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Cover art by
Rabbi Yitzchok Mouly
(see About the Cover, p.3).

Mouly 67

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SAVING LIVES IN ISRAEL

Editorial

Five years ago I wrote about some people who lived through very challenging childhoods but in spite of that were able to accomplish major achievements as adults. I had also seen a video about “using our pain to help us grow.” It was posted on the Facebook profile of David Wolpe, senior rabbi of a Sinai Temple in Los Angeles (www.sinaitemple.org). The video wasn’t about him but he has experienced major health challenges in his life and knows firsthand about pain. He has authored at least eight books and two that include this subject are *Why Faith Matters* and *Making Loss Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times*.

Rabbi Wolpe says, “It’s an uncomfortable truth of life, but I think everyone realizes that difficulty and challenges and pain are what grow our souls. It’s not that we seek them out. It’s not that we welcome them, but we can use them to make ourselves better, to grow closer to what is best in ourselves, to each other and to God.”

Recently I have come across more examples of this from others and I will quote from them. One was in the Sunday, May 7th *Parade Magazine* where Stephanie Stephens interviews Emmy and Golden Globe winning actor Jeffrey Tambor, age 72. His most recent success is his role in Amazon’s series *Transparent*. He says that as a child he went to Hebrew school on Sundays at a conservative synagogue, Temple Beth Shalom in San Francisco.

Tambor has written a memoir coming out this month titled, *Are You Anybody?* Stephens asks him, “Is there one thing in life you’d like to undo?” He answered, “No, and I’ll tell you why. All merits and all mistakes produce all the colors on your palette, and the interesting thing about acting or any art is that the mistakes are as valuable as the merits. So I’ve gotten great lessons from errors in my life.”

Right after reading this I watched Oprah Winfrey interview B.J. Miller. Twenty-six years ago at age 19 as a student at Princeton, one Sunday night after Thanksgiving vacation, he and two friends decided to climb the ladder on a commuter train for fun. He was the first and when he reached the top he got close to power lines and was met with 11,000 volts of electricity that entered his body through the metal watch on his left arm.

Miller, who was 6 feet 5 inches tall at that time was severely burned and ended up losing both legs below the knee and his left forearm. Today he is a hospice doctor at the Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco where he works to ease patients’ physical and emotional suffering at the

About the Cover

Tree of Life – Summer
By Rabbi Yitzchok Mouly



Y. Mouly
Photo by
Marko Dashe

One of my most repeated images, the Tree of Life, is a theme I keep coming back to. Tree of Life is taken from a tree in a national park not too far from where I live. I was searching for a while to find an isolated tree, and finally found this one. I love the contrast of the strong bold trunk and form, with the fine details of the outer branches.

Torah is our tree of life with the strength and nuance to guide us through life. Represented here full of life on a colored background, this was my first time working with silk, both challenging and rewarding.

As a child Rabbi Yitzchok Mouly’s upbringing was off the beaten path. Raised by former hippies, Mouly was exposed to far more color than one would expect in the rigorously Orthodox Chassidic community. Mouly’s formal education in day schools in Australia and later at the Rabbinical College of America did not include formal art classes but his inner passion yearned for expression. After dabbling in various forms of art, Mouly found an expression for his creativity in the silkscreen process.

Mouly’s art contrasts strong Judaic and Chassidic images with vibrant bold colors to create a startling combination which he describes as “Chassidic Pop Art”. Mouly’s art reveals that the essence of Chassidic thought is far from black and white. Under the black hat there is a wealth of vibrant colorful energy waiting to be released.

Yitzchok Mouly also teaches art classes and will come to your city on request. He is the founder of The Creative Soul and lives in Hillside N.J., together with his wife Batsheva and six children. See more of his work on his website: moulyart.com. ✨

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end of their lives. He walks, hikes, and bikes on carbon-fiber prosthetics that look like supple metallic bones.

Oprah asked him, “At what point were you able to look back and see the beauty this accident brought into your life?”

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He responded, “It took a while but there were moments even in the hospital where you can’t believe you are alive, you can’t believe all this effort, devotion and human innovation is going on around you to help you survive. Beauty wasn’t out of reach immediately but until I could feel it in my (see Editorial, page 5)

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

Belief

I recently visited a relative who has serious health issues. He told me that even the “good” doctors are only giving him another 10 years to live.

I suggested that he ask the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* for a blessing. He agreed. How do we ask the Rebbe today? There is no natural way. The Rebbe has been hidden from our eyes for more than 20 years. However, we believe that the Rebbe is still with us and helping and guiding us. But now our communication is not in a natural way, but supernatural and miraculous.

One way is to write a letter to the Rebbe online. We opened his computer and went to www.igrot.com. *Igrot* is Hebrew for letters. At this website one can send a letter to the Rebbe and receive a letter in response. He typed in his Hebrew name and mother’s name. I suggested that he ask for a blessing for his health, but he decided to write something else. Then he clicked on “send”. In a split second we already had an answer. The web site opened up one of the volumes of the published letters from the Rebbe. On the screen appeared two pages of the book, and we began to read.

I was amazed The Rebbe wrote that even if someone had been a non-believer all of his life, if at the end of his life he repented, his soul will go to Heaven and he will have a portion in the world to come. How did this website know that my relative had been a non-believer for most of his life and was now worried about facing the end? A miracle!

However, my relative was not impressed. He said “Look! Now you can have a good time! You can go to McDonalds! Just make sure that you repent right before you die.”

Now I understood. Why did my relative decide to ignore this miracle? I think that he understood that if he admitted that there are miracles and that we have a Creator, he would have to give up some of his worldly pleasures. He would only be able to go to *kosher* restaurants.

What a shame! True, an observant Jew cannot eat at non-*kosher* restaurants, but so what! I personally do not miss McDonalds. The food that my wife and I prepare at home is much healthier, and tastes better. Plus there are many outstanding *kosher* restaurants.

On the other hand, if you believe in *Hashem* (G-d) and learn His *Torah*, you will be able to enjoy the really good life.

Maggid

BY RABBI HERBERT HOROWITZ



The Sefira Bridge

The jury was being selected. The attorneys were questioning perspective jurors. It was Goldberg’s turn to be questioned. He answered all the questions in a forthright manner and was about to be selected. He interrupted the Judge and said “Judge, there is one thing you should know, on me you can’t count!”

Counting is a major part of life. We count our money, our possessions, our good fortune and we count the days, months and years. We do this on wall calendars, pocket calendars and now on our smart phones.

Today (May 9th) is the 28th day of the counting of the *Omer*. Tomorrow is 29 days since Passover, known as *Pesach Sheini*. Where does this counting period come from? Why is it a significant part of the Jewish calendar? The *Torah* commands us to count, it is Biblical, “*Sheva Shabatot Temimot Tehiyana Of Mimacharat Hashviyit Tisperu Chamishim Yom*” which translates: Seven weeks you shall count from the 2nd night of Passover until you reach the 50th day, after seven weeks – *Shavuot*.

Sefira is linked to three items pertaining to the *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple). The first is the *Omer* Sacrifice or Barley Sacrifice that was brought on the 16th of *Nissan*. The second is *Chadash* – New Wheat, which is not to be eaten from the 16th of *Nissan* until the year is completed the following *Pesach*. The third are the *Shtei Lechem* – two loaves of bread made from wheat which is brought on *Shavuot* as the first offering to God known as *Bikurim*.

Barley is usually fed to beasts and is the lowest form of grain; while wheat that is brought as an offering to God on *Shavuot*



What are some of the really good things? True love, happiness and fulfillment.

Take for example true love and happiness. What is true love? Love that can last forever. If you are secular, you can fall in love, and get married. But this love usually will not last. Why? You love your partners because of the pleasure they are giving you. But after a while you get less pleasure and automatically you feel less love.

