

# The Jewish Post & Opinion

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Cover art by Jackie Olenick (see About the Cover, p.3).

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**AMERICAN FRIENDS OF  
MAGEN DAVID ADOM**

**SAVING LIVES IN ISRAEL**

# Editorial

I have been thinking about what new and exciting thing I could write about the upcoming holiday of Passover. When nothing stood out in my mind, I researched our archives and found several inspiring articles. I chose two “oldies but goodies” from which to quote. Both are based on powerful speeches I heard when I lived in San Francisco.

The first was by Dr. Edward Hoffman, an adjunct associate psychology professor at Yeshiva University in New York who has written many books on psychology and Judaism. It was part of a speech given at the San Francisco JCC titled, “Dealing with Stress the Jewish Way”.

Hoffman wrote about self-reflection as an important way to keep stress from becoming overwhelming. “Some of the great *Hasidic* masters said one should put aside one hour each day for introspection.” Hoffman recommended putting aside part of a day every week to answer the following type of questions: Where am I going with my life? What kind of person have I been? How have I been treating others? Have I forgotten my own needs?

In Judaism, this is the purpose of the Sabbath but there are also special times of the year built around the holidays for this. The first one he mentions is before the High Holidays. He says the most important time of the Jewish calendar for self-reflection is the 28-day period prior to the Jewish New Year.

Quoting from Hoffman, “Another time is in the spring during Passover, the holiday that commemorates the exodus out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom. The *Kabbalists* viewed this holiday in symbolic terms. The task of this holiday is for each individual to examine what is keeping him or her in bondage or darkness, Egypt being the symbol of darkness. What is preventing him or her from moving ahead in a spiritual way. Everyone is enslaved by different things such as food, alcohol or work. One needs to confront these issues. This is an ongoing process that every Jew should do every year. Then it becomes a personal experience, not just an abstraction or something with only historical significance.”

The full article can be seen on our website at the following link: <http://jewishpostopinion.com/?p=3252>

The second one is made up of a few different paragraphs from a lecture by Rabbi David Zeller, z”l, given at Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland, Calif. Rabbi Zeller was an internationally known musician, lecturer, and workshop leader in Jewish mysticism, spirituality and meditation, as well as in transpersonal

# About the Cover

*Miriam, Leading the Dance Into the Future*  
By Jackie Olenick

From Exodus 15:20, Miriam the prophetess leads the women in joyous song and dance at the edge of the Reed Sea. “Miriam” is a wonderful Jewish feminist symbol for strength, prophecy and healing.

Jackie Olenick is a Judaic artist and jewelry designer residing in Bloomington, Ind. Her work can be seen on her website: [www.jackieolenickart.com](http://www.jackieolenickart.com). ✨



J. Olenick

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psychology. Learn more about him at [www.davidzeller.org](http://www.davidzeller.org).

“*Pesach* is about regaining our freedom. It’s waking up and realizing that we are slaves. According to many *midrashim* (commentaries), most of the Jews never woke up to that reality. One *midrash* says only one fifth of the Jews actually left Egypt. The rest of the Jews thought that slavery was the way life was supposed to be.

“*Pesach* is a time to think about our levels of slavery. If I have this spiritual level – this soul – and these mental, emotional and physical levels, I become a slave on all of these levels.

“Make a chart of what you do for one day and see how much of it is for your physical body – eating, sleeping, going to the bathroom, bathing, shopping, and working. For many of us, the work we do is only to earn enough money to have a roof over our head to be protected from the elements and to have clothes and so forth – to be comfortable. The work itself may not have its own intrinsic value. Everything comes down to being a slave to the physical.

“There’s nothing wrong with the physical and with being comfortable, with making money and having good food. But if I have no choice, and if I’m driven by it, and if that is all I can think about, and if the denial for half an hour of something to eat or drink or a cigarette is challenging, I’m a complete slave to my physical. I have to

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*The Jewish*  
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look at that and see if somehow through *Pesach* I can free myself a little bit.

“If there’s any time left in my day after I measured off everything I do physically, where am I emotionally and how often do my emotions enslave me? For example, my  
(see Editorial, page 5)



## Jewish America

BY HOWARD W. KARSH

### We all have a front row seat in history making

I would be surprised to find out that many of the readers of *The National Jewish Post & Opinion* are enjoying the process leading up to the November election. We are unaccustomed to the “gutter talk,” the “kindergarten behavior,” and the fact that everything we had been expecting, based on our own experiences, has been turned upside down. At this moment a great many people myself included, feel embarrassed by the behavior, are disgusted by both the insiders and the outsiders, and are tired of a deadlocked system that seems unable to work.

But there is an opportunity at just this moment to see something up close, that we have never seen before. Our entire political system is in play, and we are witnesses to what happens to the people who have been in the system, and are now clearly seeing that they may have no place in the new one. We saw the repression before the famous Middle Eastern uprisings, the Arab Spring; the revolutions, the new governments that came into being, and then the instability which opened the door to the “old guard” dismissing what we thought was the will of the people, and reestablishing new governments in some places, and resulting in civil wars in others.

It is no wonder that we are confused. It is no wonder that the course and speed of what is happening in both political parties has taken us by surprise, and the results of the elections are even more puzzling. People are actually going to the polls and voting for candidates they don't always trust, because they are angry, and “they just won't take it anymore.”

While the Democratic election is certainly more civilized, it is filled with lots of garbage. Senator Sanders, a Democratic Socialist, has touched the consciousness of a whole new voting group of people who identify with being Democrats, but did not feel part of the party. They represent some women, some liberals, some minorities who are binding together to support a candidate that doesn't seem to have a chance to win or, for that matter, to lead. Our current President is out of the news and out of the actions, frozen by a lack of compromise and even discussion.



## Maggid

BY RABBI HERBERT HOROWITZ

### The appropriateness of compromise

A woman seeking a mate went to a *shadchan* (matchmaker) and said to her, “I don't care about looks, income or background. All I want is a man of upright character.” A man told the same *shadchan*, “the only thing I am seeking in a woman is intelligence.” The *shadchan* evaluated the two and introduced them to each other because they had one key element in common: they were both compulsive liars.

The political atmosphere of the last eight years has been one of divisiveness and partisan attacks from both Democrats and Republicans. In one of President Obama's State of the Union addresses, a congressman from the opposing party cried out, “You, lie!”. The race for President has heated up in January and February with accusations of “Liar” being uttered by several of the candidates during their debates. When the dust settles and a President is chosen by the people next November, the only way to avoid the gridlock of the past is for the new President to use the tools of compromise.

The definition of compromise is an agreement or a settlement of a dispute that is reached by each side making concessions. This is often an arduous task requiring the ability to listen to opposing views and devise a compromise that both sides can live with.

What does Jewish tradition say regarding compromise? The *Talmud* discusses three opinions on the subject of compromise. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi explains that arbitration, resulting in compromise, is a *mitzvah*. “*Emet u'mishpat v'shalom, shifvu b'shareichem.*” (Truth, justice and peace



And although the polls would have you believe that Hillary Clinton is a shoe-in, that could all change if she is indicted, or if and when she is forced to release the speeches she made to Wall Street, and explain why she is the recipient of so much money, and why the Party has given her the gift of so many accumulated “SuperVotes,” that seem to make her impenetrable.

She is being helped by African American and Hispanic voters, who never got what they wanted from President Obama, or Mrs. Clinton. Why? It is like

(see Karsh, page 5)

shall govern life within your gates.) Rabbi Eliezer Ben Yossi Haglili says “*V'atzaveh et shofoitehem bayom hahu.*” (Judgment is God's and not the arbitrator's.) Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya says “*Ain b'din makshenin.*” (Compromise is neither a *mitzvah* nor is it prohibited; it is merely permissible.)

What, then, is the *halacha* (Jewish law)? It is considered a *mitzvah* to ascertain from the opposing parties beforehand whether they wish the dispute to be resolved by a judge or by arbitration. Once the choice is made, both sides must abide by their decision. This ruling resonates in today's environment of political confrontation. Justice Antonin Scalia's death, a few weeks ago, has brought on a battle royal between the executive and legislative branches of our government regarding the selection of a new Supreme Court justice.

If the President and the Senate leaders followed Jewish law, it would lead to an equitable solution. A meeting of the Senate Judiciary Committee and representatives of the President might result in a resolution of the impasse, one based on Article II of the Constitution.

Here is a story about Eve's dialogue with God in the Garden of Eden:

Eve walked with the Lord and thanked Him every day for the beautiful Garden of Eden. One day, she asked the Creator, “Lord, why is it that creeping things, and the beasts of the field, walk two by two but I am alone?” The Lord answered, “I have been waiting for you to ask. I have the perfect mate for you. It is called man. He will care for you. He will be the strong and silent type, and he will be the father of your children. He has some faults, but I believe your generous nature will overlook them.”

Eve responded, “Oh, thank you, Lord. I have long wanted a companion like myself. A man sounds fine.” The Lord said, “Eve, there is one thing you must do if you truly wish the man as your life's companion.” “Yes, Lord, I will do whatever you wish,” the woman quickly answered.

“Remember that I warned you the man has some faults... One of them is his ego. It will require something of you,” said God.

“Ego, Lord? What will a man's ego require of me?” asked Eve.

And the Lord said, “You will have to let the man think that I created him first.”

This joke is a metaphor for each and every one of us to do better to open our hearts and minds to other points of view as valid and legitimate ones. As the Rabbis say: “*Eilu v'eilu, divrei Elohim chayim.*” (Both these and these are the words of the living God.)

Herbert Horowitz is Rabbi Emeritus of Shore Parkway Jewish Center, Brooklyn, NY. He is a popular lecturer and scholar-in-residence. He can be reached at rabhh18@gmail.com. ★



## Wiener's Wisdom

BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

### “Me” verses “We”

When did we invert the “W” in “We” to an “M” as in “Me”? Think about it. I did as I was sitting at coffee listening to people discuss times gone by. It is a daily ritual when a group of us get together and drink a \$2 cup of coffee that at one time sold for 5 cents. Perhaps those of a certain age can remember, perhaps not.

Looking back to the 1940s, in particular, 1941, it was the darkest time in the history of our country, excluding the Civil War. That war was a defining moment in our history as a nation. World War II was the defining moment in the history of the world. Even more so than World War I.

Those who lived through this nightmare can remember the sacrifices and the solidarity demonstrated by our fellow citizens. For example, I remember saving the fat drippings from chicken and bringing it to the butcher shop for redemption.

The fat was used in the production of ammunition needed for the war effort.

I remember the dimes collected each week in school until enough was accumulated to purchase a War Bond. The cost was \$18.75 with redemption at \$25 in seven years. We did not think about the value but rather the purpose – to aid in the eventual victory over fascism.

I remember the rallies to encourage our men and emphasize how proud we were that the finest among us would ensure the finest lives for all of us. The Hollywood stars of the day opened their hearts and purses to symbolize the unity of purpose. The Hollywood Canteen and the USO allowed our soldiers and sailors the opportunity to take a bit of home with them wherever they were sent.

Who can forget the B 29 bombers decorated with a pin-up of Betty Grable, or Lt. Jimmy Stewart waving goodbye as he entered the nightmare of the unknown. All the famous people of the time lent their time, effort and resources as an indication of what America represented, not only to us, but the whole world.

The newsreels gave us an inside look into the horror of war. The newspapers listed the dead. Windows in our homes were draped with banners decorated with stars, one for those serving, and another for those who lost their lives.

Today, we turn on our TV sets and watch the atrocities while munching on a snack as though we were in a movie house.

## EDITORIAL

(continued from page 3)

emotional reactions such as anger, love, lust, greed – I’ve got to weed out what is good and what is bad. How many people have I written off because of some emotional feeling? How many situations have I turned upside down, reacted in the worst of ways because of emotional lack of freedom? Like a slave I seem to have no choice.

