vidui* (confessional prayer) and the *Shema*.

Again recalling Rabbi Carlebach, I remember him asking which day in the Jewish calendar is happier, *Yom Kippur* or *Purim*. He said it was *Yom Kippur* because at the end of the *Neilah* service, one is like a brand new person, able to make a fresh start. The old sins (missing the mark) have been forgiven and because no new ones have been made, one has a clean slate.

Also I wonder if the reason for wearing white is because the questions that arise during the process of mourning are similar to the questions that we have to ask ourselves beginning with the month of *Elul*. What are my priorities? What really matters to me? What changes do I need to make so that when I reach my last days, I will have expressed all of my values and done all the actions that I hold most meaningful?

Sometimes when grieving a loss, we regret that we waited to express our feelings until it was too late. These holidays beginning with *Elul* prod us not to wait.

## Elul – Preparing for High Holidays

BY RABBI AUDREY S. POLLACK



The month of *Elul*, the month leading up to the High Holidays, which begins this year on August 7, is a time for rethinking, self-reflection, and meditation. During this month it is customary that every Jew – not just scholars or rabbis – take time to join in Jewish study, read the Bible, and rethink and take stock of his or her life.

Why 40 days of preparation? This custom is explained in relationship to the earliest of reconciliations between the Jewish people and God: the 40 days which Moses spent on Mount Sinai after destroying the first set of the Ten Commandments. Moses had come down the mountain and saw the people with the golden calf. He punished the people, destroyed the calf and then went back up the mountain to fast and pray for 40 days.

These ended – on *Yom Kippur* – when Moses received the second set of Ten (see Pollack, page 3)

Rabbi Norman Koch of Temple Shalom in New Milford, Conn., wrote “Life and living should be our focus. Yet it is the lens of death that often provides the clearest picture of life.”

He continues: “tomorrow may be too late to talk about important matters. Resolve disputes, learn to appreciate differences, and give compliments while life is full and vibrant. Don’t let distance and the all too hectic pace of life leave you taking those you love for granted; call them regularly, say hello, say I love you. ...I wish to share my thoughts, fears, and desires with those who fill the most intimate spaces of my life; I want to know their thoughts and feelings. I want no doubts, no unsaid words, no unexpressed feelings to linger in those I will leave when I die.”

Along these same lines, when asked what might help mourners cope with their own doubts, fears, sadness and grief, Rabbi Amy Eilberg said, “In my experience, people grieving who know that they have already said everything that needs to be said before the person died, have a much easier time, relatively speaking, than those who did not. There is no way to prevent the feelings of sadness, anger and grief but it would be wise to anticipate, ‘What will I be sorry for if I don’t say and do?’ and do just that.”

Fourteen years ago when I was caring for my mother and I knew she had only six months or less to live, I had to be very

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## The Jewish Post & Opinion

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careful how I spoke to her because I did not want my last words to her to be unkind. As an exercise for *Elul*, spend one day or even an afternoon and pretend only you know that today will be your last one. Notice how carefully you choose your words and actions.

This is the work of *Elul* and the High Holidays. May you create your new goals and accomplish them during this year 5774.

Jennie Cohen, August 14, 2013 ★



# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

## Inspiration

For the last 20 years I have been visiting our local hospital. Years ago I would go by bicycle. Now I usually hitch a ride. Recently I was waiting at the entrance of Kfar Chabad for someone to give me a lift. A car pulled up. I asked the driver if he could give me a lift. He asked me where I was going. I told him that I am going to the hospital. He said that he was sorry, but he is only going half of the way there. I told him that that is okay, I will go with him half of the way, and walk the rest.

I got in the car and he started to drive. He asked me why I am going to the hospital. I told him that I help the patients and visitors to put on *tefillin* and pray. He said if that is the case, he will go out of his way and take me all the way to the hospital, so that he will have a share in the *Mitzvahs* that I am going to do.

I was inspired. The driver was a young man, without a beard or a *yarmulke*. We knew each other for only one minute, and already he was going out of his way to help me. I told him that I wanted to return the favor. I am a Cohen, a member of the priestly tribe, and wanted to give him a blessing. What blessing did he want?

He said "Bless me that I should love the Holy One, blessed be He, as much as He loves me!" I said to myself "Wow! This is big time! A unique request!" Forty-four years ago I learned that one of my jobs is to bless people. Since then I have given many blessings. Many people ask for health, wealth, and *nachus* from their children. Others ask for a blessing to find their soul mate, or to have children, or a blessing for peace and happiness. (By the way, if any of you need any blessings, just send me a letter or email and I will be more than happy to bless you.)

I told him that it is impossible to love Hashem as much as He loves us. Hashem is infinite, and His love for us is infinite. He said "Then bless me that I should have an infinite love for Hashem!"

In the meantime we arrived at the entrance to the hospital. I blessed him, gave him some literature about *Moshiach*, got out of the car, and started to walk into the hospital.

I took a few steps, and then it struck me. "Hashem is infinite. His love for me and for all of His children is infinite. Am I reciprocating? How much do I love Hashem? He does so much for me. I really have to try much harder to appreciate Hashem's love for me and everything that He does for me." The next

## POLLACK

(continued from page 2)

Commandments from God as a sign of God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Jewish people.

In identifying the 40 days Moses spent on the mountain with the days leading up to Yom Kippur, the Jewish community strives to spend those 40 days as Moses did – in prayer and study and in rethinking one's life in order to merit God's forgiveness. The month of Elul is 30 days long, and there are ten days from the first of *Tishrei* to Yom Kippur. So, the 40 days begin with the first of Elul.

There are two major customs associated with these 40 days. Each morning of the month of Elul, with the exception of *Shabbat* and the last day of Elul, the *shofar* is blown. This is meant to be a spiritual wakeup call, and is also a reminder of the shofar blowing that will be heard on *Rosh Hashanah*.

The second custom is the reading of Psalm 27 at every service. This plea to God for help and deliverance from our enemies is understood at this time of year as a plea for deliverance from our own internal enemies, from the challenges we face daily that may have caused us not to be true to ourselves. As Elul comes to an end, our spiritual preparation, prayers and self-reflection intensify with special prayers of *Selichot*, prayers of asking forgiveness from God and for spiritual healing.

These resources are available for your own spiritual preparation leading up to the High Holidays: [www.JewelfofElul.com](http://www.JewelfofElul.com), *Seasons of Our Joy* by Arthur Waskow, *The Jewish Holidays, A Guide and Commentary* by Michael Strassfeld, *Days of Awe* by Shmuel Yosef Agnon, and *Preparing Your Heart for the High Holy Days: A Guided Journal* by Kerry M. Olitzky and Rachel T. Sabath.

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few hours I went around in a state of inspiration.

Not only does Hashem give me a beautiful life of Torah and Mitzvahs, a house to live in and food to eat, a wonderful family and many friends, but He also sends me inspiration. Now I really have to love Him.

Unfortunately it is easy to take our blessings for granted. We have to try hard to appreciate Hashem's love for us and all of the blessings that He brings into our lives. Then it is easier to fulfill our purpose in life, to love Hashem and serve Him with all of our heart and soul and even more.

(see Benzion, page 7)



## Unatana Tokef

BY RABBI ANNE BRENER

We now confront the meaning of this day  
As we stare into the face of our own mortality.  
We form a circle.  
Hands and souls linked,  
We stand as community.  
Together we contemplate  
The Yomim Noraim.  
The days of awe,  
The days of trembling.

Our eyes scan the room  
And lock with the eyes of others,  
As we consider the year just begun.

As we cross the threshold of a New Year,  
We are not so foolish  
As to think that it will be  
A year unblemished by tears.

Give us the strength to stand as a circle,  
When the year is touched by anguish and pain.  
When injustice, illness, and death,  
Enter the circle,  
Give us the compassion not to avert our gaze.

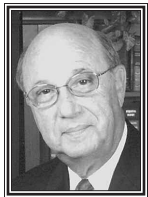
Only You know what the year will bring.  
Who will live and who will die.  
Who will face cancer or depression  
Or the other maladies of flesh and soul.

Job loss, addiction, infertility, heartbreak,  
Temptations to stray from vows to family  
and community.  
Impoverishment, earthquake, hurricanes,  
acts of terror,  
We are vulnerable creatures subject to  
Your grace.

We do not ask to be exempt from the  
afflictions of being human.  
We only ask that you be with us in the  
peaks and in the valleys,  
That you help us to stand with each other  
in good times and in bad.  
And that the circle of witness and consolation  
Remains unbroken  
In the coming year.

Amen.

Rabbi Anne Brenner, LCSW has a private practice in psychotherapy and spiritual direction. She is the author of the acclaimed *Mourning & Mitzvah: Walking the Mourner's Path* (Jewish Lights, 1993 & 2001) and has contributed to many publications. Ordained in 2008, she is a graduate of Hebrew Union College's School of Communal Service and the University of Southern California's School of Social Work (1983). ★



## Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### What is this thing called faith?

Each year, as the fall season approaches there are holidays in the Jewish calendar referred to as "The High Holidays." They consist of *Rosh Hashanah* – literally meaning head of the year, and *Yom Kippur* – significantly known as Day of Atonement.

The first acknowledges the fact that the cycle of life involves a time of renewal, a time set aside to remember the past and reflect on the future. The second offers us the opportunity to reconsider the past so that the future will have more meaning, a time offered to make life better through understanding the mistakes that create havoc in our lives.

Some people ask why we have to wait for a set time to reminisce and undo the mistakes we innocently or purposely produce. In our heritage there is an understanding that time can be an unforgettable opportunity for connection and fulfillment. Holidays were designed to remind us of our potential.

They signify a commitment to the human experience of faith and the purpose of creation. The places designed for all this to come together are our Houses of Worship. We learn this from Scripture in which we find a true expression of collective responsibility, "My House shall be called a House of Prayer for all people." (Isaiah 56:7). It is the focal point for traditions, customs and laws to come together to create a feeling of connection to each other and to God.

All of us, in some way, are charitable people; giving represents the very best in us for it enhances our ability to truly understand kindness and is equal to all the teachings found through our faith experiences. It takes a charitable heart to understand relationships and connection. Kindness awakens in us the possibility for fulfillment. Charity is dispensed to the living, but kindness – loving kindness – is given to both the living and the dead. Charity is given to the poor, but deeds of kindness are given to the poor and the rich.

This season incorporates all these things and more. It is the expression of an effort to join with the Divine. It is a time for us to seek unification with our deepest thoughts and actions. It is a time to really cleanse ourselves and hear the voice of God say to us, "You are forgiven." This season



## Kabbalah of the Month

BY MELINDA RIBNER

### Intimate closeness with the Divine

*The month of Elul is Aug. 7–Sept. 4*

Every month has its own unique energies and spiritual opportunities. On the evening of Aug. 6, and on Aug. 7, we enter into the new month of *Elul*. The first letters of the Hebrew verse, "*Ani ledodi vidodili*." (I am my beloved and my beloved is mine.) from *Song of Songs* spell out *Elul*. This itself is a powerful mantra to repeat throughout this month. There is



allows us to poise ourselves between Heaven and Earth, as we measure the success of our lives and realize that it is the reason for which we were given life.

Twenty-five hundred years ago a Prophet proclaimed that we each have the ability to display the goodness of humanity. The most enduring force known to man was the power of our capacity to conquer the wrongdoing we witness every day. It is not enough to acknowledge the problems; rather we are obligated, as partners with God, to ensure that the tear in our society is repaired. Each tear in the fabric of our existence should bring us closer to understanding our place in the journey upon which we became embarked when God breathed the breath of life into us (Genesis).

Each society, in its celebration of a New Year, plans for tomorrow by recalling yesterday. Resolutions are made with good intentions. Then we falter and return to the old habits. However, it should not end there. The act of making a wish, a pledge, should be combined with the action necessary for completion. There is no shame in falling; rather the impurity is in not making an honest attempt. After all, we are human, subject to human failings. In that, we find the beauty of trying.

The Prophet was right when he declared that goodness could be found in each of us. Perhaps it takes a little push called New Year and Day of Atonement, to bring out the best in us. This, to me, is the true meaning of this thing called faith.

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an intimate closeness between the Divine and people this month.

The letter associated with the month of *Elul* is the letter *Yud*. The *Yud*, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, is simply a point. The *Yud* is the essential point. The *Yud*, a part of all letters, represents the essential life energy. The month of *Elul* is about getting connected to what is essential, what is the essence. The *Yud* represents also the self nullification of the ego necessary for closeness with the Divine. The *Yud* is the soul. The *Yud* is the first letter in the tetragrammaton *Yud Hay Vav* and *Hay*, God's name of compassion.

We live in a world of increased information, corruption and distraction. Meditating on the letter *Yud* this month supports the inner turning to the most essential inner point within us. Through the spiritual grace of *Elul*, it is easy to get in touch with what is pure and constant within us.