I remember growing up without *Torah* and with very little happiness. What were my goals? I wanted to be popular and have beautiful girl friends. I worked

(see Benzion, page 5)

is the highest form of grain. Rabbi Soloveichik interprets these grain offerings this way. He writes that the Jewish people progress from an enslaved nation in Egypt into the “Children of Israel” through a “Covenant of Fate,” bound by the miracle of the Exodus. Rabbi Soloveichik continues – *Shavuot*, the act of receiving the *Torah* is the “Covenant of Destiny”. This spiritual transformation is achieved through the “bridge” of the counting of the *Omer*.

The *Talmud Yebamoth* (62A) records the reason the why the *Sefira* period is a semi mourning period. Rabbi Akiva, ignorant until the age of 40, became the greatest Jewish teacher and scholar of his generation. He had 2,400 disciples. A plague broke out and killed many of them during the period between Passover and *Shavuot*. This semi mourning period is part of Jewish tradition. Weddings, happy events with joyous music as well as haircutting are forbidden.

The third aspect of *Sefira* is personal to each of us. The story of the Chinese Ambassador visiting New York illustrates this third concept. The mayor of New York City loved to show off the efficiency of the NYC subway system. Mayor Bloomberg took the Ambassador on a train ride. He kept on switching trains to show how the subway system saves time. After a half an hour, the Ambassador turned to the Mayor and asked him – “Now that we have saved 15 minutes, what will we do with this extra time?”

What will we do with our extra time?

The *Torah* tells us Count the *Omer* – *Usefarthem Lachem* – “You shall count for yourself” and use your time purposefully. As the Psalmist reminds us, “Each day shall be a lamp onto our feet and a light onto our path leading us to true purposeful living.”

Herbert Horowitz is Rabbi Emeritus of Shore Parkway Jewish Center, Brooklyn, NY. He can be reached at rabhh18@gmail.com.

Rabbi Horowitz is available to serve as a scholar-in-residence or to officiate at services on Shabbat and holidays. His affiliation is Conservative to Modern and Open Orthodoxy. He can speak on these topics: ‘American Jewish Experience: Hopes and Challenges’; ‘Abraham Lincoln and the Jewish Connection’; and ‘Israel through my eyes’. On topics of ethics: ‘When is compromise possible?’ and ‘Brandeis and Soloveichik: towering figures in the legal and religious Jewish community’.

For communities in need of a Shabbat leader, he can read *Torah*, Baal Koreh and Davin, as well speak on a timely topic related to the *Torah* portion. He lives on Long Island and prefers to visit congregations within a 200 mile radius of NYC. However, if a congregation would want him to come from a greater distance, he would fly to them and those expenses would be part of the honorarium. ✨

Don't cut funding for the arts

BY RABBI SANDY E. SASSO



The White House's proposed budget for 2018 would eliminate funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. This exclusion will make barely a dent in federal spending. The NEH and NEA receive only .001 percent of a nearly \$4 trillion budget. Compare the estimated cost of \$38 billion required for a border wall between Mexico and the United States with the \$148 million that supports the arts and humanities. The administration is making a statement about what it is we value as a nation.

There are those who believe by eliminating these agencies, they are "targeting waste." They suggest that the arts are not really necessary; they do not rise to the level of national security that requires increased government resources. But the defense of democracy requires precisely what the arts and humanities give us. Studies have shown that exposure to the arts and humanities improves social and emotional development, increases empathy and generosity, encourages civic engagement and expands cognitive development. These skills are not a waste, but essential to the fabric of our nation.

The arts and humanities help us to understand our place in the world, to value complexity, to think critically and independently. In a world that is increasingly polarized, the ability to appreciate nuance and diversity are more essential than ever. Our democracy will wither if we do not cultivate the imagination, educate people with historic and cultural memory, train leaders with creative ideas and the ability to communicate them and inspire others.

Studies in neuroscience find that the arts have a strong impact on the brain's cognitive and social development. Music improves spatial and temporal thinking, memory recall and mathematical ability. Engagement with the visual arts leads to greater creativity. The humanities and arts increase academic achievement and bolster confidence and teamwork. Contrary to House Speaker Paul Ryan's assertion that the NEA funds programs that are "generally enjoyed by people of higher incomes," 40 percent of the NEA budget supports activities in low-income neighborhoods. The loss of funding will hurt rural and impoverished communities the most. Government funding catalyzes other investments and matching grants that provide exposure to the arts, poetry,

BENZION

(continued from page 4)

hard to achieve these goals, but failed time after time.

In order to experience happiness and true love, you first have to find G-d and your soul. Why did *Hashem* create the world? Why did He send our soul down here? He wants us to bring goodness and holiness into the world by learning *Torah* and doing good deeds.

Now that I believe I can be happy. If I help someone, I am doing good. The person I helped is happy, and I am happy that I was able to help someone and make them happy, and make the whole world that much holier.

Now I can feel true love for the person standing over there. I have a precious G-dly soul and so does he! This is what I love about him. We are all the children of our Father in Heaven. We are all one family. This love is not dependent on what the other person is doing for me, or whether he is rich or famous, so it can last forever.

And true love is contagious. When you feel and demonstrate true love to someone, they will automatically feel love for you. I show love to my wife, my children and grandchildren, and get a lot more right back. And boy that makes me very happy.

If you have trouble finding G-d, go to your local Chabad or Orthodox Rabbi. They will be happy to help you out. It is worth the effort. Your life will improve greatly, and the whole world will benefit. This will certainly help to bring *Moshiach* now!

Rabbi Cohen lives in K'far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at bzioncohen770@gmail.com. ✨



literature, drama, history and music that make life worthwhile.

In Indiana, the NEA and NEH work through the Indiana Arts Commission and Indiana Humanities. Their work reaches all 92 counties.

The humanities help us reflect on our purpose in the world, on issues of authority and power. They give us the resources to face difficulties, loss and failure, to ask the hard questions and to live with the questions for which there are no answers. Art, literature and music offer us new ways of looking at our world and help us see things to which our presuppositions have blinded us. They give us all this, as well as moments of exquisite beauty and delight.

Books like John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* have helped us look honestly at ourselves. Robert Frost's *Two Roads Diverged in a Yellow Wood* and Langston Hughes' *Let America Be America Again* inspired us to dream.

EDITORIAL

(continued from page 3)

bones in a daily way, to stop comparing myself with my old body, that took a few years."

"Now do you look back at this accident and can you say in some ways it was a gift to you?" asked Oprah.

"Of course there are other ways to learn these lessons, you don't need to go through this kind of ordeal but at some point the lessons, the beautiful moments, exchanges with others, and shared vulnerabilities stack up and before you know it, if you are honest, the good is so potent. I would be a fooling myself if I regretted it," he responded.

Also it has helped him in his work partly because he can be more empathetic than someone who has not experienced a trauma and partly because his patients trust him quicker than they trust his colleagues. The patients look at him and immediately know that he has been in their shoes. He says another way his injuries help him is when he is present at the death of a patient. During this sacred but mysterious moment he is comfortable with the unknown. He doesn't need to have all the answers or to have control over everything.

This last question and answer will be appreciated by Eva Kor – see page 11 for coverage of her Sachem Award ceremony. Oprah asked Miller, "What is the purpose of forgiveness?"

"The act of forgiveness is the kindest thing we can do to ourselves and others. It is the way to move on. It clears the path for delight in the time that you have while you still have it. It is a loving thing to do," replied Miller.

Miller set the bar high for all of us. Since he was able to forgive himself for his traumatic accident, we all can forgive ourselves and others for our past shortcomings, because at any given moment each person is doing the best he or she can with the knowledge and experience he or she has at the time. Here is the link to his TED talk on this subject: ted.com/talks/bj_miller_what_really_matters_at_the_end_of_life

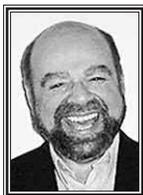
Jennie Cohen, May 17, 2017 ✨



Picasso's "Guernica" and Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel" have offered us new ways of seeing the world. Beethoven's "Symphony No. 6" has stirred our souls. These are the weapons of civilization. Without them, our nation is at risk.