“*Haggadah*” is a highly developed spiritual tool that can realign one’s consciousness and change one’s life. It’s important not to change the *Haggadah* too much but to simply say it. “*Haggadah*” means “to tell.” “*Pesach*” means “the mouth tells.”

“*Pesach*” is an opportunity. It’s not just a historical celebration, not just a great time to have family and friends get together for a good meal. *Pesach* is a breakthrough in time from the realm of eternity. It is the breakthrough in the world of hiddenness to that which can be revealed. What happened 3,000 years ago can be repeated, not just commemorated on *Pesach* night. *Pesach* – and this is true of all of the holidays – offers that opportunity. *Pesach* is a time to sit at your seder table, go through the *Haggadah* and experience a breakthrough.”

The full article can be seen on our website at the following link: <http://jewishpostopinion.com/?p=3244>

We wish all of our readers a Joyous and Kosher *Pesach*!

Jennie Cohen, March 23, 2016 ✨



Unless we know someone involved, we are so detached from the realities of killing and murder.

Patriotism is a word relegated to history, as is our fervor for justice and mercy. The “We” demonstrated by a generation who understood the value of collective responsibility and pride has now become “Me”. “What is in it for me?” is now the rallying cry of the so-called millennia. From the walkways of Wall Street to the fortresses of opulence, we see extremes to which we have become accustomed.

The obscene pay checks of athletes, to the corporate greed of accumulation, there is no longer the need of helping those less fortunate. “I have mine, go get yours” is the new slogan of today’s generation. Sports are not played for the sport. Investments are not made for security. Education is not encouraged to enhance character. Law enforcement is now synonymous with distrust. Politics is not to govern, nor leadership to emulate.

Can we again learn the value of pride? Is it possible to witness a return to civility? The inheritance given us by the past generations will be the model upon which

## KARSH

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asking the majority of Jews why they have this sometimes irrational relationship with the Democratic Party, even forgiving them for their lapses, and even though its support of Israel, at times, seems lacking.

Everywhere we look there is disarray. CNN has become an irrational platform for professional “talking heads” who are overwhelmed by what is happening, and are hoping that they won’t lose their consultancy jobs. When the world is shaking, the old platforms are not a reliable foundation.

It is not clear what is going to happen. The big money has temporarily withdrawn from an unsure market, and the givers are running around and trying to find a path to return to the place where they felt secure. They have big fortunes to give to influence the election, but they are certainly not foolish.

But there is no path.

If you realize that we just have one vote, it makes it easier to watch the debacle with this “historic view” that we are all in the same place, bewildered by each new day, and realizing that we are on a wild amusement park roller coaster where the only thing we can do is to hang on tight.

Our short and long term futures are up in the air. This very well may be the “time before the storm” and we would do well to stock up, not overextend and ride it out.

It is not the end of the world, but it may be the end of the world as we knew it, and as survivors, we will prevail.

That’s the good news. I have missed sharing with you. But I had work to do, and the time to re-look at all the paradigms that formed my life. I am always looking for your input.

Howard W. Karsh lives and writes in Milwaukee, Wisc., and can be reached at [hkarsh@gmail.com](mailto:hkarsh@gmail.com). ✨



we should make this country great again. Not rhetoric, but by example. Strength should be tempered with understanding. Justice should be administered by mercy. Greatness is our destiny.

Try thinking of “We” as we do when we pray. Because it is through prayer and the understanding of gratitude, that “Me” will be turned back into “We”. Perhaps then we will see an even greater America. This will be because we are great, not because we proclaim it, but rather because we act it.

Rabbi Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. He welcomes comments at [ravyitz@cox.net](mailto:ravyitz@cox.net). He is the author of two books: *Living With Faith*, and *The Passover Haggadah*. ✨



## Shabbat Shalom

BY RABBI JON ADLAND

*Pirke Avot 4:21 – Rabbi Jacob used to say: This world is like a hallway to the future world. Prepare yourself in the hallway that you may enter into the banquet hall.*

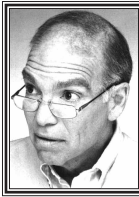
**March 4, 2016, Vayakhel/Shekalim  
Exodus 35:1–38:20, 24 Adar I 5776**

People always ask about what you saw in Israel or the takeaway moment or just the general experience. It is hard for me to answer these questions after so many journeys to Israel, but despite the many trips, my guide and friend Doron Bookshtein still shows me new places or brings new stories to light. He doesn't expect those on his tour to remember everything he says, but he does want us to leave Israel loving it more than we did and maybe, just maybe, to return again someday.

So what was new? We stayed in five different hotels/*kibbutz* guesthouses and four of them were places I had never stayed before. Beresheet Hotel in the middle of the Negev is just awesome. We visited a number of ancient sites that I hadn't visited before or in a long time, including Tel Azekah that overlooked the battle between David and Goliath and commanded a view of the south central part of ancient Israel. We traveled into Maktesh Ramon (a geological crater). I had been to the other two, but smaller, *makteshs* (very poor Hebrew.)

I continue to be in awe of the archeological excavations of the City of David that demonstrate the strength of Jerusalem from David's time forward. I loved the surprise visit to Tzipori in the lower Galilee. I hadn't been there in over a decade, maybe even longer. The magnificent Roman era streets only pale in comparison to the beautiful mosaics revealed at this city. The tremendous earthquake of 749 CE destroyed this city and others, including Bet Shean, driving the residents away forever. Time and dust reclaimed the city until human hands revealed the magnificence below. Our group's final night's sunset on Hannah Senesch's shores of the Mediterranean Sea topped off this amazing adventure.

Let me add one more moment. In the middle of the trip, my friends Marty and Joan celebrated a Jewish wedding at the egalitarian prayer space at the *Kotel* (the Western Wall.) Joined fortuitously by Cantor Kathy Sebo, a longtime friend of the Ortman's, we held a somewhat



## Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY

### Why is everyone so angry?

Usually, most people don't take a real interest in politics until at least spring of an election year. Admittedly this year is different. The rise of The Donald continues to amaze. Obviously Bernie Sanders has touched a nerve.

Jews have been almost solidly Democratic for over a hundred years. The reasons are simple. The Democratic Party stood by the Unions. The Jews who became citizens in the early 1900's and beyond knew that their only chance against the "Stinking Bosses" was to organize.

My grandfather, Abraham Shiplacoff (go ahead, Google him!) was a union leader in Brooklyn in what was called the "Needle Trades". They were the thousands of Eastern European Jews who slaved making "shirtwaists", skirts and pants on treadle sewing machines. They live in cramped, hot, stinking, unhealthy tenements on the lower East Side of New York and Brooklyn.

He was instrumental in the creation of the ILGWU (the International Lady's Garment Union). All he and his colleagues wanted was for Jews to have a decent life and a shot at the American Dream. And they got it.

Jews moved from the tenements of New York and Brooklyn "uptown" to the Bronx and beyond. We spread across the country and because of rampant Anti-Semitism we were forced to become entrepreneurs, starting our own businesses. There were quotas in most law schools and medical schools limiting the number of Jews



planned wedding under a *chuppah*, an exchange of rings long worn, and the breaking of a glass. *Mazal Tov* to Marty and Joan! This was my first time standing close to the wall in daylight and in prayer next to Sandy. I can't do this in the traditional space of the Wall, as it has been co-opted by the Haredi Orthodox Jewish world that separates men and women.

I was moved to tears along with Joan and Marty at this special moment and my heart pounded with joy that a space for men and women to pray together existed. Several days later, the CCAR held a service at this space. (I was not present, but it was all over the Jewish news.) Women and men prayed together, heard *Torah* read by

(see Adland, page 9)

allowed. Still, the Jewish doctor and the Jewish lawyer have become legendary.

We have come a long way. But, things change. The American Dream has become a little muddled. It's become tougher to move up that ladder. Not just for Jews but according to all statistics, for everyone.

The "New Economy" is one of innovation and entrepreneurship. These are two things we Jews are pretty good at. So we are finding our way in computer engineering and innovative startups. But not everybody has that urge, that ingenuity, which brings us back to this year's testy election.

I asked a renowned psychiatrist: "I don't want to get into a political discussion, but can you give me an opinion on what is going on in this country?"

His answer was simple: "People are afraid of losing their toys."

Now, the definition of toys can be pretty broad, and the Doctor does have a point. But in my opinion it is more than that. I think the anger comes from the fact that many people think the game is rigged against them.

Jews are particularly sensitive about this. For almost a century in this country the game was rigged against us. An attorney general of the United States once said "All Communists aren't Jews, but all Jews are Communists." Yes, we have come a long way from then, but we still have to be aware.

When people get mad, when they think their "toys" are going to be taken away, whether it is an assault weapon or mid-life sports car, they look for someone to blame. Step two is for someone to tell them who to blame. And that brings us back to the 2016 election cycle.

Fingers are pointed at Muslims. Fingers are pointed at all immigrants. Could we be next? After all, aren't we part of the problem? Don't we control the media and the banks and the politicians?

I am not trying scare tactics or creating a straw Golem that will come after the Jews as Father Coughlin did in the 1930s. It's just that when fingers start being pointed and people look for someone or something to blame, can we be far behind?

I am writing this on Martin Luther King Day and yes, that is playing on my mind. I see what is happening in State after State to unravel the Civil Rights Movement which was led by Dr. King and had so many Jews involved in the fight.

I see the anger that The Donald brings on in his rallies. I see a Muslim lady who simply stood up at one of his rallies with a tee shirt that said "Salam, I Come in Peace". She was heckled, booed and asked by Trump to leave the gathering. As she did, she was heckled on her way out.

I think it is more than toys that people are afraid of losing. I think it is over a century

(see Shipley, page 7)

# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

## Belief

Recently I have been trying to convince one of my favorite skeptics that we have a Creator, a Father in heaven. I did some research and found two proofs that were given by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Here is the first one.

Do you believe that George Washington led the American troops at Valley Forge? Then you can believe that *Hashem* gave us the *Torah* 3,300 years ago at Mount Sinai.

How many people witnessed the troops at Valley Forge? A few thousand. How many people were standing in front of Mount Sinai? Over a million. And each and every one of them heard the voice of *Hashem* giving them the Ten Commandments.

If one person tells me that he saw or heard something, I might believe him, or I might not. It would depend on how much I relied on him. If ten people would tell me that they had also witnessed this, I would be more likely to believe them. Here we have over one million witnesses that *Hashem* gave them the *Torah* at Mount Sinai.

They passed this over to their children, and their children passed it over to their children. This chain continued unbroken till this very day.

Here is another proof that the Rebbe gave. Suppose that you walk into a factory, and all that you see are machines. Everything is working automatically, and there is no human being in sight. You would say to yourself wow! Somebody really smart put this factory together!

The same thing should happen to us when we look at the universe. The universe is one huge and amazing and awesome factory! And everything works automatically! How great is the One who put all of this together!

This proof applies especially for those who have learned science. They know more than others just how complicated and huge the universe is.

I hope and pray that these proofs will help those last diehard skeptics to come to believe in *Hashem*. We believe that we are now entering the first stages of the complete and final redemption. More and more are coming to believe in *Hashem* and follow His commandments. Soon the entire world will be full of the knowledge of *Hashem*.

We can help this to happen by learning more *Torah* and doing more *Mitzvahs*. We can pray to *Hashem*. We can plead to Him to redeem us already! We want *Moshiach* now!