The month of *Elul* is the last month of the Jewish year. As such, *Elul* is a time of spiritual accounting, a time of letting go and forgiving. *Elul* is a time of affirmation and healing. *Elul* is a time to be with oneself in the most intimate holy way. *Elul* is considered the headquarters for *Teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* has many facets to it. On the deepest and most mystical level, *Teshuvah* is the return to who we really are our true essence, our inner wholeness, beauty and potential.

The Torah portion of *Shoftim* (Judges) is read during the week when we inaugurate the month of *Elul*. "You shall appoint judges and police officers for yourself – for each of your tribes in all your (city) gates that God, your God is giving you." According to our sages, gates refer to the two eyes, two ears, the nose, and the mouth of our body. This is an important awareness needed to protect what enters into your body/soul temple.

Many people are afraid of the concept of judging and judgment. Who wants to judge or be judged? We fear judgment because we live too often with the chatter of the inner negative critic within us. We are frequently judging ourselves harshly. Too much of the time, we feel inadequate, not enough, and unworthy. These feelings disempower us.

This is not the judging that God is instructing us in this Torah portion.

God is telling us so lovingly in this Torah portion to judge ourselves like God would judge us. God is love, compassion, abundant mercy. View yourself from the perspective of the Higher Self or Soul, through the eyes of love, acceptance and compassion. This kind of judging validates and strengthens us. Love allows us to see, accept ourselves as we are, to feel and

(see Ribner, page 5)

# Gather the People



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

## Yomim Nora'im – awe or fear of God

It's difficult not to imagine the *shofar* (ram's horn) when we think of *Rosh Hashanah*. We also know the day as Yom Teruah; it's to be a day of shofar blasts to shake us up. The *mitzvah*, of course, is not to blow the shofar but to hear it blown. It is, in a manner of speaking, like a summons from a court – but this summons is from the Court on High.

What are we to think when we hear this sound, whether in our imagination or real life?

We are being called to a spiritual *yoveil*, not unlike the jubilee of the 50th year, to be rescued from moral poverty and to be at one with God again. We are being called to abandon everything that estranges us from God and goodness. We are being called to ally ourselves with God, not just momentarily with prayer in the sanctuary, but persistently in our everyday actions.

Maybe it's naïve to think so, but we imagine that on some level most of us long for spiritual yoveil, to no longer live with and berate ourselves for our moral missteps and mistakes.

But how is it possible when mundane pressures, and our obsessive search for sensory and material pleasures to assuage them, often dominate our day-to-day lives? How is it possible to sharply reduce our intentional and unintentional wrongdoing, which causes needless pain to people we love and care about, and to us?

Our tradition teaches that the beginning of moral maturity is *yirat Adonai*. The term is ordinarily translated as awe or fear of God. But we suggest that each of us has a choice in this matter; we can choose to live our lives either in awe or in fear of God. And the character of our *yirat Adonai* depends – borrowing a page from Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888) – on whether and how we *keep God in mind*.

We're in awe of God when constantly conscious of God's power, or whatever we name the creative, masterminding power in the universe. That consciousness produces within us a sense of respect, reverence, and wonder. And we can choose to live our lives inspired by the genius and beauty of that power, which is

infinitely greater than our own powers, recognizing that while we are given freewill to make moral choices, the Mastermind of Creation arranges the consequences of our actions. And when we find ourselves admiring the beauty of an ordinary tree, for instance, we may recall that God created a forested earth, while we're unable to create anything comparable to the beauty of a single living leaf.

On the other hand, we're dogged by anxiety and fear when we fail to keep God in mind. These emotions are the outcome of consciously failing to recognize and respect that the Creation operates by certain rules. When we ignore those rules and the Creator who devised them, our subconscious begins to protect us by anticipating that we may suffer damaging or even destructive consequences. It partly explains why, once we recover from initial embarrassment and shame, we almost always feel relief when our wrongdoing is revealed. So it's our choice whether or not we live our lives with this fear of God.

One of the most extraordinary powers of the Creator is the ability to eradicate the evidence and effects of our wrongdoing on us. Of course, this miracle requires *teshuvah*, that we turn our lives. And *teshuvah*, in turn, requires confession.

We know how difficult it is to confess our misdeeds to others. But the real obstacle to that necessary step is overcoming our resistance to confessing them to ourselves. Insincere confession to others, for the sake of *shalom bayit* – maintaining peace in the home – is cheap if we can privately humor ourselves with the thought that truly, we're not morally compromised. Thus we're called on for *hitvadah*, the reflexive form of *vidui* or confession, admitting our wrongs to ourselves.

But why should we take this drastic and potentially very painful step?

It's essential if we're to be reconciled with those whom we've become spiritually alienated from by our misdeeds. Put more directly, the incentive we have for confession, first to ourselves and then to others, is to end our isolation and loneliness, a condition that entails more intense pain when we nonetheless surround ourselves with people. The alternative is spiritual intimacy – a spectrum of intellectual, emotional, and physical intimacy with others – reflecting a relationship with and response to God.

How soon and how much do we have to confess?

It's a little like asking how soon we have to take the nail out of the bottom of our shoe. We can choose to continue living relatively isolated and anxious lives. Or we can choose to live lives inspired by the Creation's beauty and limitless possibilities, breaking down the distance between

## RIBNER

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release what is not true to who we really are. With love we can change and become better people.

Take time this month to review your life objectively, as much as possible. Record and consider major events that took place this year. Be willing to see yourself as you are and as you showed up during the year. Love and be compassionate with yourself, no matter what you see and what you have done. Complete the following in a journal:

I regret.....

I feel guilty about.....

I recognize that I need to change in the following ways:

Do not think you can figure out how to change solely with your intellect. Change occurs through feeling. You have to enter into the heart and feel. Get in touch with your deeper yearnings and feel the feelings that are there for you. Listen to the messages being sent to you from deep within yourself. Breathe, Pray, Let go, Get out of the way, Go beyond yourself and Open to receive and Allow God to work through you. You cannot change on your own.

The most important part of the transformational process of this month is the commitment to nurture and strengthen your connection to the goodness of life and God. This is your greatest protection from negativity and harm. Taking on another *mitzvah*, an activity prescribed by Jewish law or an act of loving kindness for another person, or even for yourself will make a significant difference. And most importantly, take time to meditate and pray each day, even if it is just for a few minutes.

Melinda Ribner L.C.S.W. is the author of *The Secret Legacy of Biblical Women, Everyday Kabbalah, Kabbalah Month by Month, and New Age Judaism. Internationally known for her pioneering work in kabbalistic meditation and healing, she is also a spiritual psychotherapist and for more than 30 years has used kabbalistic wisdom as part of treatment. She offers a free newsletter on meditation, healing, kabbalistic energies of the months, holidays, and so forth. [www.kabbalahoftheheart.com](http://www.kabbalahoftheheart.com). ✨*



those we love and us.

It's largely our choice whether we experience the coming year as a bad year or a good year, whether we live the year in fear or in awe of God.

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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](http://www.gatherthepeople.org)). ✨





## Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

### Building sandcastles and a relationship with God

On a hot August day in 1959, I sat cramped in the back seat of our Thunderbird between suitcases, pillows and my annoying 13-year-old brother for what seemed like the longest trip of my life. Amid melting crayons, half-eaten sandwiches and bouts of car-sickness, I whined for most of the eight hours it took to get to our destination. But the moment we drove up to our little cabin, nestled among pine trees and within walking distance of Cape Cod Bay, my attitude changed. For the next two weeks, I spent every waking moment running up and down the sand dunes, building castles on the beach and finding all sorts of magical things, like starfish and sea glass, in the sand at low tide.

Most of us have memories of a special place in nature that we hold dear: a mountain where we hiked or camped, a summer cabin on a lake, a beach where we played with our children or grandchildren. As children, we often appreciate the majesty of the natural world even before we can articulate the concept. As adults, many of us find something in nature that inspires deep, spiritual feelings and emotions – moving us toward a closer understanding of what God is or might mean to us.

I once read a quote by the great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright that expresses my feelings about the connection between God and nature. "Nature is the body of God and it's the closest we're going to get to the Creator in this life." Being in nature is, in a sense, like inhabiting the essence of God. So it is easy to understand why so many of us feel spiritually alive when we are surrounded by natural beauty.

I have heard people claim they are "not religious," then describe with poetic proficiency their radiant feelings about nature. Captivated by the fragile shoots that produce intricately designed orchid flowers or entranced by the stillness of a night sky painted with stars, they relate to feeling "spiritual" but not to feeling Jewish or religious.

When you witness a beautiful sunset or a hummingbird flitting across your back porch, do you connect that image to

your Judaism? When you think of being Jewish, do you relate it to first buds peeping through the soil or the rising of the harvest moon?

It is so easy to disconnect the awe-filled feelings we have in nature from being and feeling Jewish. Yet if we glean anything from the Bible about the human experience of God, it is that Judaism and our relationship to God is deeply and indelibly rooted in nature.

Biblical man's first encounter with God was through the natural world, the Garden of Eden being the epitome of all that is beautiful on earth. We are placed in the Garden, given a Divine purpose for living that is directly linked to nature. In Genesis 1:28, God blesses man with these words: "...Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it; have dominion over...every living thing..." One chapter later, God places man in the Garden of Eden "to cultivate it and to guard it." From the very beginning, we are given the inherently complex task of having complete control over the Earth, and are required to treat it with a deep sense of fiduciary responsibility.

But it doesn't stop there. The essence of God, as Creator of the world, is expressed in numerous ways within Judaism. Jewish blessings, sacred texts and liturgy are replete with examples acknowledging the connection between nature and God. The *Ha Motzi*, the blessing we say over bread and before eating a meal, praises God for bringing bread from the earth. The *Kiddush* we recite on *Shabbat* celebrates God's works of creation, praising God as Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Images in the Psalms reinforce a joyous relationship between man, nature and God, like these words from Psalm 96: "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea roar and the fullness thereof; let the field be joyful and all that is therein; then shall the trees of the forest rejoice before the Lord..."

The Jewish calendar continuously commemorates and reinforces the connection between God and nature. We are commanded weekly to refrain from our own labors and rest on *Shabbat*, the day we acknowledge that the Creator of all also rested. Holidays like *Sukkot*, which commemorates the fall harvest, and *Tu B'Shevat*, the new year for trees, link nature to our annual cycle of festivals. The sabbatical year (or *Shmita* in Hebrew) requires us to give the land a rest from planting every seven years while the *Yovel* commands a redistribution of the land every 50 years. All of these work to establish a continuing consciousness and intricate relationship between God, nature and the Jewish people.

(see Lederman, page 7)



## Yiddish for Everyday

BY HENYA CHAIET

### Childhood summers in Chicago

*Ah gooten tog eich Yiddisheh kinder. Ich vil eich fregen ah frahgeh. Zeit ear hays?* (A good day to you all my Yiddish friends. I want to ask you a question. Are you hot?)

*Mein mahmeh haut gehot ah naytze far altz.* (My mother had a solution for all her problems.)

*Vehn mir hauben gehven klayeh kinder in shtaut Chicahgeh flegen dee summers zein zayre hays. Mir hauben nisht geh kent chappen dem autem in hoyz.* (When we were small children living in the city of Chicago, summers were very hot. You could not catch your breath indoors.)

*Arum fear ahzayger flekt dee mahmeh ein pahken dem essen uhn mir flegen gayn tzoo ah park nisht veyet foon un zuch aup killen. Mir flegen zitsen unter ah grayseh baym.* (Around 4 p.m., mother would pack a picnic supper and we would go to a park close to our home and cool off. We would sit under a large tree.)

*Mein tahteh flekt cumen nauch der arbite un mir flegen alleh essen tzoo zahmen.* (My father would join us after work and we would all eat supper together.)

*Ahz daus is gevoren finster flegen mir layfen unter der vasser shpritzer zuch aup killen. Der nauch flegen mir shlofen ahfen graus. Zayer free flegen mir gayn tzoo rik ah haym.* (After dark we would all run through the water sprinkler to cool down. We would fall asleep on the grass. In the early dawn we would walk back home.)

*Dos iz geven mein mahmehs naytze far dee hayseh vetter. Siz nisht gehven kine luftkiller in der tzeyet.* (This was my mother's solution for the hot weather. There were no air conditioners available to us at that time.)

*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. ★*

# In defense of hypocrites

BY RABBI ELIEZER ZALMANOV



The 18th century rabbi, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, was referred to by his colleagues and followers as the "Advocate of Israel." He was famed for constantly highlighting the positive in his fellow Jews, so that they find favor in G-d's eyes.

One morning during *Shacharit* services, he noticed that someone had stepped out of the synagogue in middle of the *Shema*. Peering out the window, the rabbi saw this individual, still decked out in his *Tallit*, greasing the wheels of his horse-drawn carriage.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak immediately raised his eyes towards heaven and called out, "Master of the Universe! How great are your children. Even while involved in extremely mundane tasks, they still make time for prayer!"