Sasso is rabbi emeritus of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck and director of the Religion, Spirituality and the Arts Initiative at Butler University, both in Indianapolis, Ind. Reprinted with permission from the Indianapolis Star, March 22, 2017. ✨

A Playful Path



BY BERNIE DE KOVEN

Delight in Creation – Completely!

If I were the One and/or the One were Me, what I'd want from My creations – especially the conscious ones:

Appreciating. Not of Me, per Se, but of the world I make for them. I don't think I'd be the kind of One Who'd need thanks. I'd be the kind Who'd want to see My creatures enjoying My creation. As much of it they can possibly enjoy. As many moments and movements of it they can perceive. I'd want My creatures to be more and more intelligent so they could perceive more and more of My creation, and delight in it, completely.

Enjoying themselves. As deeply, as thoroughly as they can possibly perceive My creation, I'd want my Creatures to enjoy it. I'd want even more for them to enjoy themselves. That, for me, would be all the praise I'd require, all the prayer I'd want to hear. Not sacrifice. Not ceremony. Not even thanks. Just enjoyment.

Enjoying each other. In the same way that they enjoy themselves, I'd want them to enjoy each other. As many and much of each other as they can embrace. In fact, the wider their embrace, the more they'd be fulfilling My purpose. Embracing family, friends, neighborhood, community, strangers, people of different abilities and languages, cultures, traditions, values, status.

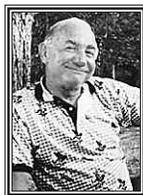
Enjoying the other. As much of else that is not their selves as humanly possible. All My creation. My clouds and lightning bugs. My mountains and mud puddles. My wildness. My tameness. Appreciating. Enjoying. As much as they possibly can.

No, of course not, I don't expect all of them to enjoy all of it, or all of themselves, even. But the more they do, the closer they'd be to being the beings I made them to be.

Loving. At least loving themselves. Loving the intricacy, the harmony between the parts and the whole, the mind and the body. Loving even the selves they find themselves with. The selves of animals, of trees, grass, even. Enough to keep themselves healthy, make themselves healthier. Enough to heal themselves. To heal the others.

So, all right. Maybe that's expecting too much. So maybe if they were just having fun, being fun, creating fun – it would be enough for Me. Better than gratitude or sacrifice or prayer.

Spoonful of Humor



BY TED ROBERTS

Bonds of Jewish matrimony

Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Moslems – they're all the same when it is time to link up matrimonially. They just mumble some words. Nobody signs anything. And words are like the swallows of spring. They come and they go, contributing to conversational debate like: "I didn't say Aunt Lena could live with us". "Yes, you did."

But Jews sign a marriage contract. Listen to the groom's declaration: "I faithfully promise to honor and cherish thee, protect and support thee and provide all that is necessary for thy due sustenance. . . and further obligations to thy maintenance. . . as are prescribed by our religious statute." Wow, that's a commitment that would have shook up Moses and his promise to lead our ancestors through Sinai.

The bride, on the other hand, makes no formal declaration. Zero, zip. The contract that she signs says something frilly and feminine (and legally undefinable) about "plighting her troth". What does that mean? Making up the grocery list which her husband must fetch and cook?

She does sign up to "all the duties incumbent upon a Jewish wife". No details. The Supreme Court would rule that short, shilly-shally, weak-willed statement totally unenforceable. Furthermore, in a Jewish marriage – the *ketubah*, duly signed and witnessed, is handed to the bride for safekeeping. So guess who's gonna win every argument.

Now, note the gazebo where the ceremony takes place. The *chuppah* – symbolic of the canopy of the sky – under which a Jewish wedding is sanctified. The *chuppah* is our earthly representation of the Lord's heaven. It reminds us that we live – at his pleasure – in his world. Remember it says, that marriage is not only a legal, but a SACRED contract.



Bernie De Koven, is the author of The Well-Played Game, A Playful Path and Junkyard Sports. A Playful Path is available here: <http://www.aplayfulpath.com/the-book/> where one can also purchase the paper or download the electronic version for free. Bernie can be found on the Internet at his two main websites: <http://deepfun.com> and <http://aplayfulpath.com>. ☆

Remember that due to its openness, the meditation of our hearts and the work of our hands are visible to his judgment as well as his mercy.

Then the seven blessings which are recited under the *chuppah*. These are easier to explain than the *ketubah*. The Seven Blessings are – SURPRISE! SEVEN BLESSINGS: Our thanks to our Creator for wine, creation, fertility, joy, love, plus life itself and other gifts like liberty and opportunity that our American system provides to us. Gifts that we often take for granted until we lose them – like our bodily well being.

May the bride and groom, as well as we guests, profit from these benedictions. And while we're on the topic of blessings, remember that nine Jews out of ten, well before the current health craze, used to go 'round saying, "thank God I've still got my health". What's poverty, or even ungrateful children who never call, compared to a fine-functioning circulatory system.

("Hey, did you see poor Sammy – he's got on a cheap sport coat with two buttons missing." "Yeah, but look how good his color is.")

One of the oldest blessings in Judaism says it all: "May the Lord cause his countenance to shine upon you and give you peace". This blessing, word for word, has been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls – so its antiquity and literal accuracy are well documented. And implicit in the wedding ceremony.

In all the repertoire of Jewish behavior, known to the larger world, like *bar mitzvahs*, Passover, and pickles on corned beef, the breaking of the glass at a Jewish wedding is way up there. And as most people now know, it symbolizes the destruction of our Temple first by pagan Babylonians, then Romans; and our fervent hope for its revival. Our bible instructs us that "If I forget Jerusalem, may my left hand forget its cunning". We are always to cherish it just as we cherish our marriage partner and our wedding vows. The heart of Judaism, a city in the headlines two millennia ago and still today, is not to be forgotten. So, we crush a glass to remember the sack of Jerusalem and its temple.

The bride usually has a more novel interpretation of the glass stomping. According to her, it's the last time "the husband puts down his foot" but the Talmud and a couple thousand Rabbis disagree.

The humor of Ted appears in newspapers around the US, on National Public Radio, and numerous web sites. Check out his Web site: www.wonderwordworks.com. Blogsite: www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com. His collected works, The Scribbler on The Roof, can be bought on Amazon.com or lulu.com. ☆

Jewish Educator



BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

It's all in the "Daditude"

My dad is a stand up kind of guy. Well, actually, at 98, he is more of a "sit down, I'm tired" kind of guy but his attitude reflects that of someone much younger. He has weathered business ups and downs, macular degeneration, colon cancer, a daughter who hitch-hiked across country after college hoping to "find herself" and a host of other challenges. But in each situation, he has looked for the silver lining or at least for a plausible reason to keep moving forward.

Dad's secret is mostly in his positive attitude. When I was young and became frustrated or disappointed by something that happened to me at home or school, dad would offer this advice: "For the same nickel, you can have a good attitude or a bad one."

In the past two decades, after facing serious health problems, Dad's standard answer when asked how he is doing is: "No pain, no complain." But perhaps my favorite comment came on his 95th birthday, after finally having to give up doubles tennis, when he wistfully remarked: "Oh, to be 90 again!"

Over the years I have come to call Dad's philosophy of living "Daditude." In a nutshell, it is this: Whatever happens to you at any age or stage of life, you have to follow the Three A's Rule – Accept, Adjust and Advance. Simply put: we have to learn to accept our situation, adjust to the new realities that we now face and advance forward in order to live life to the fullest.

My father is not a religious man but I have come to view his way of dealing with life as a form of an ethical will. An ethical will is a lovely Jewish tradition, the origins of which date back to the patriarch Jacob who counseled each of his 12 sons on his deathbed. In its simplest form it is a transmission of the values, life lessons and wisdom a parent wants to impart to a child before he or she dies.

Unlike a legal will which disposes of property and possessions and must comply with state law, an ethical will bequeaths one's innermost spiritual estate and has no formal requirements. Traditionally, it is written in letter-form and can be written at any time during one's life. Some ethical wills are more like continuing letters, added to at various

Shabbat Shalom



BY RABBI JON ADLAND

Pirke Avot 1:14 – "Hillel used to say, if I am not for myself who is for me, if I am only for myself what am I, and if not now, when."