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



# Jewish Educator

BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

## Grief

*My husband Ray died on June 15, 2015, exactly 3 years, 7 months and 6 days after he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Since that hot Tucson day in June, I have traveled up both coasts and through alternating worlds of numbness and unrelenting emotion. This is a piece I wrote while at the gym about seven months after Ray died. It came to me as a quasi-revelation, the ideas fully formed as if the words had already been written. I jumped off the treadmill and grabbed my cell phone to record it before the words faded from the page imprinted upon my mind.*

There is a certain need to examine this thing called grief – something between curiosity and compulsion. I take it out and hold it in my hands, like a trinket. I turn it over, rub my fingers along its sharp contours, knowing that inside, it is as nebulous as shadows at dusk. Perhaps, I think, if I look at it closely and long enough, I will gain some understanding of its substance and be able to conquer it over time.

It is uncomfortable to examine grief in this way, as if I am a voyeur looking at the mangled car and distraught bodies of an accident I witnessed. But *not looking* at it doesn't feel right either, as if somehow, in not looking, I do dishonor to my husband. And so I concede that I am drawn to my grief as a way of being in relationship with the man I loved. But it is not the only way to remain close and I am grateful to know this as well.

I find great comfort in writing. My journal naturally takes the form of letters to Ray which I write before I go to sleep. It replaces what I miss: the whispered sharing of daily events as we lay in bed together, the give and take of dealing with life and its complexities. So I vent, wonder and question – with pen and paper – and the process provides me with a form and structure to help me during one of the most difficult times of day – bedtime.

At first, my need to write to Ray feels almost religious, like a ritual I shouldn't change. I want and need to honor him, to connect to "us" in a specific way. But over time, I find that I am writing less and only do so when I have something I want to remember – like a dream I had or a bit of wisdom that has helped me. As time passes, I become aware that I have internalized our relationship; the external giving way to the internal because he is a part of me now.

I saw a baby in a stroller at a restaurant

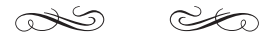
## SHIPLEY

(continued from page 6)

of progress that seems to be slipping away. Jews have a stake in this fight. Whether it is government, lobbyists, the big banks or once again "The Stinking Bosses" we must be a part of making it right.

We too should have anger. Not of the Trump kind, but of the kind that Jews have always manifested to make things right. When a nurse in Israel, a mother of six is murdered in front of her children by a Palestinian terrorist and there is no immediate reaction from the organized Jewish community, I wonder: where is that anger?

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



a few weeks ago. The baby was about six months old. I studied her beautiful face, realizing that she did not yet have words to describe her world or reality. I watched her curious eyes as she looked at her surroundings: the people walking by, the waitress asking for an order, the plates of food being set on the table. She took in so many images without seeming to mind and yet, I knew that her ability to understand what was happening was limited.

My grief is only seven months old and like a baby, I don't have the words or ability yet to fully navigate or understand the world around me. But with each passing month, I can see that I am acquiring new skills to survive in a landscape that has been forever altered by my loss.

A friend, who lost her husband years ago, wrote a card to me after Ray died. The words, which helped her in her grief, gave me perspective and a sense of optimism.

"There will always be a big hole in your life but at some point, you will stop falling into it."

I know I am not falling anymore. I am slowing inching my way through my grief, peering into the hole but no longer finding myself at the bottom of the pit. Deep down I know that it is essential to examine my grief in order to accept it. And in doing so, I am certain that both grief and I will change.

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). ✨

# Book Excerpt

BY RABBI SANDY EISENBERG SASSO

## Ceremony is historic in Judaism

I was preparing to teach my first Sunday School class since my acceptance to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC). It is 1969 and there are no women rabbis. The phone rings. It is the religious school principal from Keneseth Israel, my home congregation. The classical Reform synagogue is the third in a line of four congregations on Old York Road in Elkins Park, a well manicured middle to upper middle class, predominately Jewish, neighborhood. KI, as the synagogue is affectionately called, is housed in a long two story modern building. It is a neighbor to Beth Shalom's towering Mt. Sinai sanctuary designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The principal says, "One of the new rabbinical students, Dennis just called to say that he will not be able to arrive in time to teach his first class. He is stuck in Panama and recovering from a severe virus with high fever. Will you instruct his Creative Worship class on Sunday morning?"

I want to refuse, but decide it is not a good way to start a new job. I imagine Dennis a young man in cut-off jeans and sandals, unshaven and suntanned, unwilling to cut short his summer vacation just to teach a bunch of teenagers. He probably plays guitar. I will never be able to lead his class the way he would.

The first rabbinical student I meet has already studied at the RRC for a year. He invites me to an outdoor concert in the summer. We sit on a large blanket. A number of other seminary students join us. When we are all settled, he asks, "Would you like a smoke?"

"No," I say, "I don't smoke."

"In that case, I won't either," he responds.

It is then I realize that he doesn't mean tobacco. He is offering a joint. Ok, I am really confused. I am entering a seminary

and I expect young men in pants and buttoned-down shirts and tied shoes. And here I am among Birkenstocks, jeans and marijuana. The young men have clergy draft deferments, but on principle, they burn their draft cards.

Dennis is probably like all the others. As I arrive at KI to teach his class, I am greeted by the principal. "Thanks for being available to substitute, but Dennis is feeling better, and he is here to teach his class."

I breathe a sigh of relief and then prepare to meet a fellow student. I am introduced to Dennis. He wasn't on vacation. He really was sick. In fact, he was in the hospital, with some kind of unidentifiable virus. He is actually from Panama, born in Colon, and he is on a foreign student visa. He wears perfectly tailored pants, a buttoned-down yellow shirt and shoes with a fresh polish. His hair is blonde and short, and he is clean-shaven. There is no evidence that he has spent any time on a beach. I am darker skinned than he is. He doesn't play the guitar.

We exchange greetings. He is incredibly polite and his English is impeccable, although it is his second language. I detect a bit of an accent which doesn't sound like Spanish. I mistakenly identify it with British, and I love British accents. It must be his vocabulary and the way he enunciates each word so carefully. He often chooses words that sound like he has just read Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. I comment, "That is not a word that is commonly used in English." He responds, "It is an ordinary Spanish word, used every day." Then he proceeds to give me the Latin derivation. I am impressed.

Dennis looks far more like the rabbinical students I thought I would encounter. I am a bit intimidated by his vocabulary and by his impressive degree from Brandeis in Near Eastern and Jewish Studies. But he is soft spoken and incredibly polite. I am relieved that I will know someone in my class who doesn't seem at all horrified that one of his fellow students is a woman.

The first day of rabbinical school arrives. I am embarrassed to say that I am worried about what to wear. I feel a bit like a seventh grader wanting to fit in, to be accepted. Will pants identify me as a raging feminist who burns her bra? Will that be a good or bad idea? I don't know very much about feminism yet, although I find myself buying every MS magazine.

Will wearing a dress identify me as too timid, attending seminary in order to find a husband? I have never considered such an idea, but people often whisper that is why I am going. "Why else would a woman have the chutzpah to attend seminary? No one will ever accept a woman rabbi, but if she marries a rabbi, she can be a *rebbitzin!*"



The happy bride and groom, June 25, 1970.

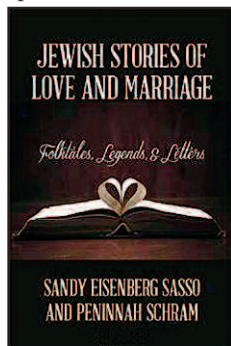
The comments make me angry, but I try to shrug them off as a joke. I am not yet prepared to engage in an argument.

I finally decide on a simple skirt and blouse. I do not want to appear that I care too much about fashion. It is enough that I am studying to be a rabbi without others stereotyping me by my clothes. I don't want people talking about what I wear. Nevertheless, I learn early on that people will look at how I am dressed, how high my speaking voice is before they will begin to discuss what I think. So I go to my closet and choose a pair of black pumps with one and a half inch heels. At five feet, three inches, the men will all be taller.

Besides worrying about how the administration and faculty will view me, I am also thinking about Dennis. What will he say about what I am wearing? I am thinking of his yellow shirt with a soft open collar, and I am attracted enough to want him to ask me out on a date.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical School is on Broad Street a few blocks north of Temple University. It is a restored brownstone building that had once been a funeral parlor. The surrounding buildings have not been so fortunate. Many still have boarded up windows and broken concrete steps. Temple University has renovated many of the brownstones nearer to campus for department offices, but the ones further north are dilapidated or abandoned.

The first class at the rabbinical school began in 1968. The students were fond of spreading rumors. They recounted that when they first entered the college building, they found skeletal remains in one of the closets. I am part of the second



Sandy Sasso



Dennis Sasso



entering class. The summer night on the blanket during the concert, the first year students tell me that there are still some closets that have not been opened.

These exceptionally bright and talented young men are also just boys. But Dennis seems different. I take a seat next to him when I enter my first class. My heart is racing. First, I have no idea of how I am going to be accepted as the first woman in the seminary. My Bible professor has just learned that there was going to be a female student in the class. Second, I am wondering what Dennis will think of me.

Theologically, I do not believe in supernatural miracles. Nevertheless, I think something of a miracle happens that day. My professor says, "I usually address my rabbinical students as gentlemen, but I see that will not be possible. So I will call you gentlefolk." Immediately, I am on an equal par with the rest of the students. Later that week, Dennis asks me out!

Being from Panama, Dennis does not have a car. He lives in one of the rooms on the top floor of the seminary. He rides the bus to pick me up and then we take another bus to go to a fancy downtown restaurant. We have an elegant meal and then we take the bus back to where I live. As we are walking, he takes my hand. I do not think much of it, until he says, "You know in Panama holding hands means something special. You don't do that with anyone." I don't even imagine he is giving me a line.

"Wow!" I think. This is the east coast in the 1960s. What a different culture! Handholding does not feel too conservative; it is sweet and pleasant. In rabbinic school Dennis and I argue Talmud; he treats me like any other colleague. Yet when we date, he treats me like a lady. If we take someone's car, he walks around to open the door for me. For a moment, I feel like I am being transported to another time. I'm used to opening doors for myself. In fact, I make a point of it. I want to be a rabbi; I don't want to be treated any differently because I am a woman. Still, I have a soft spot for Dennis' gentlemanly behavior.

The first year of seminary proceeds. I date another student for awhile. Still, I always sit next to Dennis in class. At first, I think we will be really good friends. But it is more than that. Looking for an excuse to talk with Dennis outside of class, I call to ask for our homework assignment. But Dennis isn't much of a phone conversationalist. He gives me the class requirements which, of course, I already knew.

Dennis has this extraordinary skill of punning. Every class he makes bilingual or trilingual puns. Often he and the professor engage in a punning contest to see who can outdo the other. They have the class laughing or moaning at their linguistic gymnastics. Sometimes it's hard to know

when he is serious.

In seminary we appear to be just classmates. But outside of class, something else is happening. We work together at Keneseth Israel and start leaving love notes to each other on the classroom blackboards of the synagogue. We aren't worried that the students will get suspicious and start giggling. We write to each other in biblical Ugaritic script.

We do more than hold hands, so I know it has to be serious. Then one Sunday night after a youth group meeting, we study passages from the book of Jeremiah together. The room has walls painted orange, a brown sofa and a large mahogany secretary. We are sitting on the couch and reading chapter 31. There are many powerful prophetic verses, but the one I recall is – *With eternal love have I loved you*. That is when Dennis looked at me and asked, "Will you marry me?"

The next day we return to class at the seminary. Dennis speaks to the professor before class. He says, "Sandy and I became engaged last night."

The students are seated around a large conference table. I sit on the professor's left side. It's strange that he says nothing to me, not even a word of congratulations. Ok, I concede, a little disappointed, our studies are too important to be interrupted.

A few moments into class, the professor leans over to me and whispers, "Is Dennis serious?" I might have expected the response. I inform the professor, "This time Dennis is telling the truth. We are engaged."