Indeed, a unique perspective on worshipping G-d.

The term "religious" is oftentimes used as reference to one who is firm in his or her beliefs. People who attend services regularly are considered to be more religious than those who aren't as frequent attendees.

According to Judaism, however, being religious means observing G-d's laws. We believe that G-d has given the Jewish people 613 commandments – *Mitzvahs*. Each *Mitzvah* provides us the opportunity to strengthen our bond with G-d.

Every *Mitzvah* is independent of the others, and with every *Mitzvah* performed – or transgression avoided – a link is added to our connection. The more we do, the stronger the bond.

At times, we may hesitate taking upon ourselves the observance of a certain *Mitzvah*. The reluctance usually stems from feelings of hypocrisy. For, how can I observe one *Mitzvah* while I disregard another?

A quote I am fond of repeating is "There are three types of Jews: Those who do *Mitzvahs*, those who do more *Mitzvahs*, and those who do even more *Mitzvahs*." Simply because you aren't prepared to make a life changing decision regarding some *Mitzvahs*, shouldn't preclude you from observing those you are able, and willing, to.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's comment regarding the individual greasing his wheels while praying was referring to precisely this scenario. The man's prayer was a step in the right direction. Had he thought

# Starting early – not waiting to change

BY RABBI STANLEY HALPERN



It is hard to believe that the High Holy Days are nearly upon us – this year they are shockingly early – hence Thanksgiving during *Hanukkah*. Actually, the Holy Days are right on time – they are always on time – for us it just seems early.

But, as early as they are this year, I wonder and perhaps fear that, in some ways, it is already too late.

The purpose of the entire Days of Awe is change. We assess what we have done well and what we have not done so well. We dedicate ourselves to continuing to do those positive things – maybe even better – and we set goals for improving those things that we just did not handle well – because we tried and failed – or perhaps, we just did not even try.

Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik taught that at this time of year there are three different types of people. He told the following parable to demonstrate.

A merchant went to a far-off market to purchase items for resale. He took a great deal of money, some of it his own, and the rest from various investors. God was with him, and he had a very successful trip. All he needed to do now was get home safely. He hired a large wagon and driver. However, he did not want to deal with the customs inspectors and to pay their bribes. Therefore, he had the driver take a somewhat difficult and dangerous route seldom traveled.

From the very beginning, the merchant was very nervous. He hid and re-hid his merchandise, and practiced to himself what he would say if they were caught. The driver remained calm through the trip, which only made the merchant more nervous. As they neared the border, the driver also became very nervous – what if they took his wagon and horses – how would he make a living.

They proceeded quietly, trying to get

himself a hypocrite, he would have sooner stopped praying rather than stop greasing.

By emphasizing the positive in this behavior, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was reminding us that we aren't at all perfect, and that every activity is judged by its own merit.

And the more we do, the better we off we are. So, go ahead, be a hypocrite!

Rabbi Zalmanov is co-director of Chabad of Northwest Indiana. For past columns, visit his Blog at [www.chabadnwind.com](http://www.chabadnwind.com). ★

across the border. When all of a sudden, the horses reared up and neighed at the tops of their lungs as if screaming, "We are caught!"

Some people prepare for change all through the year. Like the merchant, they are always trying to do better. They can never start too early. Some people, like the driver, wait until the end, and then nervously try to make their lives and their relationships better. And some people, like the horses, just wait until it is too late.

Look around us. Look at our communities and our country. Are we just now realizing that we are the horses?

Rabbi Halpern is the rabbi at both Temple Israel in Gary, Ind., and Congregation Beth Shalom in Carmel, Ind. ★

## BENZION

(continued from page 3)

We have to do everything in our power to bring redemption to ourselves and to all of the world, and to love Hashem is a big step towards redemption. It allows us to free ourselves from bondage to the mundane and material aspects of life. If you love money and what money can buy, you are a slave to money. If you love Hashem, you are a free man.

The more we love Hashem, the more we will love His children. Every act of loving kindness that we do makes us and the world better, and brings us closer to the true and complete redemption. Then Moshiach will help us to make the world perfect. We want Moshiach now!

P.S. Until Moshiach comes, very soon, we can sometimes feel a little down. How can we cheer ourselves up? Just think for a minute how much Hashem loves us.

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## LEDERMAN

(continued from page 6)

For some, a synagogue is essential to feel the presence of God. But for many Jews who struggle to feel that connection, the world we live in is as holy a place to acknowledge God's presence. The Talmudic rabbis knew this when they wrote: "No spot on earth is devoid of the Presence."

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





## Laugh with Big Al

BY AL MUSKOVITZ

### Bungled package deal

We all face challenges. Health. Financial. Challenges that test us. It's part of the human equation. No one gets by unscathed. But you know the saying – "That which does not kill us makes us stronger." Yeah, well try convincing someone of that after they've attempted to "seamlessly" switch their phone service provider. I know, because I just lived through the (insert echo) horror, horror, horror.

Yes, I finally turned my landline phone service over to my cable and internet provider to take advantage of their bungled, er, "bundled" package deal. While in the end it all worked out, you do pay a price to pay a lower price. I will forgo mentioning my cable company's name. My goal is not to besmirch them nor harm their bottom line, because for every communications firm in existence, there are plenty of disgruntled customers on the verge of a mental breakdown. I'm just one of the lucky ones who lived to talk about it...though it took a few days to talk about it because my phones didn't work for awhile.

Here now is a condensed chronological compilation of my recent chaotic communications conversion. A deep breath aaaand here we go...

Switching to digital phone service required a new modem to accommodate my two landlines. Provider said I could buy modem to avoid leasing one. Told to visit on-site cable representative for assistance at one of five local Best Buys. To be safe, contacted all five by phone first; no representative existed. Visited a Best Buy to make sure. No rep and no such modem. Called manufacturer of modem. Says Best Buy has the modem, just wrong SKU. Given SKU; go back to store. Best Buy enters SKU in computer. No such product exists. I cave and order/lease modem from cable provider.

While new modem is in transit, cable company shuts off my existing modem. I have no computer service. Nice cable guy in Pakistan apologizes; turns modem back on. New modem arrives with "self-install" kit. I install modem. Seven of my eight phones are rendered useless. After six hours on phone with techs from three different countries, a service call is



## Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

### Christian hearts in the Bible Belt

Like sweet and sour cabbage soup, the Queen of the Jewish kitchen, or if you prefer romantic analogies, how about Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton – Christianity and Judaism have a long and spotty love affair. First united in wedlock, then amicably divorced, then bitterly antagonistic, next friendship without the marriage vows. The latter seems to be our current phase. United in heart and soul. And due to several worldwide factors, including a newfound knowledge of Christian wellsprings and the animosity of

scheduled. In the interim I receive voice mail confirming that, I swear this is true: "Your new phone service will commence on "December 31, 2044". I call cable company and ask if we can shoot for 2041. Service man arrives. Informs me there is no way I could've ever self-installed this system. He gets phones working. He leaves.

Oops, forgot to see if new phones communicate with my alarm company. Want to venture a guess? Need special tech to fix alarm. Set-up appointment. Tech arrives two days later. Can't fix it. Call alarm company; they fix it. Done. Phones work. Cable works. Internet works. Alarm works. Prescribed anxiety meds work. Mission accomplished. (Exhale.) I close now with a modified version of the 23rd Psalm.

Yea, though I walked through the valley of the shadow of a cable company,

I feared no evil: for thou art provided me with 3 technicians and 2 servicemen;

Thy cable, internet and phones, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a bundled price package before me in the presence of mine competitive offers,

Thou annointest my bill with discounts; my cup runneth over with savings.

Surely this great deal will follow me all the days of my life...NOT! I've already been told that I'll be getting a rate increase in years two and three!

Amen? Yeah, right.

Alan Muskovitz is a Detroit-area writer, voice-over/acting talent, speaker and emcee. Visit his website at [laughwithbigal.com](http://laughwithbigal.com) and "Like" Al on Facebook. ★

Islam, a new informal Judeo Christian alliance is forming.

Have you noticed recently that Jewish/Christian relationships (and I speak in a historical perspective) are thriving in a bull market? Here in Huntsville, Alabama, the buckle of the Bible Belt, in the recent Holocaust Remembrance Day in April there were as many Christians in attendance as Jews. Traditionally, six candles are lit to remember the 6 million Jews who fell before the Nazi butchers – an evil that made the pogroms of the past seem picayunish, small potatoes.

The 7th Candle Award – given to the non-Jew who has done the most to foster the memory of these martyrs – Jews and non-Jews – went to Pastor Rusty Nelson, leader of The Rock Family Worship Center. In previous years the award has been given to a camp liberator, John Rison Jones; an educator, Mary Hudson; a inspirational Christian minister, Robert S. Somerville; the Huntsville City Schools; Mieps Gies, (deceased) protector of the Anne Frank family in Amsterdam; and to Stan Minkinow, a Holocaust survivor and a business person living in our community.

Pastor Nelson and his congregation, generous donors to Jewish causes, embody the finest of Christian virtues. They have given thousands to Jewish causes. Love thy fellow man is his watchword. He has stood firmly by his Jewish friends at every crisis. Both he and his congregants monetarily and spiritually embody the prime Christian hallmark of love and he does it with a spirit, a panache you might say, that exemplifies the very fountainhead of Judaism because it's a perfect example of *Tikkun Olam* as expressed in Hebrew.

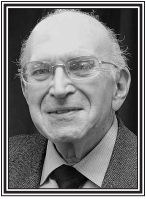
Tikkun Olam means repair the ailing world. It answers the deepest philosophic question of humanity: Why are we here? "Tikkun Olam" answers the good Jew, "to repair an imperfect world". The Creator is perfect. And the planet earth, as well as the glittering galaxies, are precisely piloted by their Creator, but occasionally the orbit of man will morally wobble. That's for us, humanity, to fix.

And here in Huntsville, a deeply religious community, we have a man who understands this family relationship of Jew and Christian not only in his head, but in his heart: Pastor Rusty Nelson, the guiding spirit of The Rock Family Worship Center – a non-denominational group. He's the winner of this year's 7th Candle Award – given to the non-Jewish individual who has done the most to burn into our memories the horror of the Holocaust.

He has raised thousands of dollars for Israeli projects and equally crucial has raised his voice to chastise the enemies of

(see Roberts, page 9)





# As I Heard It

By MORTON GOLD

## Nonmusical pet peeves

Readers of my column already know that I tend to *kvetch* about the newer informal character at our services, the ever obnoxious quasi Chassidic (Israeli?) style of tunes with their requisite syncopations along with a host of other things I feel the need to share with my readers. There is one matter that I will forswear never to poke fun at in the future, namely the attire of the men of Chabad.

No, I do not admire their wearing white socks with black shoes or the hats that went out of fashion some 60 years ago. (At least they don't wear kapote's, or turbans like their Arab counterparts, or their addiction to beards either.) That is their business, not mine and in light of all the good work they do, they can dress as they please and forget about shaving. One should not judge a book by its cover or as it is written in *Pirke Avot* "Look not at the flask but at what it contains."

One of my granddaughters attended a recent Jewish Girls Retreat in Albany and I was present at their closing banquet. The good, positive Jewish values that it was impossible not to notice that were imparted during their time together are things that I wish all of our children could experience.

The girls came from many states, and from places as far away as New Zealand, France, and Alaska. And if you haven't noticed, if by chance you have a stay at a hospital, the odds are that one of them will visit you and that you will be better for the experience. More power to them.

While in Albany I happened to read an article that quoted the chief Sephardic rabbi in Israel who referred to those men who wear knitted *kippas* as "Amalek!" Incredible! With all those who stand ready to annihilate us, this fellow singles out Modern Orthodox Jews as the implacable enemies of the Jewish people. It is obvious that he has forgotten that because of "causeless hatred" Jerusalem was destroyed.

He has ignored the dictum that *Chaverim Kol Israel* (all Jews are brothers) or the commandment that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. He does not believe that Modern Orthodox Jews are his neighbors and because they wear knitted kippas they are not frum enough for him and not worthy of his love.

Many years ago I chided those who wore knitted kippas as being or pretending

## ROBERTS

(continued from page 8)

the only democracy in the Middle East. Like an Old Testament prophet, he sees over the horizon and pictures a communality of belief and a kinship/communality of birth. Add to that he sees the secular threat that bullies both of us, a threat that not only bares its fangs, but bites at our faith and our roots. Sure, the world has changed in 3,000 years, but as Solomon spoke, "there is nothing new under the sun". We are still surrounded by Canaanites. And their common foe is Judaism and Christianity. Their weapons are different, but their goal – destruction – is the same.

Then there is Pastor Robert Somerville, a man endowed with a generous Christian



to be super frum. These days, I wear a knitted kippa myself. Not because I want to pass myself off as being super frum. No way. Because the top of my head lacks hair, these kippas tend to stay in place unlike those made of other material. If the rabbi regards Modern Orthodox Jews as "Amalek" I can only guess what he thinks of Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, secular or humanist Jews.