**April 28, 2017, Tazria/Metzora
Lev: 12:1–15:33, 2 Iyar 5777**

Hillel's saying is one of the most well-known of all the verses in Pirke Avot. In fact, this verse has gained universal acclaim outside the Jewish world as well. Jewish composers have written music to go with these words – *Im ein ani li mi li* – and "if not now when" is a foundational quote on which rests the importance of our participation in social justice.

One rabbi wrote the following about this verse, "*Occasionally, we come to a mishna which says it all, in which our Sages, in a few short words, sum up what life is all about. This is one such mishna. The words of the Sages are always wise, relevant and eternal. Without exception they contain messages which, if we study carefully and take to heart, will instill new meaning in our lives. This mishna, however, is "it". It does not require advanced and in-depth analysis to uncover its hidden meaning. It tells us outright what life is all about. We must merely hear its message, and it will – if we only allow it – change our lives.*" How true are these words.

Each human being is important in this world. Gender, color, orientation, religion, politics, beliefs are what make us unique, but that uniqueness doesn't make one person better than another. We need to take care of ourselves and recognize there is no other me, but me. At the same time, it isn't just about me. We live in a world of billions of people. We are interdependent on each other for our survival. All of us must participate in this ongoing experiment we call humanity.

As compared to the age of earth, we are just a mere blip. As compared to the age of the universe, we are even less than that. At the same time, for whatever reason, we



stages of life such as a child's *Bar Mitzvah*, graduation from college, marriage or birth of a child. Others are written once, later in life, incorporating the important values and life lessons a parent wants to impart. And sometimes, they take the form of oral wisdom and life lessons observed, as in the case with my dad.

Daditude is all about living with the
(see Lederman, page 8)

have the ability to think, create, innovate, develop, and experiment unlike any other creature that has lived on this planet. Humanity is woven together in a great tapestry of individual threads. Each thread by itself is unique, but together it creates something awesome. So yes, I am for myself, but I am not only for myself because what I am is nothing without all of the others.

With the knowledge of who I am and that I am part of a family, a community, a country, a world, what is my role in this world? Am I going to just sit back as an observer or will I act now to make this world a better place. Despite our interconnectedness and our interdependence on each other there is brokenness all around. We live on a planet that produces enough food to feed all, but people are hungry. There are enough resources for everyone to have a decent place to live, but people are homeless. Our prophets told us to take care of the stranger, the orphan and the widow in our midst, but we often think only about ourselves.

"If not now, when?" When will we realize that we are killing the world on which we live? When will we realize that worshipping in a manner different than your neighbor is okay and not a reason for war? When will we realize that we need to "beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks and not make war anymore." If we don't do this now, right now, when will we? When will we clothe the naked, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and try to lift the poor out of poverty – "If I am only for myself, what am I, if not now, when?"

No one knows how Hillel came to write these three phrases and make them one verse, but he has left us gold to mine in understanding them. I need to take care of me, but I am not free from working with you and together we must do what we can do now. This is as true today as it was yesterday and it was in the time of Hillel 2,000 years ago. Judaism believes that each of us must find a way to leave the world a better place than when we came into it. If we do this, if we all do this, then maybe, just maybe, we will find ourselves a little closer to fulfilling that dream of peace and harmony.

When you light your *Shabbat* candles this week, light one for Hillel who left us in his simplicity one of the greatest sayings ever written. Light the other candle to remind us that if we don't act now to make the world whole, when do you think it will happen?

Rabbi Adland has been a Reform rabbi for more than 30 years with pulpits in Lexington, Ky., Indianapolis, Ind., and currently at Temple Israel in Canton, Ohio. He may be reached at jadland@gmail.com. ✦

Kabbalah of the Month



BY MELINDA RIBNER

Shavuot falls during Sivan

May 26–June 24

The holiday of *Shavuot* commemorates the giving and receiving of the *Torah* during the month of *Sivan*. It is said that when the Jewish people received the *Torah*, they were of one heart, so unified that were likened to one being.

In the *Torah* passage that describes Israel's encampment at the foot of Mount Sinai at the time of the new moon in *Sivan*, the word "encamped" is in the singular rather than the plural form. It is this unity that enabled the Israelites to receive the *Torah*. An open loving heart is a prerequisite. The *Torah* is an expression of everlasting love, commitment and intimacy between God and the Jewish people. This transmission is forever.

Shavuot, the holiday celebrating the receiving of the *Torah*, culminates the completion of the journey that began on Passover, the holiday commemorating the departure of the Jewish people out of Egypt. The Jewish people left Egypt, not just to leave a place of bondage, but to receive the *Torah* and enter into the holy land of Israel. The purpose of the exodus was not simply to become a free people living in the Land of Israel, but to be a people who would love, know and serve God.

It is not that God ever needed our love and service, but through it we human beings receive the greatest good. According to our teachings, the desire of God was and is always to bestow goodness upon all of creation.

"*Sivan* is one of the most beautiful months spiritually and physically. Just as the trees and flowers are blossoming, so are we blossoming this month. *Sivan* is a time of gaining clarity of vision, discovering one's life purpose and receiving guidance and direction on actualizing our personal life goals. A wonderful time for travel, *Sivan* is also a time of increased love and intimacy. It is not a coincidence that June (usually encompassing most of *Sivan*) is the most popular month for weddings to take place.

"*Sivan* is a wonderful time to deepen existing relationships and open ourselves to meeting new people whom we will be able to draw closely to our heart this month. There is an openheartedness in *Sivan* that makes it easy to communicate and bond

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right attitude. None of us will ever know what will happen to us, what problems, disappointments or losses will come our way. And although we can't control what happens to us, we can control what happens within us. We can control our attitude about everything – the good and the bad, the joys and the sorrows – and remember that, for the same nickel, it is totally up to us to find ways to accept, adjust and advance into the life we are given.

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. ✨



with many different kinds of people."

"Astrological Sign: (The astrological signs correspond to the Hebrew months) *Sivan* corresponds to Gemini: Gemini is the energy that does not want to be contained. Mercury, the ruling planet for Gemini, was the Roman messenger of the gods who flew from the heavens to the earth. Similarly, the *Torah*, given in this month is the messenger between heaven and earth. People born under this sign are thought to be mercurial, quick to move from place to place, physically and mentally. Geminis want to leave the earth and fly to the heavens. Geminis are creative and skillful communicators. The planet of Mercury is associated with communication and intelligence."

On *Shavuot* we receive the *Torah* anew. By connecting and learning *Torah*, by living by the guidelines of *Torah*, we become attached to God. When we are attached to God, we know and love God, and that is the greatest joy. It was for this reason that we were created, yet it must also be our choice.

Please read and share these words of *Torah* with others, especially during the *Shavuot* holiday. These ten suggestions below and previously quoted excerpts come from *Kabbalah Month by Month*.

Suggestions for Increasing Love and Intimacy in Sivan

1. Appreciate, and acknowledge others each day, especially your spouse and children.
2. Add romance to your life. Buy flowers, and gifts for no reason. Little gestures of the heart mean so much.
3. Extend yourself by doing favors for others.
4. Be open to meeting new and different people.

Wiener's Wisdom



BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

Our diversity is our strength

In August of 1945, we celebrated VJ Day [Victory in the Pacific]. After much bloodshed and sacrifices, we finally defeated Japan in a war that still reverberates to this day. The relief that followed also served a reminder that even in victory there is sadness. The needless waste of resources and humanities disdain for the values of life's gifts caused us to pause and wonder about our purpose.

During these difficult times, we Americans came together as never before. The blood drives, the collection of fat, the rationing of things we once took for granted, the purchase of savings bonds, the entertaining of the troops, all taught us that when a nation is in need its citizens rise to the occasion. It certainly was a different time.

One thing that stood out, in my mind, was a simple song made famous during that infamous time in our history – "The
(see Wiener, page 9)



5. Fully receive with gratitude all that you are given from others. Appreciate and acknowledge every gesture of thoughtfulness.