Immediately, the professor announces our engagement to the class. He says, "This is a time to celebrate." We switch from Jeremiah to Song of Songs, and after class we all have a glass of wine and toast *l'chayyim*.

On June 25, 1970 Dennis and I are married at Congregation Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia where we first met. Rabbi Bertram Korn, the senior rabbi who has been my rabbi and mentor officiate along with Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, President of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, Dean officiate at the ceremony. Some of the rabbinical students sing the seven blessings. Rabbi Korn remarks, "This ceremony is historic in Judaism. Never before have two rabbinical students married each other."

The next morning the picture of us as bride and groom appears on the front page of the Philadelphia newspaper. Inside our wedding bands we have inscribed the words from Jeremiah – "With eternal love have I loved you."

*From Jewish Stories of Love and Marriage, by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso and Peninnah Schram. Copyright © 2015 Rowman & Littlefield. Used by arrangement with the*

## ADLAND

(continued from page 8)

a woman's voice, and rejoiced at this historical egalitarian moment. Standing in this space was truly a WOW moment for me.

So what is next for me and another Israel trip? I have always dreamed of leading a trip to Israel for those who have been before, but want to see more of the country than the usual things that one does on a first trip. Tel Aviv is a real foodie city, so maybe there is something to experience there. Or going to a winery or two. Maybe taking time to do a hike in some of the beautiful countryside of Israel. I know that it will be led by Doron and I know he will create a unique experience. My hope is to do this trip in the fall of 2018 after the Holy Days.

I always come home filled with a love and admiration for this tiny state on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It has had to overcome so much adversity in the past to just survive and it continues to face threats today. The resilience of the people to live, work, grow, and thrive is just amazing. Despite the threats of those who wish to see Israel disappear or put enormous pressure on Israel to conform when the rest of the world is ignored will not succeed. Israel is not perfect and should not be held to a higher standard than any other country, but Israel continues to push forward into the future bringing to the rest of the world its best minds and inventions. *Am Yisrael Chai* – the People of Israel lives and I am there with them.

When you light your *Shabbat* candles this week, light one for the people of Israel. Light the other candle for the future of this tiny state and may it be an ever-lasting light.

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*Sandy Eisenberg Sasso is the first woman to be ordained from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1974. She served as rabbi of Congregation Beth El Zedeck in Indianapolis for 36 years. Upon retirement she became Rabbi Emerita and director of the Religion, Spirituality and Art Initiative at Butler University. She is the author of many award-winning children's books.*

*Dennis C. Sasso was ordained from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1974. Since 1977 he has been Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth El Zedeck in Indianapolis. He teaches at Christian Theological Seminary and Marian College and serves on the boards of United Way as well as many other civic organizations.*

*Sandy and Dennis are the first practicing rabbinical couple in world Jewish history. ✨*



## Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN  
PHOTOS BY BARRY A. KAPLAN

### Sderot – A city that supports its youth

Mention Sderot and people will reply, oh, yeah, where all the Qassam rockets have been shot since 2001 from the Gaza Strip less than a mile away. Or, as some people refer to, irreverently, “the bomb shelter capital of the world.”

This was my third visit there. The first was in 2006 as part of the Jewish Agency Assembly. The second was with my husband Barry in fall 2008, delivering bomb shelters as part of the International Christian Embassy group.

Despite the cold and rain, one day after *Tu b’shvat*, it was a lovely town with new apartment buildings being built and very pleasant local people wanting to share their lives with us. We were there to “Experience Sderot,” as part of the International Young Israel Movement’s (IYIM) trip – not to hear about how many were killed by rocket attacks or how much damage was done or how daily lives were disrupted. We were not there to hear about psychological trauma, post traumatic stress in children or to look at bomb shelters.

Planned by Daniel Meyer, director for the past six years of the IYIM, and coordinated by Shira Stein, program coordinator and executive assistant, all one can say is everyone needs to take a trip like this!



D. Meyer

We were part of a busload of over 50 modern-religious people, who left Jerusalem’s Kings Hotel at 9:10 a.m. By 10:25, we were on the outskirts of Sderot and pulling into a building in a neighborhood where 45-year-old Yaki Cohen, who works in real estate, took on the role of our guide. Originally from Gush Etzion, he and his wife live here with their eight children, ranging in age from 4 to 20.

A walk in the mixed neighborhood of the first settlers in Sderot led to a street overlooking a house where an Ethiopian family lived who had lost two children, killed while decorating their *sukkah*, the first victims of a Qassam.

The town started in the 1950s as a *maabar* (a transit camp for new immigrants) from Kurdistan and Persia, then from Morocco and North Africa. In the 1980s, immigrants from Romania came; in the 1990s they came from the Soviet Union. Twenty

years ago, people started to come from the cities. In recent years, immigrants from Ethiopia arrived. Today, the city has grown to 24,000.

The walk ended with a visit to Yaki’s apartment for hot drinks and sweets and to see the two Qassams sitting on his terrace which hit his apartment.

#### Municipality’s Youth Department

In the Municipality, we met Yigal Bracha, the director of the youth department, who has lived 35 years in Sderot and came here after 10 years working in high tech, deciding to change his life and do *tikun olam*. He thanked the Young Israel Movement “for 10 years of support and connection to Sderot.”

Daniel, the youth department manager in Sderot for nearly three years, grew up in Scotland. He characterized the background of Sderot and explained the major challenges: (1) the city doubled its size in the 1980s and 1990s while creating cultural differences between the original and the new immigrants (2) the lack of successful leadership (3) the issues with the rockets fired into the city beginning in 2001 when there were not enough shelters.

He related how the sound of *tseva adom*, meaning a rocket was coming in, allowed people 15 seconds to get to a shelter. Now with the Iron Dome interceptor, it is more effective. Throughout the years, people from all over Israel and elsewhere came to Sderot to help and to show solidarity and then they left.

During Operation Defensive Shield, in the summer of 2014, the mentality of the people changed, and everything that needed to be done during those 55 days were run by 200 local volunteer teens and young adults out of the 2,000 who live in Sderot. Public shelters were run by teens and young adults whom the people knew, wearing T-shirts reading, “I’m from Sderot.” Posters read “in unity and courage, we shall win.”

#### Hearing from the Mayor

Alon Davidi was elected mayor in October 2013. He thanked Young Israel for its support as Sderot sits “on the front line of struggle against Gaza.”



Mayor Davidi

In the past one and half years since Operation Defensive Shield, the town has created a village of students from Sapir College, located in Sderot as the largest public college in Israel and affiliated with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

The students receive counseling after they finish the army or service programs. “Everyone knows everyone,” says the

Mayor. “Because of that we are strong; we are a community.”

Every neighborhood now has a club with activities and a center for pensioners. All money from donations is used for “programs for the teenagers and to make Sderot more beautiful; to build a new future is education and teenagers,” says the mayor with pride.

#### Yeshiva Sderot

The Yeshiva in Sderot, one of the largest *hesder yeshivot* in Israel, is entering its 20th year. It was founded and is headed by Rabbi Dovid Fendel, originating from West Hempstead, Long Island. A *hesder yeshiva* is a five to six year program which combines advanced *Talmudic* studies with military service in the Israel Defense Forces. Combined with its satellite in Kiryat Gat, the \$15 million dollar campuses have 750 students.

Atop the *yeshiva*, down the hall from the classrooms is a room where students see the *Torah* made relevant to the market place as a rabbinical court of three hear legal cases in mock trials as an educational tool. Climbing to the roof, one sees the *chanukiah* built in 2007 with Qassam rockets and lit each year at *Chanukah*. “Dodging Qassam rockets is one of our hobbies,” quipped the rabbi.



“We are very thankful for the generosity of American Jewry,” said the rabbi, as he invited those visiting to attend their dinner at Terrace in the Park in New York City, a week and a half before Passover. “Be our guest of honor at our dinner,” he said. He explained that the *yeshiva* needs people to be their friends and urged people to “tell people to visit.” They currently have five big dorms and “little checks help.”

#### The Youth Café Shul

Returning to the original building when we arrived in Sderot, we learned that this building, undergoing repairs, is the brainchild of a modern religious couple, Yael and David, who came to Sderot 16 years ago. “We had no mission, we just came to live here,” Yael says. After a few years, when the Qassams started, it became an issue and they asked themselves what they were doing there. David is a male nurse and Yael is a computer programmer. They realized they were here for a purpose and in 2007 they started a small synagogue “a place where everyone could feel comfortable.”

They soon expanded, adding community activities. They raised money to buy more stores and expand again, this time making a playground for children who lived nearby. They also arranged a place for *kiddushim*. Now there are 120 families and a waiting list.

They then realized there were teenagers sitting in the playground at night. They added a popcorn machine, audio and video equipment and a ping pong table. They became a model for other neighborhoods as the synagogue became a youth club at night. Today, twice a week religious girls come there; twice a week traditional boys come there; one night a week Ethiopian mothers have an empowering group meeting there.

### Looking into Gaza

From here the group traveled to a hill to climb to a lookout point into Gaza. It is scary to think how very close (approximately one kilometer or .62 miles) Sderot is from Gaza.

By 4:35 the bus is heading out of Sderot, away from the four and six-story apartment buildings, the roundabouts with sculptures made from remnants of Qassam rockets, the attractive town frequently in the news.



## Meeting the Prime Minister

Each January, card-carrying members of the foreign press (like yours truly and my photographer-husband) receive a "Save the date" for the Government Press Office's (GPO) traditional civil New Year toast with the Prime Minister. We register and receive a letter thanking us; then we receive a final acceptance.

That evening was very cold as we went to the Inbal Hotel, just as it was beginning to sprinkle. The hotel directed us down one floor where our names were checked off a list and an ID was put into a hanging ribbon to wear around our necks. From there we were sent down another floor where everyone was told to wait until exactly 4:30 p.m., as the security people readied everything.

Soon they checked our names off a list, tied on yellow, hospital-type plastic bracelets, and we were told these meant we did not have to go through the security



*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.*

machine. Past the machine was a room with many food stations, bar-stool-high tables and chairs and a harpist.

Although the names and titles are printed on the ID cards in large letters, it is difficult to read them and identify the people, something I regret because I wanted to meet some of the foreign press. After two hours of eating great food and *schmoozing*, everyone was ushered into a room whose back was lined up with cameramen and their equipment.

### Cybertech

Nitzan Chen, director of the GPO, made opening remarks and introduced Dr. Eviatar Matania, head of the National Cyber Bureau, for a talk on "the journey we are planning for our future." He talked about defending Israel in the cyber domain and informed us there are 250 cyber security companies in Israel. A cybertech exhibition was held January 26 and 27 in Tel Aviv.

Cybertech is one of the largest cyber events outside of the U.S, including 8,700 participants from over 50 nations and hundreds of sponsoring and exhibiting companies. In addition to the exhibition, the conference will serve as a dialogue for industry and government leaders on current threats, innovations and mutual collaboration.

Next was entertainment by Dana International, the 44-year-old transgender pop singer, who won the 1998 Eurovision music contest.

### Hearing the Prime Minister

Featured speaker was Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who opened his remarks by telling the audience it is 40 years since the Zionism is Racism resolution was passed by the United Nations. Even though it was repealed, the UN General Assembly resolutions continue

against Israel – "more than all other countries combined."

He then continued, saying, "Palestinian rejection of the Jewish state has not changed...the real core of the conflict is their rejection of the Jewish state."

But there have been positive changes in the past 40 years. Israel has relations with countries in Asia and Africa and relations with individual nations like China, India, Japan and Russia. Israel has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; and Israel has growing relations with Arab countries, aware of Islam and the accompanying terror, "who see the growth of our technology."