While *Halacha* points out that a Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother, there are others who believe that anyone raised as a Jew and who subscribe to Jewish values is Jewish. Is it not sufficient for the *Sephardim* that to foster unity amongst the Jewish people that *Ashkenazim* abandoned their centuries old pronunciation of Hebrew and adopted Sephardic diction? Thus I no longer say *BAW-ruch A-TAW* etc and now say *Ba-RUCH a-TAH* etc.

I suspect that the rabbi's attitude mirror those of his Arab neighbors when it comes to their treatment of women as well. (Good for marriage and having children... in that order.) To them a female is simply a source of sin. In this I think that they represent the Jewish branch of the Taliban! That a woman can be a garbage collector, a rabbi, an electrician, truck driver or surgeon is not in their thinking. Would that rabbi prefer to bleed to death rather than have his wounds attended to by a female nurse or doctor?

As for modesty in dress, why don't they ask their ladies what THEY think is modest? From what I observed recently it was compatible for a woman to be dressed modestly as well as fashionably. Even nuns no longer wear the ankle length garments (habits) they wore a hundred years ago.

If I criticize one thing or another it is strictly an argument "for the sake of heaven." Hillel wrote a very long time ago, "That which is hateful to you, do not do that to (see Gold, page 20)

heart who gave many thousands of dollars to the local Jewish Federation. Additionally, each year he sponsors a Seder at Passover that also enriches Jewish causes. Maybe even more important than money, Pastor Bob as he's called supports seminars for public school teachers to learn of the Holocaust and a host of other activities. Pastor Bob's theology, as you can tell, underlines humility and brotherly love as the divine path. He believes with all his heart Genesis 12 verse 3: "And I will bless those that bless thee and I will curse him who curses you". These heartfelt attitudes, explains Pastor Somerville, come from his father. Pastor Bob's banner has always been: "Love is the door to brotherhood, but humility is the key". He certainly lives up to his motto.

Margaret Ann Goldsmith and Arlene Averbuch and other leaders too numerous to name have been the Jewish liaison – benefactors behind the good pastors. Another catalyst in these activities is Laura King, past president of the Jewish Federation of Huntsville and North Alabama. She was the moving spirit that initiated much of this fundraising activity with the two pastors and other Christians.

And I've only scratched the surface. There are myriads of other beneficent Christians. Pastors like Bob and Rusty have led their flocks into green pastures of brotherhood.

Have you noticed that in the past few years a dawning realization in the Christian world of their Jewish roots? Not just by the professors of the Harvard Divinity School, but by the man in the street. Eventually, this will have a dramatically positive effect on our relationship with our sister religion. Joshua Ben Yosef, the Man from Galilee, lived and died a practicing Jew who never heard the word "Christian". Yes, he had some heretical views as to his own role – so did many Jews before him (Jacob Frank and Sabbatai Zevi).

Judaism, somewhat like Christianity, holds dear to faith and forgiveness, but its foundation stone is deeds. If this be true, a roomful of rabbis might vote Rusty, as Pastor Nelson is known, as the best Jewish Christian in town. "Give them according to their deeds" Psalm 28:4. A remarkably generous and wise man, blessed in this life. In the afterlife he shall sit with the saints. If the world can be saved by the preservation of a single life, why can't the world be saved by a single, Christian Mitzvah – a radiant good deed?

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



# Holocaust Educator

By MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN

## Tears no longer sting my eyes

As a Holocaust educator, I see the need for all humanity to work for peace and justice so that “Never again!” becomes a reality for all people, and not just a slogan. For over a decade, I have been a member of a Jewish-Palestinian dialogue group and a multi-faith group composed of lay leaders and their clergy. In so doing, I believe I am obeying Judaism’s mandate to help heal the world, *Tikkun olam*.

Judaism is who I am. That said, “I am a Jew” is not as descriptive of me as “Judaism is what I do.” My religion commands me to be a better person, provides answers to my “ultimate” questions and concerns, and places me within a community that is both historical and temporal. In addition, Judaism gives me spiritual nourishment, a means for healing and renewal, and a relationship with G-d. I love most all things Jewish.

So it was with deep disappointment that I discovered an area for which Judaism had no answers, no solutions. In 2001, after months of visual symptoms, I was finally diagnosed with Fuchs’ Endothelial Cornea Dystrophy (FD). Without a transplant, one gradually grows blind.

Wearing my lens as a Holocaust educator, “transplant” evoked images of heinous experiments in transplantation by Nazi doctors. Hapless concentration camp inmates suffered brutal procedures without anesthesia. To say that I was resistant to having a transplant was an understatement.

The disease usually manifests itself in midlife. Symptoms vary by individual, and if the progression of the disease is gradual enough, one could outlive the need for transplants. Caught early and with mild symptoms, I clung to this belief. Checkups with my San Francisco corneal specialist whose yearly refrain, “Very little increase in your cornea thickness – you’re doing fine; see you next year,” reinforced my denial.

My eyes lost their ability to regulate light resulting in problems with glare and night blindness. Fluids that built up in my corneas resulted in constant grittiness and the sensation of something being in my eye. Wraparound sunglasses during the day, letting my husband or friends drive me at night, and salt drops every three hours plus ointment twice daily that temporarily controlled the edema, kept my symptoms in check for over ten

years. I learned to live with the sting that accompanied my tears by suppressing any impulse to cry. My biggest complaint was giving up on eye makeup because the drops made everything run.

But in 2011, my cornea specialist informed me that my eyes had crossed a threshold, and that I needed to consider having my transplants in the next 18 months. As I contemplated my upcoming surgeries, I realized that the most difficult part for me was accepting that my new corneas would come from cadavers.

I had no tools to deal with the fact that someone would die, and I would receive their cornea. I approached my rabbi with my concerns. He suggested I seek solace in the prayer uttered daily by observant Jews, praising G-d who enables the blind to see. But I wasn’t blind yet, and the prayer did not address my little understood resistance to accepting a cadaver-donated cornea. What was my relationship with the person whose death would restore my sight?

The *Unetanneh Tokef* prayer from the High Holy Days liturgy offered me more comfort. *On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed: how many shall pass on, and how many shall be born; who shall live, and who shall die; who in his time, and who before his time; who by fire and who by water; who by sword and who by beast; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by storm and who by plague...* (translation from Chabad.org).

Yom Kippur 2011. I spent the day fasting but restless, impatient with the proscribed prayers. My mind wandered to my

upcoming surgery, thinking about the person who would die a few days before my procedure, whose corneal tissue would be implanted into mine. Only the *Unetanneh Tokef* prayer spoke to me. Praying so intently for the person who would perhaps die “before his time” resulted in my feeling a spiritual connection to him. And I had a strong sense that it was, indeed, a man. Because of privacy laws I could not know anything about my donor.

In January 2012, one of the top cornea specialists in the country, Dr. Francis Price of Indianapolis, Ind., performed an ultra-thin cornea transplant, “DMEK,” on my left eye. Within weeks, my visual acuity in that eye improved to 20/30. I returned to Indianapolis for my second DMEK in August 2012. As a native Hoosier, it pleased me to think that because I had my transplants in Indiana and not California, that my new corneas were also Hoosiers. Unfortunately, I took the success of my first surgery for granted and barely cast a prayer in the direction of my second donor.

As of this writing, uncorrected visual acuity in my left eye remains at 20/30; my right eye, 20/70. I fleetingly wondered if my difference in prayer regarding my two donors resulted in such a disparity. The good news is that both eyes are correctible to 20/20. Thus, with glasses, I enjoy perfect vision without the symptoms of Fuchs’. I have much for which to be grateful. Yet, I had a residual feeling of unfinished business regarding my donors, a need for closure. Was my relationship with them intimate enough to warrant my saying



**Front row:** Ineko Tsuchida, Ph. D., Program Director, Shinnyo-en Foundation; Rabbi Elisheva Salamo, Kedem Congregation, Palo Alto, Calif.; Rev. Kristi Denham, Pastor, United Church of Christ, Belmont, Calif.; Miriam Zimmerman; Rev. Tsutomu Ben Takagi, Vice President Shinnyo-en Foundation. **Second row:** Father Al Baca, Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Officer for the Diocese of Orange, Calif.; Eltarō Hayashi, Clergy, Shinnyo-en; Deacon Matt Dulka, Regional Director for the Western Region, Maryknoll; Rev. Dr. Jonathan B. Lee, Director of Institutional Advancement, Hartford Seminary, Conn.; Morteza Rezazadeh, envoy of the interfaith center in Qom, Iran and graduate student in the International Peacemaking program, Hartford Seminary, Conn.. Not pictured: Mahmut Altun, Director of the Pacifica Institute, Sunnyvale, Calif. (who took the photo.)



*Kaddish* (prayer for the dead) on the anniversary of my transplants?

In May 2013, the Shinnyo-en Foundation, connected with a Buddhist order of the same name, honored me for my participation in multifaith and Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups and for promoting peace in my writings. The Foundation invited me and seven others to be guests in the 2013 Floating Lantern Ceremony on the shores of Honolulu during Memorial Day weekend. Together, we represented a variety of faith traditions and levels of peace activism (see photo p. 10).



I had never been to Hawaii before. The palm trees and busy thoroughfares of Honolulu reminded me of southern California. But the ubiquitous tropical foliage made me feel as if I were, indeed, in a different world.

The name "Shinnyo-en" indicates "a garden open to all, where everyone can discover and bring out their true nature"; a site conducive to spiritual awakening. Shinnyo-en is a lay Buddhist order based on the final teachings of the Buddha, the Nirvana Sutra. A "sutra" is a sacred Buddhist text.

In his final discourse, according to a brochure on Shinnyo Buddhism, the culmination of the Buddha's 45 years of teachings emphasized that "everyone can attain enlightenment" and all are to be welcomed "to the path of cultivating the four virtues of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity."

The Foundation that shares its name supports the vision of this global order, which serves people around the world and not just in Japan where it has its global headquarters.

What appeals to me about this form of Buddhism is the way it directs people to find enlightenment within themselves. In so doing, each individual can find their true self, their "inner Buddha." It challenges its adherents to act with compassion and concern for others. Its slogan, "Six Billion Paths to Peace," refers to Shinnyo-en's mission to help people have deeper compassion for all humanity and promote harmony and peace on a global scale. If everyone did just that, we would, indeed, have peace in our time.

It reminded me of a Jewish teaching, that if all Jews would observe the same *Shabbat*

with the proper level of observance, the Messiah will come. In multifaith work, we are encouraged to discover linkages among our various traditions and to value our differences. Never mind that humanity has passed the seven billion mark; these concepts overlap considerably. Isaiah 11:6, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid... And the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Judaism teaches that when the Messiah brings peace, we will all become vegetarians.

We were emailed reflection questions in advance of our trip to prepare us to dialogue with our fellow guests. Our packed itinerary included a visit to the Manoa Heritage Center, a nonprofit that promotes the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai'i (I learned the proper spelling of this state). We were given a tour of the mansion and its grounds, which included a sacred stone wall temple. After the tour, we enjoyed Mamaki tea served in a lanai and listened to the docent explain Hawaiian traditions. The Shinnyo-en religion honors indigenous populations and their traditions, and does not have as its mission to convert others.

My Holocaust filter reminded me of the "teaching of contempt" that resulted in centuries of anti-Jewish persecutions sanctioned by official church canon and edicts. There is so much room for healing between Christians and Jews. I wished all religions could borrow from the tolerance and understanding of Shinnyo-en. "Dialogue across religious and cultural traditions is a core value of Shinnyo-en Buddhism."

A tour of the Shinnyo-en Hawai'i Temple enabled us to learn more about this Buddhist order. Founded in 1936 by Shinjo Ito and his wife Tomoji Ito in a suburb of Tokyo, the order has over one million members worldwide. Shinjo Ito described Shinnyo-en as a "garden without fences or hedges in which anyone is welcome just as they are."

The Floating Lantern Ceremony itself is "drawn from ancient Asian religious traditions." The candle represents "light in the heart that is never extinguished". Shinnyo-en adapted the ceremony "to create a contemporary, interfaith celebration of and thanksgiving for the lives of the people who came before us and made our lives easier and richer." Honoring the dead is an important part of Jewish tradition as well: the annual *Yahrzeit* ritual at the anniversary of the death of one's parents, saying *Kaddish* four times per year on various holy days.

The theme of this year's Lantern Floating Hawai'i was "Many Rivers, One Ocean." This metaphor echoes the final teaching in the Nirvana Sutra to conclude, "Truth is revealed in all faiths." Master Shinjo Ito, founder of the order, rejects "divisive ideas, such as calling other

religious views heretical." His daughter, the current head of Shinnyo-en, Her Holiness Shinso Ito, officiated at the ceremony, the largest Memorial Day observance in the U.S.