6. Make "I" statements about what you want and feel. Refrain from criticizing others, especially your spouse.

7. If you find yourself upset and resentful, take time to be with yourself, and pray about what you are learning at this time. Consider what you can give to another person.

8. Spend time in nature.

9. Recharge and nurture yourself with meditation and Learning *Torah*.

10. Speak to God in your own words. Express your gratitude and ask for what you need and want.

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

D'var Torah



BY RABBI DR. ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Between sorrow and joy

At this sacred season of re-consecration to recollection, we are poised between *Yom Hashoah's* monumental burden of sorrow and *Yom Ha' Atzmaut's* transforming joy. We pause at this great twilight oscillating between the helplessness of *Yeoush's* despair and *Hatikvah's* hopefulness of *Yeshua's* salvation. We turn to the *Torah's* Book of Life that we may face the *Shoah's* Book of Death. These too are our Days of Awe, no less awesome than the fall ones, sanctified through our people's blood and resolve, so curiously close to *Pesach's* twin themes of bitter enslavement and ever promising redemption.

Celebrating Israel's 69th anniversary, we look forward with lasting gratitude to the 50th jubilee of the 1967 Six-Day-War miraculous victory, and the reunification of Jerusalem, the Jewish people's eternal capital. We recall the preceding gripping fear of another Holocaust, this time by the surrounding and menacing Arab states begrudging the triumphant survival of European Jewry's remnant which includes my own family.

At last, all of Jerusalem's holy sites are safeguarded and respected as we pray for *Shalom's* blessing of elusive peace to embrace Israelis and Palestinians with the latter finally accepting the exceptional return of an ancient people uprooted from its native land by the Roman sword's power for two trying millennia yet never abandoning its divine bond with Zion and Jerusalem, thus proving the superiority of the soul's power.

We marvel at Israel's world-class astonishing accomplishments and innovations in its brief and challenging years of renewed sovereignty, even as it faces Iran along with its proxies' undiminished existential threats and the close presence of ISIS and Jihadist groups with the tragic Syrian scenario entering its 6th year of massive human destruction and the greatest refugee crisis since WWII.

New opportunities have emerged for rapprochement between Israel and the Sunni Arab states. We bemoan the precipitous and alarming global rise of anti-Semitism, the world's oldest hatred that made the Holocaust possible. The threats within the United States against Jewish institutions, the desecration of

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House I live in."The words struck a chord of understanding the need and affect of connection to each other. More than that, however, it enabled us to realize that only as one people can we ever hope to accomplish the dreams of all the generations that preceded us.

The house I live in reminded us of all we hold dear and find precious in this experiment called America. The words resonate with us because they speak to our values and ideals. The entertainers that performed and sang these lyrics of patriotism gave meaning to their significance.

*The house I live in
A plot of earth, the street
The grocer and the butcher
Or the people that I meet
The children in the playground
The faces that I see
All races and religions
That's America to me*

As we examine the simple words of everyday occurrences we are left to understand that America is so diverse and yet so connected. It is the diversity that was and remains the secret strength of this great nation. It is as though God gazed at this creation of young and old, white and black, Jew, Gentile, Muslim, and Hindu – on and on the differences are clear, but the bonds are unbreakable.

*The place I work in
The worker by my side
The little town the city
Where my people lived and died
The howdy and the handshake
The air of feeling free
And the right to speak your mind out
That's America to me*

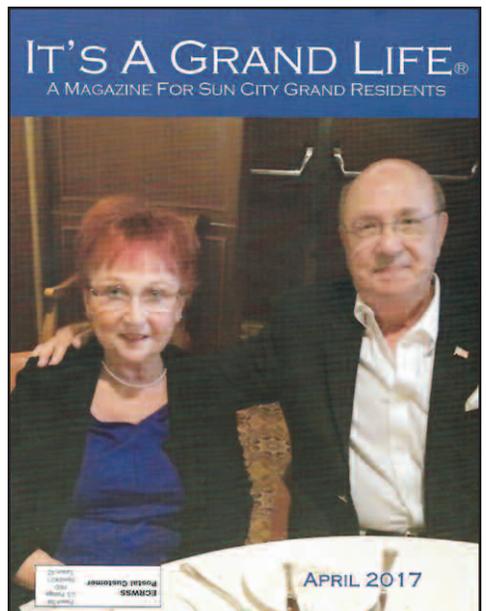
After the elections in November and the first 100 days of this administration, what



Jewish cemeteries and anti-Israel/Jewish activities in American schools make mockery of sacred memory, justice and truth, while enabling aggressors to persist and delay peace.

The United Nations, created in the wake of WWII and the Holocaust, has shamefully turned into a bastion of anti-Israel propaganda as we praise Israel's valiant defense by American Ambassador Nikki Haley, a shining light in a house of darkness. The unique bond of genuine brotherhood with the United States, vital to both countries, is between the world's leading democracy and the only democracy in the Middle East. The constructive role of American Jewry cannot be overstated.

Parashat Shemini alerts us to the unexpected both in the human condition (see Zoberman, page 12)



Rabbi Wiener writes a weekly column for this magazine and they featured him and his wife Sandi on the cover of a recent issue.

is not over is the fact that we are all Americans with the right to speak our minds. We are Americans enjoying freedoms that few in the world can truly understand.

Now is the time to join together in building an even stronger America. Two hundred forty years has taught us that only as one can we truly benefit from the many different opinions and solutions. Only as one can we overcome the vitriol that seems to have settled in our hearts and minds. Together we succeed, separate we fail. It really is that simple.

The lyrics end with a startling reminder – "Especially the people, that's America to me." Stand next to a friend or relative and look at your reflection in the mirror. The only resemblance is that each has a nose and two eyes, two ears, a mouth. This is where the similarities end because if we look closer we see two different people. This is the strength of America – similar, but different.

Now is the time to join with one another and know that through the tears, and the dreams, and the growing, we have developed a country that has never been duplicated, nor will it ever be.

August 1945 may have been a different time, but the messages of those offerings are no different today. As we journey into a new chapter in our history perhaps it is appropriate to also remember that by the Grace of God do we flourish.

Rabbi Wiener is spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation near Phoenix, Ariz. He welcomes comments at ravyitz@cox.net. He is the author of two books: *Living With Faith*, and a modern and contemporary interpretation of the Passover Haggadah titled, *Why is This Night Different?* ✨

Holocaust Educator



BY DR. MIRIAM L. ZIMMERMAN

Partisan resistance fighter Mira Shelub

Why was a Catholic educator invited to be the keynote speaker in not one, but two, San Francisco Bay Area *Yom HaShoah Ve-Hagevurah* commemorative services? *Yom Hashoah Ve-Hagevurah* literally translates as the “Day of (Remembrance of) the Holocaust and the Heroism.” It begins a week after the last day of Passover, the 27th of the month of *Nisan* in the Jewish calendar, a date chosen in reference to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began on April 19, 1943, the eve of Passover.

Jim McGarry, a Tauber Family Foundation Fellow and long-time educator in religious studies specializing in ethics, social justice, and Holocaust Studies, spoke on April 23, 2017 at Beth Chaim Congregation in Danville, Calif., and on April 25, 2017 at Temple Sinai in Oakland. His theme, “In Solidarity: The Voices Silenced, the Lessons Learned,” spoke to me as a Holocaust educator.

It is highly unusual for anyone other than a Holocaust survivor to keynote a *Yom HaShoah* service, demonstrating how far Catholic-Jewish relations have progressed. Jim currently directs the Sister Dorothy Stang Center for Social Justice and Community Engagement at my own Notre Dame de Namur University.

While still an instructor at Mercy High School in San Francisco, Jim founded the Helen and Joe Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools, an all-volunteer organization, and became its first director.



(L) Auschwitz survivor, Helen Farkas, for whom the Center is named, with friend Gila Abelson (R).