During the pre-arranged question and answer period, the Prime Minister responded to a question about the Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom who called for an investigation of Israel's "extra-judicial killings." (She was referring to the Palestinians wielding knives to stab Israelis to death whom security forces shoot to death.)

What Foreign Minister Wallstrom said was "outrageous, immoral, unjust and wrong," said the Prime Minister, and she singled out Israel in an absurd way.

Regarding the proposed NGO transparency law requiring the NGOs who receive more than half of their funding from foreign governments to disclose the foreign payments they receive, Netanyahu said he failed to understand how transparency is anti-democratic, and he cited a U.S. House of Representatives resolution from 2015 on rules for the 114th Congress requiring similar information.

Regarding the European Union, Netanyahu said there is a difference between EU institutions and European states. He said the EU is a bureaucracy entrenched in set patterns. The only place where the EU is labeling products is Israel. "We have a real issue here. I think it is a moral issue...Just as in the UN, in the EU establishment, there is a natural tendency to single out Israel."

Asked about Iran, he said it must be made sure that they fulfill their obligations, and the US must strengthen their ally, Israel, over the next 10 years.

The evening ended with a farewell to Mark Regev, former foreign press spokesman and newly appointed ambassador to Britain, whom the Prime Minister characterized as "an exceptional spokesman and wise counsel."

*Sybil Kaplan is a foreign correspondent for North American Jewish newspapers, a book reviewer, compiler and editor of nine kosher cookbooks, restaurant feature writer for the Israeli website Janglo.net, feature writer for the website itraveljerusalem.net and leader of the weekly walks in Jerusalem's produce market, Machaneh Yehudah. She lives in Jerusalem. ✨*

# BBYO's International Convention

By SYDNEY GLAZIER

Identity is something I have always struggled with. I've never been able to put myself into a box and been able to say I completely agree with this – this is who I am. In spite of that, there have been moments where I could take a step back and say this is important to me, this shapes who I am.

BBYO's International Convention (IC) was one of those moments. Sitting in a room surrounded by thousands of other Jewish teens, along with an incredible professional staff, and countless inspiring speakers, I can say with 100% certainty that that is a moment that shapes who I am as a teenager, a Jew, and an emerging leader.

I arrived a day early and attended the February Executive Conference where the movement's top leaders met and discussed business that would effect the priorities and governmental procedures that would shape regions and chapters across the world for the coming years. It was a very educational day as I took a look into the past and saw how something so influential in my life has evolved since 1924 and continues to shape so many lives. As a member of the convention's steering committee, I went to meetings to polish off the Leadership Lab I was in charge of and the chapter programs I was showcasing.

Though it had only been 24 hours, it felt as if I had been surrounded by my brother Alephs and sister B'nai B'rith Girls for days, I couldn't wait for the rest of my friends and region to arrive. At opening ceremonies that night, the 70 teens representing The Kentucky Indiana Ohio Region sat together as we introduced ourselves to the rest of the Order. We were welcomed to convention by many, a high-light being a message written by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who directly addressed the IC body. Opening ceremonies culminated with a surprise concert by Timeflies. Being in this room surrounded by so many people who are so different, yet have so many similarities to myself, was incredible. This was a defining moment in my life, one that I know I'll look back on knowing it helps shape who I am.

Friday opened with a speakers plenary then led into Leadership Labs. Teens went to over 30 places across Baltimore. I went to Baltimore Community ToolBank. Here 30 of us cleaned and organized the warehouse where in just a few hours we completed more than a typical weeks work of progress for the three full-time



Sydney Glazier (L) with Jesse Cohn at BBYO's International Convention.

employees the ToolBank typically has. Not only was I able to make a difference for this organization, the entire convention body heard speakers like CEO of the NAACP Cornell Brooks, and Geena Rocero who shared the journey she took in becoming a transgender model.

Shabbat was a life changing experience. In my everyday life, I often overlook celebrating *Shabbat* and truly taking a break from my busy daily activities. Being in a place with so many people who have the same history and values, *Shabbat* was proof that we truly are stronger together. From setting a Guinness World Record for the largest *Shabbat* dinner to praying in services with my best friends, *Shabbat* allowed us to reflect and truly be appreciative of the experience we were sharing.

Sunday, the 92nd Grand Board of the Aleph Zadik Aleph and the 72nd International Board of the B'nai Brith Girls were elected. Sitting through elections opened my eyes to how the movement will work next year, not only an educational experience, but a motivational one. Watching my best friend from summer experiences be elected as International *N'siah* (President) and a member of my Regional Board be elected as International *Morah* (Vice President of Membership) reinforced how much the power if BBYO is in our hands. BBYO creates a platform unlike any other where Jewish teens can come together and grow as individuals and as leaders, International Convention set this tone that will be experienced across the world for the rest of the year.

The weekend was filled with speakers such as Justin Baldoni, director of *My Last Days* and actor in *Jane the Virgin*, and Claire Wineland, an 18 year old with Cystic (see BBYO, page 15)

# NewCAJE 7th annual conference

NewCAJE, an international and pluralistic Jewish educational organization dedicated to excellence in Jewish education and supporting Jewish educators, is pleased to announce that the organization will be holding its 7th annual conference at North Central College in Naperville, Ill., outside of Chicago. The Conference will take place from **Sun., July 31 – Weds., Aug. 3, 2016**, with a pre-conference *Shabbat* program on July 29–30. Registration for the conference is now open, scholarships are available and NewCAJE encourages educators to submit workshop proposals to be both learners and teachers at the conference!



The conference will include presenters from across the Jewish educational spectrum, on topics as diverse as Israel, Hebrew, inclusion issues for children with special needs, adult education, early childhood teaching techniques, day school topics, and much more. The conference will also have a number of 'Intensive' workshops that bring in experts from across the country for 5 hour workshops on critical topics for educators, luncheon sessions for educators in peer-based settings, musical performances, and an exhibit hall with organizations and vendors from many backgrounds of Jewish education.

Educators from across every field in the profession attend the NewCAJE conference, and the survey results are always highly positive. One educator remarked that her experience at the 2015 conference was '...time well spent furthering professional relationships and connections. I was very impressed with the conference and felt that I came away with many new ideas....' Another educator commented that she had a '...magnificent time, learned many new things, including content, skills, pedagogy and approaches...'

Join over other 400 Jewish educators and learn the newest best practices in the field of Jewish education at the 7th annual NewCAJE conference. For further information, email [rebecca@newcaje.org](mailto:rebecca@newcaje.org), like us on Facebook, and make sure you are on our mailing list. ✨

# Gather the People



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

## The Temple is not holy

Our Jewish history, both as an historic people and as a contemporary community, repeatedly reveals spiritual confusion when we build temples of brick and mortar. The commonplace experience is that we lose sight of the fact that *kirvat Adonai*, closeness to God, is not to be gained in any physical sense: We forget that there is no special place where God is more tangibly proximate. We forget that closeness to God is a spiritual phenomenon that comes about by studying and heeding the Torah in our day-to-day lives.

So the *raison d'être* of the Temple is not that it has the power to bring God nearer to us – changing God; but that it is a means to bring our own will nearer to God – changing ourselves. The purpose of the Temple is to enable us to discipline ourselves *together* as a people and a community with one will, to build a spiritually moral and materially fulfilling society, one whose hallmarks are compassion and justice.

We do this, becoming unified as one, by surrendering our will to God and *Torah*, which frees us from slavish devotion to social and individual materialism and sensuality and their consequences. Giving up our will to God and *Torah* fills us with a satisfying consciousness of our power to avoid that which is deathly and dead in favor of that which is alive and life-giving.

But *how* is the Temple to do this – either in the Sinai wilderness, in ancient Israel, or in our contemporary community?

We can begin to find answers to this question in the *Torah* reading *Pekudei*, which opens with the phrase: *eileh pekudei ha-mishkan* (Exodus 38:21) – “These are the *pekudei* of the *Mishkan*” (i.e., the Tabernacle).

But what, exactly, does *pekudei* mean?

It refers to virtually everything that belongs to the *Mishkan*, about which we can learn much from the *Torah* commentary of Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888). The entire list is too long to consider here in detail, but some of the main “furnishings” and contents include: The *Kodesh Kodashim* or Holy of Holies, in which is found the *Aron* or Ark containing the

*Eidut* or Testimony; the *Shulchan* or Table, with the loaves of bread; the *Menorah* or Lamp; the *Mizbeiach Nechoshet* or Copper (sacrificial) Altar; and the *Mizbeiach Zahav* or Golden (incense) Altar.

The *Mishkan* with all its furnishings and contents was created entirely out of the voluntary sacrifices of the people. Those who didn’t contribute forfeited their right to exist as Jews; in effect, one who failed to contribute to the community lost the right to be counted as one of the Israelite people.

Withal, the total spent on the *Mishkan* didn’t even begin to approach the national treasure spent on the later Temples – yet those Temples, for all their grandeur, didn’t approach the spiritual heights of the *Mishkan*. Only in the simple *Ohel Moeid*, the tent of meeting with God, was the *Shechinah*, as God’s palpable presence on earth, visible as the Cloud of Glory.

What is the purpose of the Sanctuary?

It’s certainly not meant to be a place of escape from earthly human conditions; instead it contains the means to uplift those conditions. It’s erected as a home for the *Torah*, which is to govern and thereby enhance all social life. The Sanctuary is the place in which we offer *ourselves* up to God and *Torah* through the offerings we bring. The offerings are not intended to be personal expressions of our thoughts and feelings; instead they represent the Sanctuary’s demands on us as a condition of *kirvat Adonai*, getting near to God. The Sanctuary is thus a model for all public and private activity, and in that sense it’s a place of learning and personal transformation.

How does that learning take place?

The Sanctuary itself does not bring God’s grace, but its design demonstrates to the people what is necessary to make the *Shechinah* present. The presence of the *Shechinah* is experienced in the blossoming of communal and national life. Thus the purpose of the Sanctuary is to provide a continuous spiritual education so that the people become an *Aron* for the *Torah*, which is the means to that blossoming.

What are the tools and the methods?

Let’s take a guided tour of the Sanctuary: The *Kodesh Kodashim* is in the rear to the west, with the *Aron* containing the *Luchot*, the Tablets of the Testimony, and a copy of the *Torah* compiled by Moses – the Law. The *Kodesh Kodashim* is the *source* of all holiness. Not because of some “Raiders of the Lost Ark” magic, but because the essence of holiness is that someone or something has been dedicated and consecrated to the special purpose of striving upwards to God and *Torah*.

In front of the *Kodesh Kodashim* are the *Menorah* on the south side and the *Shulchan* on the north side, symbolizing the enlightened mind and material well-being, respectively.

The *Menorah* represents the spirit of knowing and serving God to build up the world: It symbolizes a golden tree of knowledge, a unity of spiritual perfection and completion, the light signifying our God-given spirit of understanding and doing. The central stem symbolizes that there is a common source and purpose for our knowledge and action. Maintaining the lights signifies our need to derive clarity from the *Torah*. And the lights burn from evening until morning to enable the study of *Torah*, which is the essential foundation for action.

The *Shulchan* represents the idea that when *Torah* guides our focused industriousness, the result is not only spiritual meaning, but also material satisfaction and comfort. The Table is belted by a pure golden band, which teaches us that our materialism is to be restrained by holy purpose. Our material life is not to be guided exclusively by our selfish sensual appetites, but to be placed before God’s judgment. The loaves on the table represent communal brotherhood, cooperation and caring as the fundamental conditions for our material survival and success – not cutthroat competition, but unselfish sharing with others is the means.