In keeping with such observances, we were encouraged to honor "those who sacrificed their lives in war and who have been victims of natural disasters, famine and disease." But we could do whatever we wanted: writing prayers, listing names, or even leaving our lanterns blank.

In the afternoon of Memorial Day, we were taken to the VIP hospitality tent on Ala Moana Beach. Volunteers gave us a canvas bag containing a kit to assemble our floating lanterns. A foam board base with a hole in the center perfectly accommodated the included candle. The candle seemed identical to the Shabbat candles I kindle every Friday night to usher in the Sabbath.

Heavy parchment unfolded to create a cube, open at the top and bottom. The front parchment panel contained both an English inscription "All Spirits Related to the Lantern Floating Hawai'i," and a Japanese inscription. Before I removed the strategically placed contact paper to permit me to adhere the parchment to the base of the lantern, I was encouraged to write on three of the parchment panels.

The first two panels were easy. On one side, I wrote a prayer honoring my parents and all their ancestors and my husband's parents and their ancestors. On the opposite side, I wrote a prayer for all the children lost in the Holocaust, children who have no children to say *Kaddish* for them. Someone took a picture of me holding my lantern with my camera phone.



On the back panel, I decided to write a prayer honoring my two cornea donors. As I wrote this prayer from my heart, I suddenly realized that my tears no longer sting my eyes. (see Zimmerman, page 20)



## Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### How Israel absorbs her unique immigrants

Israel is still absorbing immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, the United States, the Ukraine and France. Between 1990 and 2012, 1,178,676 came from the Former Soviet Union and 73,817 from Ethiopia. The methods of integrating both groups is very different.

Two excellent examples are the Amigour Jerusalem Sheltered House and the Mevatseret Absorption Center which I recently visited.

The Jewish Agency partnered with Keren Hayesod and then partnered with a public housing company, Amigour. They offered long-term hostels of affordable housing for singles from the Former Soviet Union, over the age of 65.

Amigour built or rebuilt 57 such hostels throughout Israel where more than 7,500 elderly currently live as a solution for these people. Unfortunately, there is a six to seven year waiting period to get into the one-room apartments for which they pay \$60 a month rent.

Two of these buildings are located in Armon Hanatziv, the East Talpiot suburb, built six years ago. In one building are 159 people and in another are 136. In these Jerusalem buildings, more than 75% are also Holocaust survivors. All of the staff are Russian speakers and besides doing repairs in the apartments, they provide lectures, excursions, social activities, Hebrew classes and concerts. Each apartment has an emergency button as well.

The tenants provide their own furniture and in the apartments I saw, there was a bathroom and shower with a washing machine and one large room with an efficiency kitchen (sizes of refrigerators vary; they have two burners rather than a stove and supplementary table-size ovens and other types of cookers.) Most apartments have a couch bed, table and chairs and a small living room area. All apartments have a terrace where they can grow flowers and sit. They were both decorated with curtains, pictures on the wall, and art and flowers in the hall.

#### Absorbing Ethiopians

As a contrast, the absorption center in the Jerusalem suburb of Mevatseret Tzion,

across the street from a large mall, currently houses 1200 immigrants from Ethiopia, half under the age of 18, living in 200 apartments.

In one yard are two tukalo, the huts in which they lived, prayed or studied in Ethiopia. These were built to remind them where they came from and to show others as they bridge their culture to the new culture. At Mevatseret, the Ethiopians learn Hebrew, about Israel and how to be citizens.

We visited an Ulpan class where the young people, ages 17 and up, were learning Hebrew and computers together. The teacher said they had been in Israel less than a year. In the afternoon, they have lessons in Amharic, in Judaism.

In another crowded classroom is a mock mini market where the teacher shows them how to shop in a supermarket using Israeli product containers and fake money. One young mother sat with her three-month old baby, born in Ethiopia.

Houses have a living room, several bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen and they are now encouraging the Ethiopians to make gardens in their backyards to grow vegetables and flowers. This is especially good for the older men to have something to do.

Both of these projects are assisted with donations to *Keren Hayesod*-United Israel Appeal, the central fundraising organization for Israel in 45 countries. Keren Hayesod concentrates on the financing of immigration, absorption and settlement.

#### An Activist Par Excellence

If you browse [www.malkatshva.org](http://www.malkatshva.org), you will see an amazing website created by Serenity Productions' co-owner, American-born, Eliyahu Sidikman, and learn about the Ethiopian youth culture center founded by his wife, American-born Tracey Shipley.



Eliyahu and Tracey in Akko.

For the past three years, Shipley has been putting together cultural projects for Ethiopian youth, initially working with the

Ethiopian National Project (ENP). With the ENP, she initiated their Israeli-based fundraising efforts and put together Ethiopian cultural events like the one at the Menachem Begin Center where we first met Tracey.

In 2010, Shipley put together the Malkat Shvat Ethiopian Cultural Center youth project, the largest Ethiopian cultural program for youth in the country teaching dance, music, and theater.\*

"It teaches them their culture, helps them to feel confident about themselves and allows them opportunities to share their unique culture with Israelis and visitors," says Shipley.

In early March of this year, youth from the center were involved in the Jerusalem production of the musical *Hairspray*, sponsored by Encore Educational Theatre (established in 2006 to present classic and musical stage productions in English); Malkat Shva (the Ethiopian youth cultural performance group); Machol Shale (a Jerusalem-based dance troupe); and the Abraham Hostel (a bed and breakfast hostel for individuals and families).

In late March, *Baltimore/Addis Ababa/Jerusalem* was performed as part of the Passover *Chol Hamoed* English-language festival at Bet Avi Chai. This theater performance documents the journeys of a group of Ethiopian immigrants and two English-speaking women immigrants as they learn together about similar problems that the Civil Rights movement faced in the 1960's, like racism, how new immigrants deal with the challenges and rewards of moving away to a new place – in this case, Jerusalem.

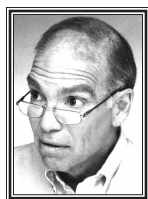
The show was written in an ensemble process by the members of the cast and features an eclectic mix of Ethiopian songs in Amharic, Ethiopian music and traditional dances plus a classic Americana song with Eliyahu on guitar, leading.

The performance was done in partnership with the Malkat Shva Ethiopian Center and was directed by the *Hairspray* Director, Eli Kaplan Wildmann, and performed by the Malkat Shva Dancers and two of the "Hairspray" Council women.

Prior to her work with Malkat Shva, Shipley began marketing the Hullegeb Ethiopian-Israel Theatre Company of the Zionist Confederation House of Jerusalem.

Reaching this point for Cleveland-born Shipley has been an interesting journey. She spent her high school years in Orlando, Fla., where she and her siblings started the Zionist youth movement, Betar, and brought the first Holocaust exhibit to Orlando. At the University of Florida in Gainesville, she started the first Zionist movement on that campus; she then came to Israel in 1979 on the *Machon* (see Kaplan/Israel, page 13)





## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### What makes a country?

There are some basic things that constitute nationhood. Language – A nation must have a native language; but it's all right if the same language is spoken elsewhere. The language must be constantly updated to cover the events, history and culture of that country.

It should have a history, however long or short. In the case of the U.S. relatively short, In the case of Israel, really a long, long time. It is important once again to emphasize that the people of the ancient and holy land of Israel have had for the past 66 years, the first indigenous, elected government on that land in over 2,000 years.

It is the first time since the Romans routed the zealots from the top of Masada that Jews control their own country, free from outside rule by Romans, Arabs, Crusaders, Turks and the British. That is a matter of pride. And pride in one's country and the willingness to defend it and uphold its basic principles are what defines nationhood.

Look, every nation has citizens that just cannot abide picking up a weapon and taking another life, no matter how justified that act might seem to everyone else. So, most nations have a type of national service that will accommodate such citizens and most of them preform admirably.

But what do you do about citizens that are total takers? Those who would live off the work of others, those who refuse to defend their nation in any way. Those who accept all that is good and sweet about living in their own land, but in some cases even refusing to admit it exists – what about them?

Now I am not talking about those who rail against the government for real or imagined injustices. I am not talking about those who disagree with governmental policies both foreign and domestic. If they live in a democracy such as ours or Israel, there are elections, debates and dialogue. If they live in a despotic nation, well there is always revolution.

But what about those who do not even engage in the national discussion? What about those who have no interest in the nation except to take its largesse, offering nothing in return?

I am not talking about any mythical "welfare class" in the U.S. It has been

proven that this is a false canard. The poor fight in our wars, leap out of the welfare system if given a chance and love to strive for the elusive "American Dream".

No. The ugly truth here is that what I am referring to is a vocal, active minority in the land of Israel who has no respect for their own country and will not lift a finger to defend it. And if anyone from their backward community dares to join the IDF and find a way to serve their country – they are spit upon and even beaten in their own neighborhoods which they have pledged to defend against any outside enemy,

This is the attitude of a class of Heradim, Ultra-Orthodox stuck in another century with no patience or respect for anyone who does not believe as they do. Recently, the population of Israel finally got fed up with these takers and passed laws to bring them kicking and screaming into the life of the land they claim to cherish.

They may believe in the right of Jews to occupy and rule their native land – but only according to their dogmatic ways. There is an argument that these are "true believers" and should be respected as such. Sorry. If they believed that we Jews are entitled to our own land based on both historical and biblical history, they would embrace the laws of the land and clamor to be a part of its society.

Beyond that, when some of their own decide it is right and virtuous to participate in the defense of this land so that Never Again would people like them be disrespected, mocked and killed – what do they do? They ostracize them. They beat them. They shun them. Even their families are made to suffer.

What kind of Judaism is this? For some obscure reason it may have worked in the *Shtetl*, but it has no place in this world. Certainly not in a nation that was founded so that they, along all other Jews in the world could live and worship as Jews of any stripe.

Israel has protected the beliefs of the Ultra-Orthodox as well as reform, conservative, Reconstructionist and even Jews who are Jews only by tradition. Matter of fact, because of the crazy election laws of the nation, there has been a need to bow to the unreasonable demands of religious political parties such as Shas who want only money and to protect the lifestyle of their backward constituency. Not any more.

To attack one of your own because they choose to defend their (and your) country? Sorry. It should be a crime. It is. These people are below contempt. They do not deserve to live in this vibrant, modern Jewish nation.

*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*

### KAPLAN/ISRAEL

(continued from page 12)

*l'madrachei chutz l'aretz* (leadership program for youth leaders from abroad). She also attended a yeshiva for some months and became Orthodox.

She then returned to the US to finish a degree in art therapy at Ursuline College in Cleveland where she started the first Jewish group on campus. She also became Midwest regional coordinator for the American Zionist Youth Foundation.

She then moved to New York to study art therapy at the School of Visual Arts where she started the first Zionist group on that campus. In 1983 she moved to Israel where her mother and brother lived. She completed her studies in art therapy at Empire State College, interned in Dimona, Yerucham and Arad, got married, and had a daughter.

In 1989, Shipley and her family returned to the U.S. where she became certified as a counselor in chemical dependency. She returned to Israel with another son and daughter in 1997 and worked in the Jerusalem methadone clinic.

During a five-year stint back in the US from 2002 to 2007, she worked for Alan Ginsberg, international board member of Seeds of Peace. She founded the Orlando-based Seeds of Peace chapter which brought together the local Jewish and Arab community for the first time ever. She got divorced, came back to Israel with her three teenage children and returned to work at the Jerusalem methadone clinic. It was then that she began putting together cultural projects for Ethiopian youth.

She met Eliyahu Sidikman, an American from Long Island who made *aliyah* in 1984, at one of his concerts where his band was performing Crosby Stills and Nash. They married in 2010. In addition to promoting the Ethiopian youth center, she helps Eliyahu promote his many bands and festivals through their company, Serenity Productions.

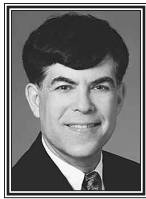
\*Tracey is in the process of working through an organization that will allow them to offer tax deductions for contributions from the US, however, anyone wishing to contribute to her efforts with Ethiopian youth may send a check to Serenity Productions at 8/7 Maon Street, Jerusalem 94530.

Please email project coordinator, Tracey Shipley, at [traceyshipley125@gmail.com](mailto:traceyshipley125@gmail.com) to inform her of the contribution.

*Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food writer, lecturer and cookbook author. ✨*



*column for more than 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. ✨*



# Jewish Psychology

By EDWARD HOFFMAN, Ph.D.

## Interview with Dr. Jeon Sung Soo

*Best-selling author in South Korea on Jewish educational methods*

During the past year, the topic of traditional Jewish education has leaped into the mainstream of South Korea. At first glance, this seems hard to believe – for South Korea's nearly 50 million people include only a few dozen Jews and there's only one synagogue in the country – a recent venture by Chabad-Lubavitch. Nevertheless, just as many American parents admiringly look to Asian child-rearing practices for keys to successful child-rearing, the same phenomenon is occurring in South Korea – and the Jewish people are the recipients of their admiration and emulation. Among the leaders in this fast-growing educational movement in South Korea today is Dr. Jeon Sung Soo.