The Farkas Center “exists to honor Holocaust survivors and to bring them together with today’s students. We seek to preserve the history of the Holocaust for future generations. By integrating the use of survivor oral testimonies in educational settings, either in person or by means of primary and secondary resources, we educate both students and their instructors about social justice and moral courage. We connect this difficult history to how we act locally and globally today so that the slogan, ‘Never again!’ can become a reality for all peoples.” So states the Farkas Center mission.

As the second director and a current board member of the Farkas Center, I am deeply involved with this mission, which embodies Jim’s vision of Holocaust education, memory, and the relationship between survivors and students. Our signature event is the annual Paul A. Schwarzbart All-School Assembly and Luncheon, which brings together Bay Area survivors at Mercy High School.

Named for Holocaust speaker, author, and former hidden child Paul A. Schwarzbart, the entire student body of Mercy High School participates in a program that not only honors survivors, but celebrates their lives and their families. Viennese-born, Paul became a hidden child in a Catholic home for boys in Belgium.



Paul Schwarzbart and his wife Sharry at the March 22, 2017 luncheon named in his honor.

Articulate, humorous, and poignant, I first heard Paul speak at the Jesuit University of San Francisco more than 25 years ago when I was on faculty. Over 250 students listened raptly to his story. His description of being raised “strict Catholic” had them laughing. The story of his father, Friedrich, who died in the Buchenwald concentration camp two months before its liberation, had them crying.

This year’s 10th annual All-School Assembly at Mercy especially honored partisan resistance fighter Mira Shelub and her family. The Farkas Center Board chose resistance as the theme of the Assembly, in keeping with Ms. Shelub’s experiences as a member of the Bielski Partisan camp in the forests of Belarus in the years 1942–1944.

Mira’s partisan group “engaged in sabotage against the Nazis and their Polish collaborators by disrupting communications and transportation to the war front. They blew up trains, attacked police stations, and stole food that had been provided for the Germans by peasants”; from the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation website. According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website, the “Bielski Partisan group was one of the most significant Jewish resistance efforts against Nazi Germany during World War II.” Mira is one of the last surviving members of the group.



(L-R) Jim McGarry (speaking) with Mira Shelub (holding flowers), her daughter Elaine Shelub, and her son Mark Shelub.

Four Mercy High School students read passages from Ms. Shelub’s memoir, *Never the Last Road: A Partisan’s Life*. These passages illustrated what life was like for Jews actively resisting the Nazis in the forests.

A sequence from the 2008 movie, *Defiance*, starring Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber in the roles of the two older Bielski brothers, visually demonstrated that Jewish life persisted, even in the forest. Students watched a joyous wedding celebration complete with *chuppah* (wedding canopy) and dancing, despite freezing conditions and starvation. Members of Mercy’s choruses, under the direction of Choir Director Laura Flaviani, sang “The Partisan Song” in Yiddish and English. In attendance not only was the entire student body of Mercy High School, teachers, and staff, but also guest students from Archbishop Riordan High School with their teacher and Farkas Center Board member John Ahlbach.

Following the tribute to Mira Shelub, Jim McGarry moderated a panel, “Considering Resistance,” which enabled Holocaust survivors Ralph Samuels, Sonia Korn-Grimani, and Fanny Krieger (picture, below) to connect their lives in

(see Zimmerman, page 12)

Eva Kor receives distinguished Sachem Award

A packed auditorium filled with a diverse population was on hand April 13, 2017 at the Indiana War Memorial in downtown Indianapolis when Eva Kor received the Sachem Award from Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. This award is given annually to recognize a lifetime of excellence and moral virtue that has brought credit and honor to Indiana.



Eva Kor

One might expect the audience to be mostly Jewish people or politicians, but Kor, who always inserts bits of humor in her speeches, received standing ovations from people of different religions and races, demonstrating how her story has touched so many lives.

Each Sachem honoree receives a specially-designed sculpture (photo above right) that captures the Native American heritage of the Sachem. All Sachem recipients are selected by Indiana's governors. Kor was the first Sachem honoree named by Governor Holcomb. "Eva Kor proves there are no bounds on forgiveness and human decency," Holcomb stated.

While onstage at the ceremony Gov. Holcomb surprised her and the audience by announcing that Eva has also been named Grand Marshal of the Indianapolis 500 Festival Parade taking place in May. The Parade has had war heroes and actors, politicians and fictional characters as grand marshals, but Kor becomes the third one in a row to be a champion of a cause.

Previous Indiana state awards bestowed on Kor are: Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Joe Kernan 2005; Distinguished Hoosier Award by Governor Mitch Daniels 2012; and Sagamore of the Wabash by Governor Mike Pence 2013.

Eva Kor is a survivor of the Holocaust, forgiveness advocate, and public speaker. Eva emerged from a trauma-filled childhood as a brilliant example of the human spirit's power to overcome. Today, she is a community leader, human rights champion, and an educator.

Eva was born in Romania in 1934. In 1944, the Nazis sent her family to the Auschwitz death camp, where her parents and older sisters were killed in the gas chambers, and she and her twin sister were subjected to inhumane medical experiments.

Fifty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Eva returned to the site and stood where so many were tragically murdered. To the surprise of many, she

Invocation for Sachem Award Ceremony honoring Eva Kor



BY RABBI DENNIS C. SASSO

Let us pause to reflect on the significance of this moment. Some people are *teachers* who impart knowledge. Others are *mentors* who help to shape persons. Some people are *scholars* who inform our understanding of the way things are. Others are *models* who transform our vision of how things might be. Eva Kor is a mentor and a model who has taught us about love and peace through the power of forgiveness.

She has taught us:

That to forgive does not mean to forget or to absolve from responsibility. She has reminded us that we grow in memory, but wither in forgetfulness. Eva has warned us that memory is not meant to be a prison. That memory should liberate us to be who



we are and to become who we are meant to be.

Eva Kor endured cruelty, but she teaches (see DSasso, page 12)



Eva Mozes Kor (L) is presented with the Sachem Award by Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb; Rabbi Dennis Sasso (seated, middle).

then freed herself from her victim status and announced to the world that – in her name alone – she forgave the Nazis.

In 1984, Eva Kor founded the organization CANDLES, an acronym for "Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors," to locate other surviving Mengele twins. In 1995, she founded the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, Ind.

To find out more, web links for interesting key events and projects involving Eva and CANDLES Holocaust Museum are below:

2017 Sachem Award Recipient –
<http://www.indystar.com/story/news/2017/03/10/holocaust-survivor-eva-kor-receive-indianas-top-honor/99017084/>

New Documentary Trailer –
<http://www.thestoryofeva.com/>

CNN Inspirations & My Hero –
<http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/12/world/my-hero-max-foster-eva-kor/index.html>
 and

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2016/12/20/eva-kor-cnn-inspirations.cnn>

Road to Reconciliation –
<https://vimeo.com/155844148>

The Railway People (Trailer) –
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOdjXbKDg_U

CNN 70th Year Anniversary Auschwitz Liberation –
<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/01/world/auschwitz/>

NDT (hologram) Info –
<http://www.pcmag.com/article/343452/how-natural-language-tech-holograms-are-preserving-holocaust> ✨

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and the divine response. In the midst of the Tabernacle's zenith of joyful dedication, two of the four sons of Aaron the High Priest who just a short while ago were all consecrated as *Kohanim*, are tragically consumed by fire. We are told and taught though ponder we must, that the victims' attendance to holy duties went awry.

The text reads, "*Va'idom Aaron*," "And Aaron turned silent." He had no words. Perhaps he could find no words given the shock's magnitude of a double loss of his dearest of the dear, while ironically performing their sacred service. "*Va'idom Aaron*," yet conceivably Aaron chose not to speak that he may not utter, out of the depths of pain, blasphemous words offensive to God and mocking his own calling.

Thus, choosing to remain silent but not necessarily speechless, was Aaron's best possible option under terrifying circumstances that challenged him personally as well as professionally, threatening to undo his very being. Insightfully, if not convincingly, a rabbinic commentary blames the disaster on the poor communication between the victims, Nadav and Avihu, along with their familial failure to respect father Aaron and consult with Uncle Moses. Namely, it is ultimately our own conduct or lack of it, which determines the outcome and not necessarily the Divine's actions.