The *Mizbeiach Zahav* is located between the *Menorah* and the *Shulchan*, opposite the *Aron*. It represents the union of spiritual and material life, earthly existence permeated by spirituality. What it directs as a practical matter is the complete sublimation of the selfish self of material acquisitiveness to God and godly purposes.

The *Mizbeiach Nechoshet* is used to raise human deeds up to God. The Altar represents *Hareil*, the Mount of God; it is in fact called *Har Sinai*, Mount Sinai. The square form of the Altar is a reminder to dedicate ourselves to free-willed morality, so that we are to be nothing like the nature cults. The lesson of the elevating offerings made on the Altar is that we are to overcome our physical appetites and live by the ideals of the *Torah*. We are to be elevated up to God by our own spiritual moral efforts.

The offering symbolizes commitment to giving up the life of an animal lived solely to preserve oneself and, instead, to live for one another through *Torah*. Different sacrificial animals express different intentions, depending on the particular form of atonement that one requires. A cow, for instance, represents commitment to duty, to be a *consistent* worker in God’s fields; a sheep represents a commitment to *submit* oneself, to be a loyal member of God’s flock. The purpose of the sacrifice is to free oneself of the animal within, to liberate oneself from the blind forces of nature. The sacrificial animal only symbolizes offering oneself up to God, to motivate

(see ben Asher, page 15)



## Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

### Jews don't need frying pans

A Jew growing up beneath the Mason Dixon line has a hard life. Especially when it comes to food. Looking back on my culinary life, it's amazing that I grew up as normal as I did. A Jew in the South was as gastronomically out of place as stuffed *kishke* in an ice cream store. All around me, friends and neighbors were frying everything in sight; steaks, chops, potatoes, onions, okra. A Southern cook without a heavy cast iron frying pan was like a nightingale without a song. While at my house my mama was stuffing and roasting a veal pocket. I almost developed a neurosis.

School classmates: "Teddy, boy did we have some great fried chicken last night.

Double dipped batter, you know. What did you have?

Honest answer: "Carrot kugel."

Public answer: "Oh, we fried up a roast. Took a while, you know."

Why did my mother insist on complicating my integration into 6th grade society? We were hopelessly divided by the kitchen wall. At school I ate the contents of my lunch bag in the coatroom. My Christian friends were fryers. We were roasters. It wasn't bad enough that we went to synagogue on Saturday and they churched on Sunday. Or while I slaved in Hebrew school, they played baseball. We ate weird dishes like *tsimmus*, *kanadlach*, stuffed veal pocket, Gefilte fish. And how could I ever explain Gefilte fish to my friend and neighbor Tommy Thompson, who thought a stuffed veal was a young cow who had eaten too much grass for supper. Another point of contrast between a shy, Jewish adolescent who wanted to pass as a native.

Grits was also a problem. They loved it. They even took cakes of it frigidly congealed in the lunch sack. My mother thought it was some kind of glue to patch the cracks in the sidewalk. "Oh sure we have grits all the time. I had two slices of bread smeared withgrits before I went to bed last night."

"On a what?"

"Uh, Colonial white bread, naturally. We love Colonial bread and grits" (not pumpernickel, the real receptacle of the nonexistent grits, which was really chopped liver).

Not only was I betraying my cultural



## Purim

BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

### In messianic era, Purim only holiday still celebrated

*Purim's* extraordinary fun-making masks and matches the extraordinary seriousness of the life and death issues behind it, while allowing for the healthy release of pent-up tension and emotion. After all, a threat of genocide hanging over a vulnerable people such as the Jews with a plot in place to terminate its existence in the vast Persian empire of antiquity was not to be taken lightly.

The salvation found through, interestingly and provokingly, an intermarried Jewish queen who happened to be, or was placed in a pivotal position to help her kin while in dire straits, adds an intriguing dimension to a drama whose historical veracity remains uncertain. However, the challenges and lessons contained in the fascinating Scroll of Esther have remained applicable throughout the Jewish saga which does not lack all that the human imagination, creatively and destructively, can conjure up.

The Rabbis have taught us that in the messianic era yet to come, of all the Jewish holidays only *Purim* will continue to be celebrated. Is it perhaps because we should never take Jewish survival for granted and need to always be on guard? Is that why God's name is not mentioned, even once in the scroll, a notable exception to all the other books in the Bible? Israel's first Prime Minister David



roots, I was turning into a pathological liar. Next thing you know I'd be humming *Onward Christian Soldiers*.

My pals came to school bragging about the charms of fried catfish. What hope did I have of exalting Gefilte fish? No bones? Tell them that my mama served it with a neat circle of boiled carrot atop each lump? I was hopelessly alienated. How was I ever gonna be the starting 3rd baseman if I ate Gefilte fish for supper and didn't dare reveal the contents of my lunch sack?

One odd place where my Jewish tummy joined theirs was chicken feet. At the local Chinese restaurant they were introduced to sweet, sticky, barbecue-flavored chicken feet. I leaped at the cultural connection.

(see Roberts, page 17)

Ben-Gurion stated that when the lion and the lamb will dwell together, he still would like to be the lion just in case...That is ample testimony to what our people have learned the tragic way. We are thus invited to ponder those unique features of a mesmerizing account in which Jews are called upon to act in God's name. Of course, the absence of the divine name does not necessarily imply God's silence nor indifference to such matters of supreme importance.

Curiously the leaders of the present Islamic Republic of Iran (once Persia), seeking hegemony in the Middle East and the Muslim world, have not given up in spite of the "deal" of "wiping Israel off the map." This time with the aid of nuclear power – well aware of Israel's mortal vulnerability given its very limited and limiting geography – to conclude what Haman and Hitler began. Has not the Haman-like, and even the more dangerous leaders of Iran, read the Scroll of Esther and taken to heart the fate of those who seek to destroy us? Denying the Holocaust they seek to deny Israel's existence, and if necessary to hasten its demise through a "real Holocaust."

Queen Esther was forced to hide her Jewish identity otherwise she could not get into the palace. Our beautiful and heroic Esther had to be prodded nonetheless by wise and courageous Mordechai – after all she was only human and young – to risk her life by appearing uninvited before King Ahsheverus. However, she did perform, and well at that, forever earning an honored place in the pantheon of Jewish heroines and heroes.

Esther's people are not yet fully safe but are finally capable of defending their lives in a way that was not possible before. Remember, experienced uncle Mordechai engaged in successful counter plots. Self-defense is a top Jewish and human *Mitzvah* particularly in our post-Holocaust era. We have already paid a very high price, and thus "Never Again!" is more than a slogan. It is a sacred imperative beyond blotting out Haman's name at the raucous *Megillah* reading. A sovereign Jewish state and an influential American Jewish community make a critical difference.

May we act and pray so that the contemporary Iranian plot will meet the fate of oblivion of the early prototype, of biblical Amalek's descendants, while we are ever vigilant. Our ultimate goal, so elusive for so long, remains a peaceful world of *Shalom* through the sacred task of *Tikkun Olam's* healing, hope and harmony for all of God's children.

Rabbi Israel Zoberman is the spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach. ✨

# South Florida Culture Round Up

BY HAROLD JACOBSON & ROSE KLEINER

## Boca Raton *shul* offers unique educational, dramatic and cantorial arts programming

Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan the founder of the Reconstructionist movement once posited the importance of the Jewish Community Center as an essential component of the organized Jewish community in North America because it did not restrict participation by religious affiliation.

It is a Conservative synagogue in Boca Raton, Fla., B'nai Torah, which best exemplifies Kaplan's rationale through its extraordinary rich adult education emphasis on Jewish culture, the State of Israel and the cantorial arts, to name but a few of its diverse interests. The synagogue's outreach is directed to all members and they have responded positively in the Boca Raton area and environs.

Over the years the writers of the following report have had the pleasure of being present at several of these programs during sojourns in South Florida and have been amazed at the solid attendance, sometimes approaching a thousand people.

Our first encounter was several years ago when a number of Israeli cantors from the Tel Aviv Cantorial Institute, appeared in the synagogue's great hall to perform a wide variety of Jewish liturgical pieces before a vast and enthusiastic audience. (The synagogue is presenting a new batch of Israeli trained cantors this winter 2016). A spokesman for the cantors told the audience that they had come not only to entertain and inspire but also to look for jobs!

The synagogue has taken note of the increasing presence of the distaff side in the cantorial department and will be featuring a representative selection of female cantors and soloists later this year who will give their interpretation of classical synagogue melodies as well as other musical renderings both ancient and avant-garde.

B'nai Torah does not hesitate to offer programming that some would suggest is rather esoteric – such as the 2015 adaptation of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's Yiddish poetry set to original music and accompanied by visual depictions of art forms that facilitated and embellished the intent and scope

## BBYO

(continued from page 12)

Fibrosis who has taken her diagnosis not as a life sentence but as an inspiration to help others and live her life to the fullest. Sunday night we celebrated the convention's success with a concert headlined by Jason Derulo. Being at International Convention, I knew who I was, identity wasn't even a question.

*Sydney Glazier, daughter of Steve and Rebecca Glazier, is a junior at Carmel High School, in Camel, Ind. She is involved in BBYO, DECA, and plans to study business in college. She and her family are members of Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis. ☆*



of Heschel's poetic genius. The female musicians and singers (several were synagogue soloists) who participated in this extravaganza read the Yiddish poetry and offered both traditional Jewish melodies and modern syncopated rhythms.

The appearance, however, of Cantor Meir Finkelstein at B'nai Torah on Jan. 17, 2016 was sui generis because it gave the capacity audience an opportunity to be exposed to the rich musical heritage of a cantor who had once served the very synagogue at which he was now lecturing and singing – in order to tell his life story. Other cantors will be invited to do the same in the future but this inaugural foray by Finkelstein has set a very high standard.



Finkelstein

Finkelstein explained that he was born in Israel in 1951 to a musical family and that his father Zvi nurtured both Meir and an older brother in the traditions of the cantorate and at age 4 Meir left Israel with his family to go England where he father had accepted an important cantorial post.

Precocious in his youth aided and abetted by his father's tutoring and habit of continually playing recordings of the world's greatest cantors, Meir instinctively absorbed hazzanut and began his professional career at age 14 in Glasgow and then served brief stints in several English and continental synagogues before settling in London where he became the cantor at the famous Golders Green congregation in London.

What made the narrative he was reading especially engaging was the way Finkelstein glided from prose recitation to singing selections from some of the 200 musical compositions he has executed over the years and which his rich tenor voice and impeccable Hebrew pronunciation delivered with precision and charm.

Parts of his compositional skills were acquired as a young student at England's

## BEN ASHER

(continued from page 13)

oneself to return to *Torah* rather than remain enslaved to uncontrolled sensuality and materialism. The sacrifice is not thought to have any effect on God.

So when we put these furnishings and contents together, what do we have?

At the heart is the "Place of the Word," the Ark, in the Holy of Holies that receives the *Torah* as the Law of God – *Torah* from the root *hey-resh-hey*, meaning the seed of life – which is the source of all holiness. Then we have the symbols of spiritual and material development that flow from the *Torah*: It is the *Torah*, the Tree of Life of the mind and spirit that is represented in the *Menorah*. It is the *Torah* that brings to us spiritually fulfilling material wellbeing, which is represented by the Table with its loaves. The Golden Altar is a reminder to make no artificial boundaries between spiritual and material life. The Copper Altar is there as the vehicle of practical commitment to strive upwards to God in daily life. And on the east side, the entrance, always open for the nation to be refined and strengthened spiritually and materially by the Word.

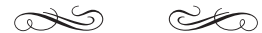
What are some of the lessons of building temples of bricks and mortar?

The Temple and the day-to-day life of the community and the nation are not to be separate spheres but entirely integrated, paid for by the people. The Temple is to be the seat of learning – not a sanctuary in the sense of escape but a seminary that prepares us to strive upwards to God every day.