Dr. Soo.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *American Jews generally know little about South Korea and its culture. These questions will help us to better understand and appreciate your work on traditional Jewish education and parenting. How did you first become interested in traditional Jewish education?*

**Dr. Soo:** I have studied and practiced education for nearly 30 years. Initially, I taught elementary school for ten years and also have a middle-school teacher's license. I am now working as a professor in the preschool department of Bu-cheon University in South Korea. I can therefore say that I have experienced a wide range of education from preschool to university. My college major was originally art education, and I have written about 100 monographs and books. About seven years ago, I began to study theology, and it completely changed my life.

From then on, I became interested in parent-training and education, especially from a biblical perspective. In this way, I turned to Judaism's traditional approach to learning. I did not have any rabbinic teachers to guide me personally, but delved into books related to Jewish education. After extensive reading related to parenting, brain science, education, and psychology, I have written six books on parenting including, "Children who take revenge against their parents," which analyzed

Korean parenting practices. Two of these six books have focused on Jewish education – particularly *chavruta*. I believe that *chavruta* can be the solution for the dilemma of children who take revenge on their parents.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *Where did you grow up in South Korea and where did you receive your university education? During those years, did you ever meet any Jews?*

**Dr. Soo:** I grew up in South Korea's countryside, in the southern-most area known as Hae-nam. It is called "Ddang-kkeut" in Korean, which means "the ends of the earth." My family was very poor back then, but the experience matured me. I graduated from high school there. Afterwards, I attended five universities and then did post-graduate work. My first university was Seoul National University and then I studied at Seoul National University of Education. I continued my post-graduate studies at Hongik University. My concentrations were all on educational methods, and I earned a PhD in that field. While teaching as a professor at Bu-cheon University, I attended the Presbyterian College and Theology Seminary to study theology.

While doing so, I had the opportunity to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and that was the first time I visited Israel and met Jewish people. The Israelis I met on the streets or at historical sites had a clear religious identity. They talked without reserve to me, and I enjoyed talking with their children and trying to explain my background to them. At such sites as the Western Wall, Masada, and Yad Vashem, I was broken-hearted to learn the history of Jewish suffering over the past 2,000 years.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *When you were growing up, what if anything did you hear about Jewish people and their history? What was your own religious training while growing up? Do you have a particular religious faith now?*

**Dr. Soo:** Because I was raised as a Christian, I attended church from my childhood days.

I started to attend church regularly beginning in the fourth grade of elementary school, and I retain my Christian faith now. It strongly brought me to learn about Judaism and Jewish history. Of course, I was exposed to the Bible and learned about Jewish history from it. Later, while studying at Presbyterian College, I had the opportunity to learn about the modern State of Israel and Jewish culture. I also learned a lot about Judaism from the books I read on traditional Jewish education. The seminars and books written by Dr. Hyun Yong Soo, who has studied Judaism extensively, helped me a great deal. Thanks to such help, I was able to visit with Jewish families, synagogues, and schools in the United States.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *Please describe your work*

*in the past few years about traditional Jewish learning and some of the main points of your recent book.*

**Dr. Soo:** Seven years ago, when I started to explore "biblical parenting," I earnestly began reading Judaism-related books. I had read almost all the books published in South Korea on Judaism, and ordered books, too, from Amazon. It was through reading Eran Katz's book, "Jerome Becomes a Genius" that I quite accidentally learned about *Chavruta*. Upon seeing that word, I jumped up and shouted "Eureka! This is it!"

I realized that this core of Jewish education could be an alternative for current Koran education. I studied *Chavruta* intensely at that point. I also visited Israel twice and many people there. I visited Jewish families, synagogues, and schools in the United States. During this period, I became even more convinced about the importance of *Chavruta*.

Jewish culture is based on the *Shema* prayer. It comes from Deuteronomy 6:7, "And you shall teach {these words} diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." Teaching your children diligently, talking about words, laws and commandments all the time are the very essence of *Chavruta*. The Jewish people have practiced *Chavruta* for more than 3,000 years in order follow the precepts of the *Shema* – which became their culture. Of course, *Chavruta* also means having a study partner with whom to study the Talmud, or with the study method involving debating in pairs. However, overall Jewish culture shows a part of *Chavruta* in my view.

In studying *Chavruta* intensively for seven years, I have written three books. These are: *Chavruta Pictures the Bible*, *An Educational Revolution for Children*, and *Educate through Chavruta like Jewish Parents*. The latter book will be published in both China and Taiwan very soon.

Koreans have a positive attitude toward Jewish culture, as we know that many Nobel Prize winners have been Jews. We also know that Jews are over-represented by their population size in the Ivy League universities, as well as in the worlds of international relations and commerce. I think this is why many Jewish-related books are best-sellers in South Korea. I don't think that *Chavruta* is especially easy for Koreans to learn, but in my opinion, it is inevitable that they would become interested in it.

*Chavruta* doesn't merely mean to debate in pairs when Jews are studying the Talmud. My definition of *Chavruta* is: "Questioning, talking, discussing, and debating in pairs." From this viewpoint,



the act of reading books aloud to an unborn child and dinner conversation between parent and child are all part of Chavruta. We can also find Chavruta when Jewish mothers tell bedtime stories to their children, and when children talk to themselves to improve their understanding and memorization of scholastic material. When teachers give lectures in which they ask questions, when students learn among themselves – and teach one another by discussion – that is Chavruta. When students engage in serious Talmudic debate at their *yeshivot*, when they have arguments about the Talmud with life-long friends from their synagogue, that too is Chavruta.

Recently, the largest broadcasting company in South Korea known as KBS, produced a documentary called “Homo Academicus” that dealt with traditional Jewish education. Since then, South Koreans have initiated small groups to study the Talmud, hold Chavruta seminars, and seek to apply Chavruta to their schools or family life.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *What aspects of traditional Jewish learning do you think are most difficult for Korean people to absorb and learn? Why is that?*

**Dr. Soo:** The precise question that I am asked most often is, “Jews have practiced Judaism for thousands of years, and it is a kind of culture as well as a religion. Can it really be applied to Korean circumstances? For example, in Korean culture, family members including children are expected to refrain from talking during mealtimes. In Korean family life, parents give orders and children are expected to obey them. For such reasons, Chavruta is difficult for many Koreans to follow in daily life, because it is all about asking questions, engaging in conversation, and active discussion. In contrast, typical Korean education revolves around repetitive listening, memorization, exam-taking, and then forgetting. This focus should be changed so that education is based instead on thinking, questioning, discussing, and then executing. Many parents and educators are seeking alternatives, and I believe that Chavruta could be the answer.

**Dr. Hoffman:** *Would you talk more about your purpose for visiting Israel? What were your impressions?*

**Dr. Soo:** I visited Israel twice, in 2008 and then in 2009. I had two main purposes for my visits. The first was to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the second was to gather as much information as possible about traditional Jewish education through interviews and observations. During my 2008 visit, war broke out between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, and I found myself questioned frequently by Israeli police. I felt that so

(see Hoffman, page 19)



## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### Bashing “Two State Solution” at University of Chicago’s International House

I attended another one of those discussions about Israelis and Palestinian Arabs at the International House of the University of Chicago, co-sponsored by the I-House’s Global Voices Lecture Series and by an organization called Students for Justice in Palestine. I just knew that this purported debate on the “one-state” versus “two state” solutions would degenerate into wholesale Israel-bashing, but I was interested in what rhetoric would emerge.

The first speaker, Mitchell Plitnick, formerly of Jewish Voice for Peace, spoke of “the tragedy of the two-state solution.” The 1993 Oslo Accord, he said, was not a workable agreement. Rather, it was a means of managing an “occupation” with “us here, them there.” The “tragedy” is that Oslo became synonymous with a two state solution instead of a way to think outside of the box. Plitnick insisted that by “cutting the West Bank into at least two pieces,” Oslo rendered an agreement untenable for the Palestinians, though, I would add, many American alumni of the Oslo Accord and later peace talks sponsored by the Clinton Administration still regard the terms as reasonable and even generous to the Palestinian Arabs.

Plitnick favors the suggestion of Menachem Klein, a veteran of Camp David and a member of the Geneva Institute, who differentiated between “citizenship” and “residency,” advocating that Jews and Arabs should be able to reside anywhere in the territories, but could choose to be citizens of either Israel or a Palestinian state. Palestinians should be allowed to establish an army and to control their air space.

True, Plitnick observed, this scheme would be a risk for Israeli politicians in that it would be unpopular, and bring the risk for Israeli society of civil strife and outside attack. But Israel needs to take these risks “because the Palestinians accepted Israel’s offer under President Bush, and Israel declined.” (What were the nature and terms of such “acceptance”?)

Better the risks linked to Klein’s

solution, warned Plitnick, than the risks of a one-state solution. The history of places like Yugoslavia has proved that national movements don’t get along well under one body politic unless the over-arching government can threaten them into not fighting. But if both states guarantee constitutionally the equality of all citizens, democracy, justice and peace will triumph in the spirit of 1776.

The next speaker, Ali Abunimah of the blog, “Electronic Intifada, is an eloquent and skilled orator, with a touch of British accent. He began by noting “with some shame” that all the panel speakers were men, but pointed with pride to parallel events in other cities with women presenters. Later, during the Q and A period, however, he was condescending to two young Jewish women who challenged his arguments, and accused one of them of being fed “talking points.” Of course, he was not without his talking points, and his reference to at least one parallel meeting only confirmed that he was in touch with others who were making the same talking points elsewhere.

Abunimah immediately dismissed Plitnick by declaring point black that the “question” of one versus two states is a bogus issue and not even a pragmatic desideratum. The key issue, he declared, is the “rights” of Palestinians, which are by definition violated by Zionism itself, by the very existence in the Middle East of a Jewish State. Menachem Klein’s solution, like the two-state solution, he said, is, by definition South African apartheid.

Abunimah went on to blame Arafat for bowing, in 1993, to the rights of the State of Israel to exist and for not demanding that Rabin recognize Palestinian rights. Israel, to him, is synonymous with the expulsion of Palestinians “just because they are not Jews.” Israel maintains a monopoly on power in the name of national identity. But all peoples do not need a state in order to exist. In this category he clearly put Israel. It would seem that he is willing to add the Palestinians to this category, as well, if it means that there is no Israel.

Arafat, he complained, was all too willing to subordinate Palestinian refugees to the “right to be Jewish.” To Abunimah, Israel’s motto is: “Even if you were born here and you’re not a Jew, you’re not welcome.” He painted Israel as utterly contemptible: “apartheid” and “racist.” The latter is his description of Netanyahu’s 2009 declaration that the Palestinians will have to recognize Israel as a Jewish State. Then Abunimah introduced the vocabulary of the American civil rights movement, comparing the two-state solution, in “American terms,” to a scheme

(see Gertel, page 16)

## GERTEL

(continued from page 15)

whereby Mississippi would become the black state.

What amazed me was that these “comparisons” were not a big jump for many in the audience, who nodded with agreement. True, many were ideologically predisposed toward Abunimah’s analogies. Some applauded his characterization of Zionism as the “ethnic cleansing of 90% of the Palestinians from their homes.” During the Q and A at the end, the questioners quickly came to a consensus that neither name, “Israel” or “Palestine” should be used, but, rather, “the land between the river and the sea.”

Plitnick later agreed, during the Q and A session, that Zionism demands a “Jewish majority no matter what that means for anyone’s rights,” and that this is by definition “anti-democratic.” This defender of the two-state solution began one Q and A response with, “Since Zionism succeeded for good or for evil at creating a Jewish State....”

Abunimah charged that Israel redefined Palestinian babies as a “demographic threat,” lamenting each new-born Palestinian, and that Israel today resents its African migrants who violate Israel’s right to exist by existing there. He accused Israel of forcing contraception on Ethiopian women, and of plotting political and physical means of reducing the population of its enemies and minorities.

The third and final speaker was Yousef Munayyer, Executive Director of the Jerusalem Fund. Munayyer decried what he regards as the creed or dogma of Washington’s Beltway: “Do you believe in a two-state solution”? The very question, he says, requires “an irrational faith in a practical solution.” He denounced “worship” of a two-state solution, which has its high priests and rituals, such as “never-ending conferences,” and “when it dies it’s resurrected again.” Israel, he said, is an anomaly in that it “was funded by colonialism for self-determination.” Its “demographic obsession” with Palestinians has led to a state of human rights abuse.