At the risk of lifting a verse out of context of a sensitive text of theological quagmire, the following resonates with overwhelming relevance to *Yom HaShoah*, which is observed, no accident, on the week of *Shemini*. "And your brethren the entire household of Israel will bemoan the *sreifa*, the burning fire."

The following double *parasha* of *Tazria-Metzora* touches upon defiling body conditions that the Rabbis attached an ethical dimension to. Leprosy becomes more than a skin ailment. With linguistic aid it is the chosen metaphor for violation, not by God but by one human being against another. To diminish one's reputation, *Motzi Shem Ra*, was tantamount to no less than shedding one's blood. A good name, *Shem Tov*, was to be a person's crowning glory. No surprise, the sinfully genocidal Nazi ideology insisted on dehumanizing as a means for a person's and our people's total destruction in spirit and body.

Shall we all, the *Shoah's* wounded survivors, choose Aaron's approach of silence as a path though like him we profusely bleed, or use words, which our enemy manipulated with ease, to contend with a reality we are commanded to change? The covenantal call and cry is clearly our own, "You shall be holy for I am

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Europe during the 1930s and 1940s to situations we face now.



Unfortunately, there are all too many such connections: rising nationalism and xenophobia, growing persecutions of minorities, difficulties in obtaining visas to the few countries that accept refugees, leaders who appeal to the suspicions and fears of ordinary people, ordinary people who subsequently turn their backs on their neighbors. Originally, the panel was composed of four survivors; two became ill at the last minute and were unable to attend. Sonia Korn-Grimani, whom I never met, was a gracious and eloquent last-minute substitute. Holocaust survivors are an endangered species.

Mr. Scott McClarty, Head of School, offered concluding remarks. A delicious Mediterranean luncheon, catered by Louis Total, followed the Assembly. Between the program and the luncheon, a professional photographer, who had spent the day with us taking pictures, took a group shot of the ten survivors in attendance. I remember the days when there were four



Survivors, back row (L-R): Ralph Samuels, David Aviel, Helen Farkas, a World War II veteran (name unknown). Front row (L-R): Paul Schwarzbart, Mira Shelub, Trude Meyer, Fanny Krieger, Sonia Korn-Grimani, and Farkas Center Board President AnneMarie Yellin.

holy." Ken Yehi Ratzon. Amen.

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman is the founding rabbi of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach and Honorary Senior Rabbi Scholar at Eastern Shore Chapel Episcopal Church. Submitted March 29, 2017. ✨

DSASSO

(continued from page 11)

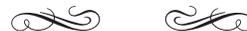
generosity. She knew pain, but she offers healing and forgiveness. She experienced hatred, but she shows compassion.

The Nobel laureate, Elie Wisel, tells the story of a just man that came to the evil city of Sodom. He pleaded with the people to change their ways, to not be indifferent to the plight of others. He went on preaching day after day. Yet, no one listened. Finally someone asked, "Dear man, why do you keep shouting? Don't you see it is of no use?" He said, "In the beginning, I thought I had to shout and protest in order to change *them*. Now I know, I must shout and protest to prevent them from changing me."

Hatred and brutality continue to flourish in our world. It is often easy to become discouraged. But Eva Kor's voice reminds us not to give up hope, not to let cruelty change us.

Eva teaches us to love our neighbors, that we may be worthy of love. She strengthens us to help fashion a world where memory serves peace, and love and justice meet. We give thanks for the blessing of Eva's life and pray that we, too, may be a blessing.

Rabbi Dennis Sasso has been senior rabbi at Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis for 40 years. ✨



or five times as many survivors. I am sure the photographer's pictures are much clearer than the ones offered here, from my camera phone.

The band of Gabe Farkas, nephew of Helen Farkas, played Klezmer music during the luncheon. Gabe also sits on the Farkas Center board. This was a wonderful element. People actually got up and started dancing.

As a Holocaust educator, I panic each time I think about the voices of survivors becoming too weak to speak to my students in the classroom. There is nothing like hearing the lived experience, told by someone who survived the worst that humanity can inflict, that will motivate students to stand up, resist evil, and take action.

We remember their names. We remember their stories. We remember how they suffered. We remember their heroism. We can never forget. Never again. Not today. Not tomorrow, will we ever let it happen again. Not to us. Not to anyone. With G-d's help, may it be so.

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

Reform Conference



BY LYNNE FOSTER SHIFRISS

Consultation on Conscience 2017

Faith-inspired social action

WASHINGTON D.C. – Standing, arms wrapped around each other, Jews from all over the United States sang the *Misheberach* prayer for Rabbi Lynne Landsberg. Tears stung my eyes.

Landsberg was honoree at a dinner during Consultation on Conscience, hosted by the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Survivor of a traumatic brain injury, she became an advocate for those with disabilities, becoming co-founder of the DC Jewish Disability Network; founder of the Central Conference of American Rabbis Committee on Disability Awareness and Inclusion; and co-founder of Hineinu: Jewish Community for People of All Abilities, involving collaboration with the Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform Jewish movements, as well as Chabad.

Earlier, as I stood in line to register, I was overcome by a sense of joy and familiarity. I thought of the history of the Jewish people in the Civil Rights movement. It's just such a part of the culture, standing up for those less fortunate. Even though I am a convert (36 years ago), I stood proudly thinking, "These are my people."

I had only met one person at the conference before, fellow Bloomington, Ind., resident Lesley Levin, but felt surrounded by friends immediately. It



Lynne Foster Shiffriss (L) and Lesley Levin, both of Bloomington, Ind., in front of the Capitol building after visits to the offices of Indiana U.S. Senator Joe Donnelly and Indiana U.S. Congressman Trey Hollingsworth. Courtesy photo.

doesn't take long for a table full of Jewish women to tell stories about their children! Eating breakfast one morning with a married couple turned into a lively conversation about social action projects at our synagogues and contact information exchanged.

Being an activist

In my mind, my retirement was going to be a time to relax, sleep late, go to yoga at the Y. But since I stopped working a month ago, I've been obsessed with what's going on in our country, wondering what else I can do. I was there to learn, and I did.

In "Speak Truth to Power: A Guide to Congregations Taking Policy Positions," available on the RAC website (www.rac.org), it says:

We proclaim that maintaining a strong safety net for those who are most vulnerable is the modern manifestation of our obligation to 'leave the corners of our fields for the poor and needy.' We believe that supporting public schools so that every child in America has access to a free and appropriate education and that paying workers enough to support themselves without having to choose between shelter and food, medication or heat, are family values. If we don't bring these progressive religious values into the public arena with us, we will abandon the public square to those offering a different view of religion and values.

The conference provided ample tools to do the work. It was the most well and thoughtfully organized event of this kind I've ever attended.

Beginning with a guide full of specific information about schedule, speakers and background information on two main issues – Criminal Justice Reform and Immigration Reform – the gathering flowed smoothly and was full of powerful presentations, ending with well-prepared visits to our reps on Capitol Hill.

Among many dynamic speakers, some of those I heard were: Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, RAC director, exhorting listeners with the "Urgency of Now," and asking attendees to take new skills and enthusiasm home and commit to personal action; Vanita Gupta, incoming president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, formerly Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General and Head of the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, interviewed by Liz Dunst about bigotry and the struggle for civil and human rights; Piper Kernan, author of *Orange is the New Black*, on the perils of mass incarceration and privatized prisons; Darrell Steinberg, mayor of Sacramento, on immigration: "If they are going to strip

I was pleased, during Consultation on Conscience, to meet Jewish singer/song-writer Stacy Beyer. We had connected before only on Facebook, as I enjoyed her music, a combination of Jewish and Nashville sounds with exuberant tunes.

A highlight was hearing "Sanctuary," performed by Beyer and Peri Smilow. It's part of an album of Jewish social justice songs, commissioned by Liz Dunst, chair of the Commission of Social Action of Reform Judaism. Beyer said, "This 8-song collection is designed to provide new social justice music for public singing in congregations, summer camps, youth groups and community gatherings of all kinds. Expected release date is December 2017." All proceeds will benefit the Religious Action Center.