The work of building the Sanctuary is so holy that it's not called *melacha*, the usual Hebrew word for work, but *avodah*, the word for holy service. Yet even the work of building the Sanctuary is to cease on *Shabbat*. And the 39 basic categories of work that are forbidden on *Shabbat* are those that are required to build the Sanctuary.

From all this we learn that the Temple is not holy in itself. It's only a way to holiness, a teaching guide that we pay for and sanctify by dedicating and consecrating ourselves to the sole source of holiness – the *Torah*.

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



prestigious Royal College of Music where he majored in composition, voice and piano. He noted two things about his  
(see Jacobson/Kleiner, page 17)



## Media Watch

BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

### Truth Be Told

Only ten episodes of NBC's *Truth Be Told* were aired, but the D.J. Nash series was on long enough to leave an impression of a Jewish ethics professor who was not very strong on ethics or on identification with other Jews.

The series focused on two couples who are neighbors and best friends – Mitch, the ethics professor (Mark-Paul Gosselaar) and attorney Tracy (Vanessa Lachy), who are the parents of four-year-old Sadie; and the more recently married Russell (Tone Bell), a comedian prone to histrionics, and his more grounded and religious pediatrician wife Angie (Bresha Webb). Tracy is Filipina in background and it is suggested that Mitch is Jewish. Russell and Angie are African Americans.

All four like to pontificate and to act out – and act up – their stances on every issue from religion to racism to worker justice. Often one or the other character will erroneously cry racism or other injustices, reluctantly if at all admitting his or her error. And when it comes to everyday needs and desires, our principal couples are not above shirking responsibility or scheming against others.

In the pilot episode Tracy and Mitch covet Sadie's friend's babysitter when they desire to attend a Jay-Z concert to which Russell and Angie have invited them. Writer/producer Nash makes sure that the employers of that coveted babysitter are an Orthodox Jewish couple with several daughters, about whom Tracy can speculate (with hostility or envy?) that "they are just going to keep trying until they have a boy" but that they would be better off to "Just play catch with your daughters."

Mitch decides that he is "just going to ask them Jew to Jew" whether he can borrow their babysitter, since the "concert is on Friday night, the Sabbath, and they don't go out Friday night." Tracy wonders whether Mitch's calling their neighbors "they" is offensive, but the ethics professor assures her that he is not talking about "all Orthodox Jewish people who for religious reasons don't go out on Friday nights," just about the Goldsteins." When his wife corrects him that the name is Goldman, he decides that not knowing their name is "offensive." When the Goldmans kindly give Mitch the babysitter's number, he gleefully dances back to Tracy singing "I've got the number" to the tune of *Hava Nagila*.

It is telling in that first episode that after five years of marriage Mitch and Tracy appear to be discussing Jewish rituals for the first time, and that ethics professor Mitch was advising Russell, who is upset that the concert tickets were procured by Angie's ex-boyfriend, to spy his wife's phone texts.

Nash depicts the Orthodox couple as (a bit) more grounded and gracious than his principals. In the third episode Tracy asks Mitch with joy, "Guess which one of our extremely religious neighbors has agreed to do a babysitter share?" (Evangelical Angie, who is reluctant to have children, expresses relief that Tracy is referring to the Orthodox Jewish neighbors and not to her.) Yet Russell complains that he gets "Avi Goldman's stink-eye" every Tuesday morning when Avi's recycling bin ends up on Russell's side of the street. It does seem in one opening scene that Avi is rather suspicious, even wary, of Russell who doesn't help things by threatening to steal Avi's toothbrush. Stressed out when he has to take over babysitting for his daughter and for Maya, one of the Orthodox couple's daughters, Mitch brings the girls to Russell's home in search of a video. There, Maya wanders into the bathroom and sees Russell nude in the shower.

The two couples discuss whether the incident should be related to Avi. Evangelical Angie comes across as disrespectful rather than funny when she suggests, "We just put one piece of bacon in that little Jewish girl, that's all she's going to be talking about." Mitch-the-ethics-professor urges that they immediately level with Avi, not so much because it is the right and truthful thing to do, but out of concern that the friends have a "very small window in which to come clean."

When Avi arrives to pick up his daughter, Maya says that she saw something for the first time: C-Span. Most of our gang assumes that if *this* news upsets Avi, who says that his wife Dvora "is very protective" of Maya in not allowing her to watch television, then relating the shower incident should be avoided. The wives send Avi off quickly, with Angie shouting "Shalom" and later observing that it "means both 'hello' and 'goodbye'; it's their 'aloha.'" It's interesting that Mitch does not comment on the use of "their" in another dismissive line given to Angie. One wonders whether an episode exploring his ambivalence toward his Orthodox neighbors was in the works, much as an episode by Nash and Carla Banks Waddles dealt with Sadie's reluctance to play with a Filipina doll that her mother gave her.

Mitch and Russell soon find out that Avi has fired the male babysitter (until then a happy-go-lucky pied piper with a guitar) because Maya has drawn a detailed picture

of a nude man. (Avi uses a Yiddish word for the male organ and Russell says, "Oy.") Yet Tracy still advises that they not tell Avi what occurred. Angie suggests that Mitch and Tracy hire the dismissed babysitter.

Mitch and Russell decide to tell Avi and Dvora the truth, and visit their home (decorated with a painting of rebbes), in which Russell cracks, "The fact that you don't eat pork leads me to question their decision-making process." (Here, ethical failure is outright rationalized by a sneer.) But Avi and Dvora are forgiving people, even if a bit peeved, and attend the Saturday birthday party, carrying in a gift (all on the Sabbath?).

It would seem, however, that no one has thought to apologize to the babysitter, who has become so despondent that he doesn't show up at the party to entertain. (Then again, in an episode by David Regal, Mitch delays removing his on-line rant against a restaurant owner after he quickly learns that the man did not commit a racist act.) The singing and dancing are gladly taken up by Russell, until a split seam in his costume reveals a certain private part to all the parents and children, who flee the party. Before running outside with Dvora and Maya, Avi blurts out, "At least he's circumcised."

One could almost discern biblical-like retribution here, where failure to tell the truth results in the same mistake being repeated before a much larger audience.

Speaking about the Bible (and God), *Truth Be Told* did devote an episode, written by Aaron Shure, to these very themes.

When young Sadie overhears Russell and Angie talking about going to church, she asks: "What's church?" When Angie describes church as a place to "go to pray and be closer to God," Angie further asks, "What's God?" Mitch is annoyed by the questions because, as Tracy puts it, he "has no faith in faith." Questions of faith are further raised – or, rather, windows to them are further opened – when, at Sadie's preschool, her favorite pet chicken dies, and the know-it-all teacher chooses to be honest about it! "He's dead," she tells the kids and parents. "And when you die, you don't come back."

Mitch is distressed because, as a know-it-all in his own right, he had planned to teach Sadie about death at a more convenient time – after she had learned about religion once her ears were pierced. Tracy confronts the teacher, "How dare you destroy our children's innocence." The teacher responds – maybe even taunts (in a rather awkward sentence), but not without insight: "Parents who are the most vocal are often the most struggling with their own unresolved issues."

Once back home, Tracy, who was raised  
(see Gertel, page 18)



# Book Review

REVIEWED BY SUSAN LERNER

## Jewish women interpret their lives through lens of their faith

*Chapters of the Heart: Jewish Women Sharing the Torah of Our Lives.* Edited by Sue Levi Elwell and Nancy Fuchs Kreimer. Oregon: Cascade Books: An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, Nov. 2013. 204 Pages. \$25 Paperback.

The beauty of an anthology is that it gives the reader the particular pleasure of sampling the work of many authors writing about a single subject. Each contributing essay brings its author's singular opinions and voice.

On the cover of *Chapters of the Heart* is printed a subtitle: *Jewish Women Sharing the Torah of Our Lives*, and in the book's introduction, editors Sue Levi Elwell and Nancy Fuchs Kreimer write about the process of gathering the essays that make up the volume. They approached some of their professional Jewish friends and asked each to "open her heart, to delve into her considerable Jewish vocabulary, and to tell us what she found" in order to show how Jewish texts or traditions helped, or didn't help, the author make meaning of her life.

Although raised in a secular household, my father sent me to Orthodox day school. Although my husband and I fall on the "not very" part of the spectrum of observance, we, in turn, sent our children to a Jewish day school. I try to use my incongruous Jewish background to my advantage. I make a point of observing those around me who come from different traditions within the faith to broaden my understanding. I've attended services and events at each of Indianapolis's congregations, from Reform to Chabad and wherever I go I make a point of trying to learn something. It is from this place of curiosity that I opened *Chapters of the Heart*.

Of the 20 essays in the book, the ones in which the author used vivid details to describe a specific time in her life were the ones that stayed with me the longest. Ellen Frankel writes about the biblical

trope of barrenness among ancestral women and how the grief and shame she experienced in her own life came after her emergency hysterectomy at the age of 26. This changed her interpretation of these stories. Sue Levi Elwell gives a vivid glimpse into the state of reproductive rights in 1970 by writing of being 22 and needing an abortion. Because there were no rabbis from whom this author could seek council, her piece is intriguing because she illustrates how, at that particular time and from her vantage point, her faith failed her. Rabbi Elwell writes that it was this early experience that spurred her to later train to become a volunteer chaplain at Planned Parenthood.

In some of the essays women write about how they've used Jewish texts and teachings in their attempts to smooth the edges on their troubled marriages and relationships with children. In others they write about how their faith guided them as they entered the later stages of life.

The pieces in *Chapters in the Heart*, with the exception of one, were penned by liberal women in their 60s and 70s who come from the Reform and Reconstruction movements. There is, to the editors' credit, one piece written by a woman who doesn't "look like all the others." In "My Interfaith Friendships: Blessings and Challenges," the Orthodox Blu Greenberg writes of her positive and negative interactions over the years with Christian and Muslim women. She tells her stories from the perspective of a woman who holds up Israel as key to the survival of post-Holocaust Jews.

The essay that follows Ms. Greenberg's is "The Remembrance of These Things." Here Margaret Holub uses aspects of the story of the Exodus and rituals from the Seder to explore the concepts of privilege and power. Near the end she writes, "I am beginning to participate in the call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions to end the occupation of Palestine." Ms. Holub writes eloquently and earnestly and in direct contrast to Ms. Greenberg. The juxtaposition of the pieces was a provocative, bold move on the part of the editors. While I applaud their decision to include Ms. Greenberg's perspective, hers was the lone traditional point of view amidst the liberal and as I read the anthology, I wished for a more balanced array of voices.

In the introduction the editors wrote that they tried to rid the authors' prose of the "stained glass" tones of the pulpit voice (most of the contributors are rabbis). When writing about spirituality, it's tricky to sidestep clichéd, sentimental language. In order for me to connect more directly with these women's stories, I wished the editors had used even more red pen on the authors' essays which sometimes fell

(see Lerner, page 18)

## ROBERTS

(continued from page 14)

My *bubbe* (grandmother) had been making chicken soup with only chicken feet for years. Not quite the same dish, but an area where I could truthfully praise our similarities. Of course, I didn't mention that Bubbe made a thin, watery gruel that resembled Chinese Dim Sum like dishwater resembled Clam Chowder. But like the book of Proverbs says or maybe should say, chicken feet is chicken feet.

*The humor of Ted*, The Scribbler on the Roof, appears in newspapers around the US, on National Public Radio, and numerous web sites. 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). ★



## JACOBSON/KLEINER

(continued from page 15)

study there. First, he was the first cantor in London to enter the Royal College and that a generous benefactor and admirer paid for all his expenses at the music school. His sensitive dexterity on the piano which he perfected there brought an immediacy and fluidity to his cantorial selections.