Like Abunimah, Munayyer dismissed the PLO as an “arm of the Israeli state,” a “sub-contractor of the occupation.” The moderator, John Mearsheimer, a University of Chicago professor known for his crusade against what he perceives as a destructive “Israel Lobby” in American society, had introduced the program by saying that Palestine is a subject of “immense consequences” to the United States because of America’s close relationship with Israel, unprecedented in modern history (even more than the U.S.

relationship with Britain?). Yet Munayyer gently disagreed, saying that he is not sure that the U.S. sees any interest in resolving Palestinian claims against Israel, as much as in managing the situation “minimally.”

In a perverted sort of way, the rhetoric of the evening displayed a certain brilliance of strategy: Deflect any discussion of Palestinian Arab rejectionism by branding the rejecter, Arafat, a traitor to the Palestinian cause. (Only days before this panel discussion, Mrs. Arafat had revealed in an interview that the Second Intifada in 2000 was not “spontaneous,” but was started by Arafat as agreements with Israel looked possible.)

By saying that Zionism and Israel are by definition the antithesis of civil rights and justice, the panelists legitimate Hamas and Hezbollah violence and eliminate any need to negotiate with Israel while suggesting that Israel should be grateful for being dissolved into the “one state” which the Jewish State has always violated.

Yet the rhetoric of the evening fell apart in the assertion that a two-state solution is, ipso facto, an “irrational faith in a practical solution.” For it is the one-state premise that is irrational, given the reality of a Jewish State that was sanctioned at a time when Palestinian Arabs lived without recognition by any existing states, under brutal rule by Egypt and Jordan and threat of pan-Arab seizure by Syria, who claimed them and the land as its own. If anything, it was the creation of the State of Israel and the promise of partition that opened up unprecedented freedom for Palestinian Arabs.

In true medieval fashion, the discussion demonized Israel as the “evil eye” resentful of Palestinian fertility. Nothing was said, of course, about how many Palestinian Arabs flourished with the help of Israeli economy and medicine and educational initiatives. Who brought up talk of demographic time-bombs in the first place? Didn’t it first come up when most Arab nations attacked the new State of Israel with confidence in their vast numbers, and then boasted of ultimate demographic conquest after other wars?

A questioner was dismissed for raising the issue of the refusal of Arab nations to absorb the Palestinian refugees. The refugees, we were told, were not the problem, but the existence of Israel which caused them to be refugees (as if war had nothing to do with it). But in truth, the Palestinian Arabs exulted in the demographic argument from the very beginning, and then applauded Israelis like Abba Eban who raised it as well. Right now, the demographics do not seem to be bothering a lot of Israelis. Were the panelists who raised the issue bothered that it no longer bothers Israelis?

Moderator Mearsheimer had declared on another panel only a few weeks before that Arab demographics will do in the State of Israel.

If the Israelis are not still bothered enough by demographics, the “reasoning” goes, they must be involved in nefarious, demonic plots to control the birthrates not only of Palestinian Arabs, but of the Africans in their midst. True, there are wrenching immigration problems and concerns in Israel. But would there have been Africans in Palestine were it not for Israel? After all, many Africans have been oppressed and sent into exile by Arabs. And regarding the appeal to civil rights by panelists, it is rather cynical and condescending to raise conspiracy theories to gain support.

I rose to ask a question. I observed that Abunimah and Munayyer (and even Plitnick, to some extent) seemed to be saying: “Sorry you’re here, Israel. You’re bad. Let’s have a state together.” I asked what enticements might be used to bring Israel into a single state. I was fishing for at least one good and encouraging thing that might be said about Israel that night. Plitnick responded that Israel was not “bad” per se, that it was just doing what any state would do. That was as “complimentary” as things got.

I pushed for at least some acknowledgment that a Jewish State had broken the headlock around the Palestinians, and at a time when the Palestinians had chosen to be complicit with Nazi Germany. Abunimah cried, “Libel,” and not uneffectively. His tone and inflection were aplomb with John Barrymore stagecraft, almost as though he were expecting someone, some time, to raise the point. But calling it “libel” does not change the historical fact that a state of Palestinian Arabs, like the State of Israel, was made possible by generous partition by Allies who had defeated a horrid Axis with whom the elite of Palestinian Arab society were complicit.

Palestinian Arabs accuse Israel of the unique “racism” of a Jewish State. But they refuse to own up to their racist refusal to recognize continuous Jewish ties to the land and to grant the Jewish people its nationalist movement. As I see it, the panelists at this meeting did nothing to move the discussion beyond denial, rejection and pandering to catch phrases.

*Rabbi Gertel has been spiritual leader of congregations in New Haven and Chicago. He is the author of two books, What Jews Know About Salvation and Over the Top Judaism: Precedents and Trends in the Depiction of Jewish Beliefs and Observances in Film and Television. He has been media critic for The National Jewish Post & Opinion since 1979. ★*



# Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY MORTON I. TEICHER

## From Odessa to Canada during Russian revolution

*Klara's Journey.* By Ben G. Frank. Portland, Oregon: Marion Street Press, 2013. 228 Pages. \$17.95.

Ben G. Frank, noted author of this novel, is known for his Jewish travel guides to South America, Europe, and Russia. He also writes travel articles for Jewish magazines and newspapers. Fiction is a departure from his usual work but he shows here his extensive knowledge about travel. Also, he demonstrates his familiarity with history by heading each chapter with an introductory note about its historical background. The result is a synthesis of fiction, history, and geography which some readers may regard as mingling too many elements.

The story takes place during the Russian revolution beginning in 1917 with the overthrow of the Czar, proceeding through the short-lived government of Alexander Kerensky, and followed by the Bolshevik take-over. Ramifications of this background and its development provide an ongoing setting for *Klara's Journey*.

She is a 17-year old Jewish girl living in Odessa with her mother, her brother who is a year younger than she, and her three younger sisters. Their father is a cantor who left for Canada three years earlier, planning to send for his family once he was settled. With no word from him, Klara's mother has decided to send Klara to Canada to find her father. The trip will take her across Siberia to Manchuria to Japan, and across the Pacific Ocean to Canada.

Klara's long trek is filled with adventures, new friends, and setbacks. Breaking down often and frequently delayed, the train moves slowly across Siberia, a journey of 6,000 miles. Frank keeps us apprised of developments in the revolution as well as telling us about the cities along the routes and their populations. Most of all, however, he spells out the trying experiences that Klara encountered as she slowly moves to her destination. She discovers her brother who decided to

follow her in his new capacity as a participant in the revolution. Also, she falls in love with a young man, casting aside her hesitation to become involved with him since he is not Jewish. Her unswerving determination to find her father enables her to cope with all kinds of burdens and adversities, including hunger, illness, and unfriendly anti-Semites.

Frank succeeds in holding his readers' interest as he utilizes the fruits of his research, manifesting the skills that have enabled him to be a successful travel writer. He rounds out those skills by telling the story of intrepid Klara who confronted risks and hazards that were perilous and precarious. Frank has fully demonstrated the capacity to make the transition from travel writer to novelist.

## Worked for an international law to ban genocide

*Totally Unofficial. The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin.* Edited by Donna-Lee Frieze. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. 293 Pages. \$35.

The editor of this remarkable piece of scholarship, Donna-Lee Frieze, an expert on genocide studies, is associated with Australian and American institutions. She spent four years working in the Lemkin archives at the New York Public Library, editing the autobiography and preparing it for publication. Her diligent effort restores to our awareness recognition of Raphael Lemkin who coined the word "genocide" and who devoted his life to making sure that it would be recognized as a crime under international law.

Lemkin was born in 1900 to a Jewish family in what was then Russia and what is now Belarus. He learned linguistics in Lvov, eventually becoming fluent in nine languages. After studying philosophy in Germany, he returned to Lvov where he qualified as a lawyer. He worked as a prosecutor and private practitioner, serving on a committee to codify Polish penal codes and cooperating with a Duke University law professor to translate the Polish penal code into English. In 1933, he presented a paper to the League of Nations on the "crime of barbarity," based on the Armenian Genocide and in 1937, he served on the Polish mission to a

Congress on Criminal Law in Paris.

When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, Lemke was injured while serving in the Polish army. He managed to reach Sweden and then, with the help of the Duke University law professor with whom he had worked, he escaped to the United States and became a member of the law faculty at Duke. In 1943, he joined the federal government, first as consultant to the Board of Economic Warfare and then as advisor to the War Department and to Nuremberg Trial chief counsel Robert J. Jackson.

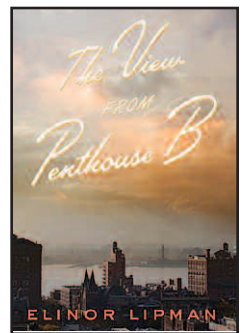
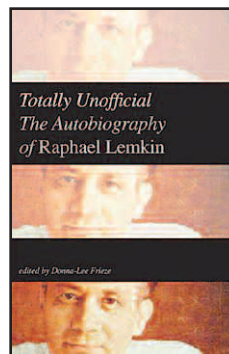
After the war, Lemkin stayed in the United States, teaching at Yale and at Rutgers. Mostly, he devoted himself to working for an international law to ban genocide, pressuring various delegations to the UN to support the resolution for a Genocide Convention treaty. The account of his unstinting efforts, often thwarted by his lack of money, is painstakingly set forth. His single-minded devotion to the cause of making genocide an international crime cost him his friends and his health. After he died in 1959, only seven people attended his funeral and his name is not well-known today. His memorial lies in the universal condemnation of genocide as a crime, reflected in the ratification by 142 nations of the Genocide Convention. However, this noteworthy achievement has not yet resulted in the complete elimination of instances in which large numbers of people are killed, leaving ample room for successors to Lemkin to follow in his noble footsteps.

## Amusing, though grim, account of down-heartedness

*The View from Penthouse B.* By Elinor Lipman. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013. 252 Pages. \$25.

This is Elinor Lipman's tenth novel. Her first, *Then She Found Me*, appeared in 1990 and was made into a motion picture. She has also written essays for newspapers and magazines, several of which have been collected in *I Can't Complain*, released simultaneously with *The View from Penthouse B*.

Lipman was born and raised in heavily Irish-Catholic Lowell, Mass. Her essay, "All My Children", which appears in *I* (see Teicher, page 18)





## My Kosher Kitchen

REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### Sweet as honey for the entire holiday season

*Sukkot* begins on the 15th of *Tishri*, the fifth day after *Yom Kippur*, and is a harvest festival. The custom of eating sweet things continues after the High Holidays.

Although beekeeping as an occupation is not mentioned in the Bible, bees are mentioned four times, honeycombs are referred to eight times and honey is referred to 26 times.

Some say the origin of the sweets comes from a passage in the book of Hosea mentioning "love cakes of raisins." There is also a passage in Samuel II that talks about the multitude of Israel, men and women, "to everyone a cake of bread and a cake made in a pan and a sweet cake."

Ezra, the fifth century BCE religious leader, commissioned by the Persian king to direct Jewish affairs in Judea, and Nehemiah, a political leader and cup bearer of the king in the fifth century BCE, told the returning exiles to eat and drink sweet things. Try these sweet things for the Sukkot table.

#### Apple-Honey Challah (2 challot)

This recipe comes from *Kosher Delicious* by Diana Kastenbaum and Penny Brenner (Jonathan David Publishers).

2 pkgs. active dry yeast  
1 cup warm water  
12 cup water for yeast mixture  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tsp. sugar (for yeast mixture)  
6 cups flour  
2 tsp. kosher salt  
1/2 cup oil  
5 large eggs  
3 peeled and cored tart apples  
3 Tbsp. lemon juice  
2 Tbsp. honey  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1 large egg  
cinnamon for sprinkling  
sugar for sprinkling

Preheat oven to 350°F. Dissolve yeast in 1 tsp. sugar and 1/2 cup warm water. Let stand until bubbly. Sift together flour, salt and 1/2 cup sugar. Add 1 cup warm water, oil, 4 eggs and yeast mixture to dry ingredients. Knead until firm and very smooth, either by hand or in a food processor.

Place dough in a large greased bowl. Cover with a damp kitchen towel. Let rise until it doubles in size, about an hour. Punch down and let stand for 10 minutes.

Dice apples in a bowl. Add lemon juice, honey and cinnamon. Toss until well coated.

Divide the dough in half. Roll out each part and form into a long strand. One end should be slightly thicker than the other. Place the thicker end in the center and wind the rest of the strand around 2 to 3 times.

Make an egg wash with the egg and water. Brush the tops and sides of the challot with the wash. Make a cinnamon and sugar mixture and sprinkle over the challot. Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 30 minutes or until light to medium brown.

#### Honey-Spiced Glazed Chicken

(8 servings)

4 minced garlic cloves  
2 tsp. paprika  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
4 tsp. Dijon mustard  
1/2 cup honey  
8 pieces of chicken

Preheat oven to 425°F. Spray a baking dish with vegetable spray. Arrange the chicken pieces in the baking dish. In a bowl, combine garlic, paprika, lemon juice, mustard and honey. Brush half the glaze over the chicken. Bake for 15 minutes. Brush the remainder of the glaze and continue baking at least 30 minutes or until the chicken is done. Just before serving, place baking dish under the broiler and broil for about 1 minute or until the skin is crisp.