On several occasions during his performance Finkelstein was expertly accompanied by Udi Spielman, the gifted cantorial incumbent at B'nai Torah, and by members of the synagogue's choir, which included a pre-teen female soloist who breathed youthful elegance and simplicity into a Finkelstein composition. The cantor also paid homage to his wife by showing her portrait and reporting that after obtaining a law degree she has moved into a real estate career in Houston.

Between vigorous renditions of his best known works, especially his "Ledor Vador" which drew an immediate audience response, Finkelstein used his screen to show the photographs of the various synagogues in which he had served in at least five countries in Europe and North America. Audience members reacted quickly with applause when they saw their own synagogues depicted on the screen. After a lengthy trajectory of travel and work in Toronto's Beth Tzedec, and in Detroit's Shaarey Tzedec, Finkelstein has settled into Beth Yeshurun, a large Conservative synagogue in Houston where he says, the musical arts are flourishing.

If he hasn't thought about it already, Cantor Finkelstein should consider transforming his narrative into book form and publishing it with a disk containing selections of his favorite cantorial works. ★

**GERTEL**

(continued from page 16)

Catholic, wants to teach Sadie about heaven. Angie can't wait to take any opportunity to evangelize, but she discovers that she might have to begin with her church-attending husband, who cites Eastern mysticism and astrology, alongside the Bible, as "paths to truth." Tracy sighs, "I'd like to give Sadie religion. It's just [that] we're a mixed faith couple." Glaring at her nodding-to-New Age husband, Angie wonders aloud whether that is true of her marriage, as well. Indeed, Russell will lose some of his joy at church-going because Angie's rebukes stifle him.

Complicating matters is the presence at the dinner table of the boyfriend of Mitch's sister – the representative (?) young Jewish woman, by the way, whom the series depicted as constantly asking Mitch for money and even more constantly sleeping around. This boyfriend is a self-proclaimed "psychic" with a police record for embezzlement. His observation that Heaven is a "metaphor" roils Angie. For her part, Tracy wants to talk to Sadie about "Heaven, God and Jesus." Worn down by negotiating with his wife, Mitch implores, "I gave you Heaven, I gave you God. Work with me."

In the end Sadie asks for prayers, and an interfaith service of sorts convenes around her bed. When Angie is asked to participate she wants to "start filling the tub" for a baptism and does not let Mitch shush her when she invokes the first name of the Christian savior. Mitch adds a "Barukh Atta" ("Blessed are You") from the Hebrew prayers, but Sadie pipes up, "You're scaring me." But Mitch is happy that Sadie finds comfort with the prayers (the Christian ones, anyway) and that Tracy finds peace of mind in an unresolved matter after consulting with the (albeit seedy) psychic.

Was the writer telling us directly or in spite of himself that Angie was the only one with integrity enough to address a spiritual issue, and that Mitch's knee-jerk atheism not only deprived his wife of her Catholic faith but also pushed her toward questionable alternatives? In an episode written by Shure (12-6-15) Mitch himself becomes a "minister" (!) with a "laser-printed certificate from a non-denominational ministry in the Bahamas" when asked to perform marriages, but hesitatingly recognizes that the couple must call off the wedding.

Paradoxically, Angie's character was the most humorous (except in the two "Jewish" comments cited above) because viewers wondered whether she could show restraint given her deeply-held views. The cast was likable, some of the writing was clever, and the show had the

laudable goal of reaching across racial and ethnic differences. But most of the characters, with the exception of Angie, were generally concerned about what looked right and what others would think of them, when they thought about ethics at all. They would have been worthy of more respect – and laughs – had they tried to do the right thing rather than to avoid it. And maybe the series would have lasted longer.

*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. ★*



**LERNER**

(continued from page 17)

into generalizations and platitude.

In *Chapters of the Heart*, Jewish women interpret the gut-wrenching stories of their lives through the lens of their faith. It's an intriguing read for all who are interested in exploring Judaism and learning how others do the same.

*Susan Lerner is a freelance writer living in Indianapolis. She is working towards an MFA in Creative Writing and posts book reviews at <http://booklerner.blogspot.com>. ★*



**KAPLAN/RECIPE**

(continued from page 19)

with prongs instead, and slide it back and forth gently.

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

**Orange Glazed Sabra Sponge Cake**

- 1/2 cup unsalted pareve margarine or
- 1/4 cup + 2 Tbsp. oil
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. orange rind
- 2 Tbsp. Sabra liqueur
- 3 separated eggs
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 cup potato starch
- 3 Tbsp. Sabra liqueur
- 4 tsp. orange rind

Preheat oven to 325°F. In a bowl, cream margarine or oil and sugar. Add 1 tsp.

orange rind, 2 Tbsp. Sabra and egg yolks and blend. In another bowl, beat egg whites until stiff, gradually adding 2 Tbsp. sugar. Add to creamed mixture gently, then stir in potato starch. Pour into greased tube pan. Bake in preheated oven 45 minutes to one hour. Let cool for at least an hour then gently remove to a plate. Meantime, in a bowl, combine orange juice, 3 Tbsp. Sabra liqueur and 4 tsp. orange rind. While cake is still hot, punch holes around cake with a toothpick and pour over glaze.

**Miriam's Banana Cake**

*This is from one of my close friends in Overland Park, Kansas, who is a really creative cook and is now 88 years old.*

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

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

**Pan di Spagna**

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

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

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

(see Kaplan's bio. on page 11) ★



## My Kosher Kitchen

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

### Passover just isn't Passover without it!

It's an integral part of *Pesach* for many people. There is no special plate. There isn't even a *bracha* over it! Can you guess this well-known part of *Pesach*? It's sponge cake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The best pan for a sponge cake is a tube pan with removable rim. Thus the central tube gives support to the batter.

In Israel, many old timers use a wonder pot (*sir pella*). It is basically a sponge cake pan which sits upon a coned base and then has a lid with strategic holes around its top to let out the steam. It is placed on a burner atop the stove for baking. One of the large supermarkets in Jerusalem, last pre-Pesach, carried three different sizes of wonder pots for Passover (dairy, meat and *parve*) so you didn't have to *kasher* your oven before the holiday.

A regular sponge cake pan should be

## Jewish Theater

BY HAROLD JACOBSON & ROSE KLEINER

### Avi Hoffman stars in world premiere of *Unlikely Heroes*

Fifty-seven year old Avi Hoffman, whose trilingual command of English, Hebrew, and Yiddish, added to his supreme acting skills, have made him a unique figure on the American stage and in film and television. Among his notable performances (and there are too many to rehearse in this limited space) is his portrayal of Willy Lowman in the world's first Yiddish version of *Death of a Salesman*. No matter what language he is working in, Hoffman's interpretive depth is extraordinary.

What is also extraordinary is the origin of *Unlikely Heroes* the touching drama in which Hoffman starred in Boca Raton, Fla., throughout February 2016 and who knows – perhaps on Broadway thereafter? Ordinarily, theater scripts are generally crafted by professionals but as Hoffman relates, the author of *Unlikely Heroes*, Dr. Charles Gluck, (now a retired physician with a long love of theater) approached him four years ago with a manuscript of unusual dimensions – and Hoffman was hooked.

In this play Hoffman, accompanied by a highly accomplished and experienced



ungreased. A preheated 350°F. oven is the best heat for baking a sponge cake.

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

(see Kaplan/recipe, page 18)



Cast of *Unlikely Heroes* – Avi Hoffman (front right).

team of actors, is virtually on stage throughout the entire one act play as he interprets the role of David, a tough Jewish businessman whose vocabulary ranges from vulgarity to reasonableness in the first half of the drama to poignancy and vulnerability in the second.

David exploits his younger brother Leo who works with him not as a partner but as a subaltern, and deals rather condescendingly with his childless wife, his sister, sister-in-law and young nephew, who lives in his own alternate mental universe. Hoffman's professionalism in interacting with these members of the family demonstrates his uncanny ability to calibrate his speech patterns to accommodate their different personalities.

Despite attempts on everyone's part to celebrate the warmth and happiness of the family "compact", an inconvenient lie, Hoffman's character undergoes a physical trauma of almost unimaginable magnitude when he learns that he is suffering from kidney failure that can be remedied only by a transplant. From this point on in the play Hoffman's David, no longer the brash self-assured mogul, is transformed into the supplicant looking for the life-saving organ that only members of his family can provide.

His wife uses the annual Thanksgiving Day dinner to gently announce the problem and make a plea for the replacement kidney. The response David receives from his siblings is not calculated to inspire belief in the closeness of the family unit. In fact, the discussion becomes very heated and harsh words bounce off David as he retires within himself as the prospect of his own imminent demise registers on his consciousness.

It is at this crisis moment of the play that a new and surprising element obtrudes which casts a totally different challenge against David and the whole family, as if his ailment was not sufficiently lethal. We cannot, in good conscience, reveal what the new challenge is except to say that it is unexpected and yet in retrospect, a telling commentary on the human condition. ✨

# I.U.'s Hooshir – Jewish a cappella

## The Jewish Post & Opinion

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Indianapolis, IN 46260

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On Feb. 14, Hooshir, Indiana University's Jewish a cappella group, performed an inspiring concert at Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (IHC). It was wonderful to not only experience the harmonious sounds of their singing but to see young people working together in a cohesive group to perform, entertain and educate. Their enthusiasm was contagious! *Hooshlove*, their new CD is a must have! It can be purchased from their website: [www.hooshir.com](http://www.hooshir.com).

Hooshir (from combining Hoosier with *shir*, the Hebrew word for song). They have performed in other cities around the United States such as New York, Chicago, Washington DC, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Akron, Louisville, Miami, Hollywood, Key Largo, and Los Angeles. Hooshir has had the honor of sharing the stage with Six13 and The Maccabeats, as well as opening for *Matisyahu* in April 2015.

Although not all of the singers in the group are Jewish and not all are music students, they are all students at Indiana University. These students have come to Bloomington, Ind., from many different cities in the U.S., and although some are majoring in music, the rest are working on a wide range of different majors.



Hooshir performing at IHC.

When asked what they do when singers graduate, they responded that they hold auditions at the beginning of the new school year to replace them. They practice about 10 hours per week and this does not count the time to travel and perform concerts, which is about two per month. This also does not count additional time when one or more of them are composing new songs. That's a big time commitment for students who have classes, homework and exams and hopefully a social life.

Four different members of the group have leadership responsibilities. They are: Director, Becky Mann; Music director, Isabel Carton; Business director, Orin Reynolds; and Publicity manager, Jessie Cohen.

From their website: *Hooshir won the Kol Haolam National Collegiate Jewish A Cappella Championship in both 2013 and 2014. Josh Meliker won the award for best beatboxer at Kol Haolam in 2013. Gloria Bangiola won the "Best Arrangement" award in 2013 for her arrangement of "Mishaela", and Becky Mann won the "Best Arrangement" award in 2014 for her original song, "Oseh Shalom". In March 2015, Hooshir had the honor of returning to the competition as the featured performers during the judge's deliberation.*

*The group was formed in 2006 after the White House called Rabbi Sue Laikin Silberberg, the rabbi at Indiana University's*

*Helene G. Simon Hillel Center, to ask whether IU had a Jewish A Cappella group that could perform at the White House Hanukkah party. Rabbi Sue replied that such a group did exist. It did not. Singers from Straight No Chaser and Ladies First, the all-male and all-female IU A Cappella groups at the time, were brought together to form Hooshir.*

*Hooshir sings a mix of Jewish music, secular Israeli pop music, and American pop music and standards. Groups such as Pentatonix and Tizmoret have served as inspirations for Hooshir. The members of Hooshir are linked by a desire to share their love of song. ★*