#### Orange Glazed Carrots (8 servings)

1 1/2 cups water  
5 cups sliced carrots  
1 tsp. salt  
1/4 cup pareve margarine  
1/4 cup brown sugar  
2 Tbsp. honey  
2 peeled oranges,  
cut into bite-size pieces

Bring water to boil in a saucepan. Add carrots and salt, cover and cook 10 to 15 minutes or until tender. Drain. In another saucepan, melt margarine. Add sugar and honey and simmer for 2 minutes. Add carrots and orange pieces. Reduce heat and cook over low heat until carrots and orange are glazed and glaze thickens.

#### Chocolate-Orange Cake with Honey-Chocolate Icing

This recipe comes from *Divine Kosher Cuisine* by Rise Routenberg and Barbara Wasser (published by Congregation Agudat Achim, Niskayuna, New York).

(see Kaplan/recipe, page 20)

#### TEICHER

(continued from page 17)

*Can't Complain*, describes what it meant to be Jewish in Lowell on St. Patrick's Day. Her novel, the *Inn at Lake Devine*, examines anti-Semitism in a resort hotel.

For 34 years, Lipman was married to radiologist Robert Austin who practiced in Springfield, Mass. He died of dementia at age 60. They had one son, Benjamin. Her being a widow is reflected in her new novel.

The narrator, Gwen, has been a widow for two years, her husband having died a month before becoming 50. She has moved into "Penthouse B," the expensive Greenwich Village apartment of her older sister, Margot. They have a younger sister, Betsy, whose husband has left the practice of law to become an algebra teacher.

Margot was married to Charles, a physician, now in prison for having practiced "amorous medicine" with his female patients. Their divorce settlement enabled her to buy the penthouse and to live comfortably until she invested her money with Bernie Madoff. Now, in addition to Gwen, she also has Anthony, a young gay man who lost his job when Lehman Brothers failed. Margot and her "boarders" busily conjure up money-making schemes while saving on their food purchases by using coupons, buying bruised and day-old items while limiting their food intake. To complete the background picture, Charles is out of prison and has moved into a basement apartment in the same building where Margot has her penthouse. He actively courts Margot and she finds herself not unresponsive.

Having done an excellent job of establishing the basic elements of her narrative, Lipman proceeds to its development. She engages her characters (and her readers) in what is an amusing, though grim, account of downheartedness and new fountainheads as Margot, Gwen, and Anthony struggle to establish fresh lives. Gwen looks for love on the internet and, circuitously, locates a Jewish partner. There are delightful and essentially pleasant turns of events, bringing humor and charm to what began as a somber story.

Readers who encounter Lipman for the first time here will undoubtedly be driven to search out her earlier books. They will be well rewarded.

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. ★



**HOFFMAN**

(continued from page 15)

many things were happening in this small country, and people of many diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds were living together harmoniously. I noticed many different kinds of people, ranging from highly Orthodox men and women to those who were quite secular.

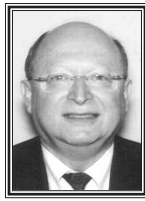
The ambiances of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv were particularly different. The most impressive thing for me was to see a two-year-old boy walking up and down by himself a steep mountainside in Ein Gedi, without any help. He didn't fret at all and didn't seek help, perhaps because that is how he was taught. Wherever I went, I could see families actively talking to one another – often discussing ideas or events. That also made a good impression on me.

**Dr. Hoffman:** What are some of your plans and future projects related to traditional Jewish education and its value for Koreans? Are there any aspects of Judaism that you wish to study in more depth?

**Dr. Soo:** I am planning to write several books this coming summer vacation. They will embody Jewish educational practice. I will keep writing books with examples from Chavruta to enhance Korean family life and schooling. Indeed, for this purpose, I founded the Chavruta Education Institute, whose motto is: Change the education of the Korean family, churches, and school." Many Koreans nowadays with a personal dream to achieve are studying the Talmud in small groups, as well as reading and discussing Jewish-related books. They are trying to apply Chavruta methods to family life, church activities, and schooling. We also hold Chavruta camps for students every vacation, and encourage discussions based on the Talmud. We try to establish dinner-table conversations similar to *Shabbat* dinner at home. These typically last for three hours; my own family loves this activity.

At churches, we are educating parents in order to enable them to teach their own children about the Bible. In one church with which I am involved, 200 people from about 80 families meet every Saturday to learn the Bible by using the Chavruta method. At schools, my colleagues and I are trying to educate teachers in the Chavruta method, such as by encouraging their students to ask questions and participate actively in discussions – and providing specific feedback to the teachers.

We are also sponsoring Chavruta seminars on a regular basis to popularize Chavruta. We are sharing all the materials and deciding on every single aspect through deliberation and discussion. I plan to keep studying Jewish culture and



## Book Review

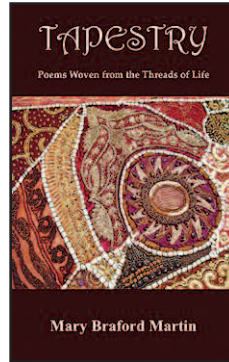
REVIEWED BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

### Righteous Gentile with loving heart

*Tapestry (Poems Woven from the Threads of Life)*. By Mary Braford Martin. Poetica Publishing Company. 2013. Pp.30. \$15.

This is gifted poet Mary Martin's first published book of verse, an inspiring debut honoring the language of the heart and Martin's heart is an embracing one. The enchanting collection of 21 poems over 30 pages reflects both the humility of a grateful heart ever seeking to connect to her world within and without, along with a stubborn insistence to express herself.

Though not Jewish, this Righteous Gentile, whom I have come to know and appreciate, has been profoundly impacted by the *Shoah's* multi-layered tragedy. Her bond with the remarkable Holocaust Commission of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater has made a difference in her life as an educator as well as in her students' lives in Virginia for the past 35 years. She was an English high school teacher for 26 years in Suffolk and Chesapeake and for the last 10 years teaching writing at Tidewater Community



education, and writing related books.

I am also thinking of traveling to the United States or Israel as an exchange professor. One of my dreams is to establish a school in which children can study based on techniques from Jewish education. One of my colleagues here in South Korea is translating the Talmud into Korean, and some of my Institute's members are studying rabbinic texts and Hebrew prayer books regularly. My country is quite interested now in Judaism and Jewish culture, and I hope to maximize attention to Jewish education through my work.

*Edward Hoffman, Ph.D., is a psychology faculty member of Yeshiva University and author of numerous books including The Kabbalah: A Sourcebook of Visionary Judaism (Trumpeter, 2011). Email: elhoffma@yu.edu. ☆*

College Portsmouth Campus. Her thesis for a M.S. Ed in Secondary Education from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., 1995, was a developed curriculum for Holocaust education.

The Holocaust Commission honored Martin in April 2000 for Excellence in Holocaust Education. She presented her poem, "Remembering the Holocaust" in memory of Elie Wiesel's family, to Wiesel in person and his hand-written note of appreciation has meant the world to her. Both the poem and the note are preserved at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. The poem is testimony to Martin's undying spirit of hope, never submitting to evil's persistence. "Yet like each generation,/ the phoenix continues to rise again,/ As each generation returns to claim/ What their forefathers sought in vain./ Humanity from inhumanity" (p.23).

Subject and sensitive to life's normal transitions and losses, she painfully mourns the death of her parents in the same year, 2006. In aptly titled "Rudderless at 52" she nonetheless succeeds in capturing the depths of losing her parents' unconditional love and protection, "Their dual deaths left me submerged /In unknown, discomfiting darkness" (p.14). Her honesty and courage to expose her human failure and vulnerability extends to very private matters she faces head on. In "when Love is Not Enough," she shares, "I thought I was the answer to your prayers/ And the solution, to your problems. / So, it came as a shocking surprise/ To realize that I was not enough/ To calm your inner fears and/To help you realize your dreams" (p.19).

How liberating is her ability to transcend the limitations that chained her, learning to navigate life's uneven course while offering us all indispensable hope, "I sway to the music of life,/ now free from imposed fears and other toxins./ Now chainless, I embrace all that life has to offer,/ The taste of freedom is, indeed, intoxicating" (p.9). She also finds consolation and reassurance in nature's works with the storm giving way to calm, "The sun's rays brilliantly break through the darkness/ as if to demonstrate that goodness most always overcomes evil" (p.2).

Martin's sincerity meaningfully communicated from a loving heart in an understated yet effective way, manages to connect life's threads (Book's title) in a tapestry made whole. We look forward to a second collection from this true and talented poet.

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

# ZIMMERMAN

(continued from page 11)

## The Jewish Post & Opinion

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A rainbow appeared prior to the Floating Lantern Ceremony 2013. Pictured: Mahmut Altun, Deacon Matt Dulka, and Miriam Zimmerman. Photo courtesy of Mahmut Altun.

The outdoor ceremony took place on a huge temporary stage with a jumbotron that allowed hundreds to view the ceremony. The picture below, courtesy of Mahmut Altun, includes Her Holiness, Shinso Ito, seated in the first row on the stage, wearing an orange robe. The ocean is off to the right.

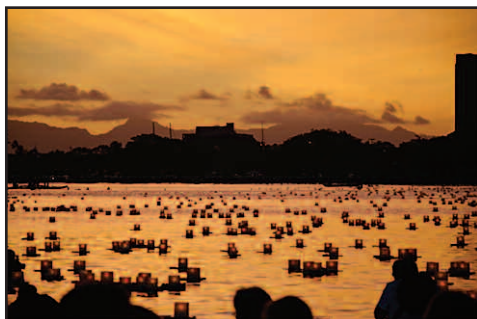


At sunset, the warm beach of Ala Moana permitted me to walk into water above my knees. The volunteer lit the candle of my lantern, which glowed as I cast it onto a gentle wave. It was such a relief not to feel like I had to suppress my tears. I watched as my lantern joined thousands of others gently bobbing out to sea, until I could no longer distinguish it from the others. I thought of the Rosh Hashanah ritual of *Tashlich*, casting bread onto the waters to release symbolically one's sins.



Over 42,000 observers, from Hawai'i and all over the world, crowded onto the beach to experience this ritual. Surprisingly, I felt a spiritual bonding with

them, a connectedness to strangers that I had thought possible only at services in the company of my fellow congregants, with the familiar prayer book and songs, and led by my beloved rabbi, Nat Ezray.



As my lantern floated out to sea under a magnificent sunset, my donors came to mind once again, and I felt both a release and a closure. I am at peace with the thought that two people died, and a small part of them lives within me. It occurred to me for the first time that perhaps they approve.

The natural beauty of the scene, the intensity of the ceremony, and the ritual of casting a lantern into the sea with my handwritten prayers inscribed on it, were as powerful for me as any Yom Kippur observance. I will always remain a Jew. But the Floating Lantern Ceremony opened my heart and my mind to the reality that religious experience is not always confined to one's own tradition, and that it is possible for people to come together in peace without having to convince one another that their religion is the right one.

I am so grateful to the Shinnyo-en Foundation and to Rev. Kristi Denham, for making this profound experience possible. To learn more about the 2013 Floating Lantern Ceremony and Shinnyo-en, browse to [www.shinnyoen.org/beliefs-practices/fire-water-ceremonies/lantern-floating.html](http://www.shinnyoen.org/beliefs-practices/fire-water-ceremonies/lantern-floating.html).

Dr. Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, Calif., where she continues to teach the Holocaust course. She can be reached at [mzimmerman@ndnu.edu](mailto:mzimmerman@ndnu.edu). ★

## GOLD

(continued from page 9)

your neighbor." Good advice. Love is stronger than hate. Besides, it is nicer too. Calling those who do not share your views as "Amalek" is irresponsible and mean spirited. I am not an Amalekite and will continue wearing my knitted kippa!

Dr. Gold is a composer/conductor and an arts reviewer for the Post & Opinion. ★

## KAPLAN/RECIPE

(continued from page 18)

- 2 slices lightly toasted challah
- 1/2 cup pareve margarine
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup ground almonds
- 3 large eggs
- 2 Tbsp. fresh orange zest
- 3/4 cup melted chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch round pan and line with parchment paper. Trim crusts from challah and discard. Grind remainder into crumbs to measure 1/4 cup. Cream margarine with sugar at medium speed with electric mixer. Add almonds and challah crumbs. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Add zest and chocolate. Pour batter into pan and bake 30 to 35 minutes or until tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cake cool and prepare icing.

### Icing

- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate
- 1 1/2 ounces chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 2 Tbsp. honey

In a sauce pan, melt bittersweet chocolate, chocolate chips and margarine. Add honey. Pour warm icing over cake and chill.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food and feature writer, and author of nine kosher cookbooks. This article was originally published in our Oct. 1, 2008 edition. ★