At the Consultation on Conscience are (L-R) Lynne Foster Shiffriss and Lesley Levin, both of Bloomington, Ind. with Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and Marzy Bauer of South Bend, Ind. Courtesy photo.

a federal grant from us, I guess that's the price we pay. Because in my city, I'm not trading civil rights for money. As an American Jew, I couldn't do so."

Also I heard Rep. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev, who hilariously told how being a congressional president prepared her to serve in Congress; Rep. Joe Kennedy, D-Mass., who has recently been a strong voice against the Republican proposed health-care revamp, especially in the areas concerned with mental health and the current opioid epidemic; Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, who spoke about his attorney daughter Emily and her toddler daughter, protesting in January at the airport against the anti-immigration order by the president, as well as stories about John Lewis and Rabbi Abraham Heschel. And there were many more, too numerous to list, including several other Jewish national office-holders.

See my photos and video clips at lynnethinkingaloud.blogspot.com. See complete videos of speeches and panel (see Shiffriss, page 14)

Book Excerpt



BY ESTELLE FRANKEL

The Wisdom of Not Knowing

Chapter: 7: Love
The Unknown in Friendship and Intimate Relationships

“The more I see, the less I know for sure.” ~ John Lennon

A Hasid traveling with a friend suddenly turns to him and inquires, “Do you love me?” to which the friend replies, “Of course I love you!” The Hasid then asks: “Do you know what gives me pain? Do you know what brings me joy?” When the bewildered friend admits he doesn’t really know what gives him pain or joy, the Hasid says: “If you don’t know what causes me pain or brings me joy, how can you say that you love me?”

The Hasid in this cryptic tale is teaching us about the intimate connection that exists between love and knowledge. In order for love to be real it must be informed by knowledge. When we truly love someone, we strive to know and understand them. We long to enter their inner world, to know their needs and feelings, dreams, and desires. And as our knowledge deepens, so do our feelings of love, as the famous fifteenth-century physician and astrologer Paracelsus once said: “The more knowledge is inherent in a thing, the greater the love.”

As a therapist I often experience a deepening of love and caring as my knowledge deepens. When clients open up and share their innermost self with me, I cannot help but fall in love with them in the special way that therapists love their clients. These feelings of “love” seem to develop even toward those clients I do not automatically “like.” Many of my clients also develop special loving feelings toward me that derive from their experience of being known, understood, and accepted. But beyond the love that knowing and being known inspire lies a higher love. It is awakened by the realization of all that remains an unknowable mystery within the soul of the other.

The connection between knowledge and love is reflected in the Hebrew Bible’s

use of the word *daat*, “knowledge,” to describe the intimate bonding of lovers, as it says in Genesis, “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived” (Genesis 4:10). While translated as “knowledge,” *daat* is not ordinary conceptual knowledge. Rather, it signifies the kind of embodied knowing we experience when we become one with our beloved.

In addition to knowledge there is another force that operates in friendship and intimate relationships and that is the element of mystery. No matter how much we strive to know those whom we love, we can never fully plumb the depths of their innermost being, for, at our core, each of us is an unfathomable mystery. Just as *Ein Sof* is unknowable, every being, made in the divine image, is an infinite and inscrutable mystery. Not only are we mysteries to one another, but we are largely mysteries to ourselves, and love is one of the primary ways we begin to discover who we are and who we might become. Relationships provide us with a mirror in which we can see ourselves more clearly.

While all relationships are shaped by the dialectic of knowledge and mystery, the interplay of these two forces has special significance in romantic love. At the same time that we yearn to experience the safety and security that comes with intimate knowledge of our partner, in order to feel erotic desire we also need to experience our partner’s mysterious otherness. Eros flourishes where there is room for imagination and fantasy. It requires a gap over which the spark of desire can leap, as the couple therapist Esther Perel writes: “Eroticism thrives in the space between the self and the other.... To sustain an élan toward the other, there must be a synapse to cross.”

Humans share these two fundamental needs: We need to feel a sense of safety and security in our lives—to have a home in the world where we are known and feel accepted for who we are. But we also have a need for adventure, for the novelty and surprise we experience when we go forth on a journey. While our need for safety and security leads us to seek permanence and dependability in our intimate relationships, our need for novelty and adventure leads us to enter unknown and uncertain spaces. In a sense we are walking contradictions. At the same time that we yearn for emotional intimacy and closeness, we also need space in order to fulfill our erotic desires. This is why eros is strongest during the early stages of romantic love, when unknowns outweigh the known, and can fade as lovers become overly familiar. The psychoanalyst and author Stephen Mitchell describes the tension that exists between these contradictory needs:

SHIFRISS

(continued from page 13)

discussions plus more photos by checking out RAC on Facebook. Sign up for RAC emails at rac.org/email.

ShifriSS is a resident of Bloomington, Ind. A former president of her synagogue, Congregation Beth Shalom, she now serves as their co-chair of Ze HaYom (This is the Day): Social Action, and is a member of the synagogue’s Chevra Kadisha. She recently retired from the Herald-Times in Bloomington, where she was editor of the Religion and Neighbors pages. ☆



Love and desire are both thoroughly human. Our problem with them is that they orient us toward very different goals. Love seeks control, stability, continuity, certainty. Desire seeks surrender, adventure, novelty, the unknown. In love we are searching for points of attachment, anchoring, something we know we can count on. In desire we are searching both for missing, disowned pieces of ourselves and for something beyond ourselves, outside the borders of self-recognition that, under ordinary circumstances, we protect so fiercely.

It’s no wonder that romantic love is so difficult to sustain when it is wrought with so much contradiction. Yet the challenge of long-term love lies in finding a way to maintain a sense of adventure and mystery at the same time that one sustains emotional intimacy with one’s partner. The poet Rilke anticipated this challenge when he spoke of the need to preserve the expanse between lovers:

It is a question in marriage, to my feeling, not of creating a quick community of spirit by tearing down and destroying all boundaries, but rather a good marriage is that in which each appoints the other guardian of his solitude, and shows him this confidence, the greatest in his power to bestow. A togetherness between two people is an impossibility, and where it seems, nevertheless, to exist, it is a narrowing, a reciprocal agreement which robs either one party or both of his fullest freedom and development. But, once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them, which makes it possible for each to see the other whole and against a wide sky!

From *The Wisdom of Not Knowing* [pp. 141–144] by Estelle Frankel © 2017. Reprinted in arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc. Boulder, Colorado. www.shambhala.com. ☆

David Grossman at Indiana University-Bloomington

BY NAOMI FARAHAN



Writers can experience the great joy of being a different person, Israeli author David Grossman said to a full crowd last month at Indiana University. By allowing their characters their own autonomy to further a plot, writers can truly see the world through new eyes.

"You are given the pleasure of understanding how another human views the world," Grossman said.



Grossman

Grossman came to campus to talk about his latest work, *A Horse Walks Into a Bar*. The book is about one session of stand-up comedy in a nightclub in Netanya, Israel.

Even in the worst human conditions, Grossman said, people use comedy to cope. He used the Holocaust as an example. Nazis tried to trap human beings in concentration camps. But those people found freedom in comedy.

"They found their own ability to move, to maneuver, within the very small space that was left to them," Grossman said. They found freedom in the chance to take on a new perspective through storytelling, poetry and jokes.

Grossman's *A Horse Walks Into a Bar* is about the relationship between a comedian and his audience, about the world and language they begin to share with one another.

As a comedian, "you are constantly betraying your audience," Grossman said. "It's an art of betrayal, after all."

Comedians are almost cruel in the way they aptly and accurately illustrate people and their interactions with the world.

But we enjoy it. We get a sensational feeling of pleasure when we get to peep into another person's hell, Grossman said.

He also spoke about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Zionism will be remembered as one of the greatest stories of mankind. It brought the Jewish people back to their home, it was "miraculous." But it is time, Grossman said, for Jews not to be victims.

"What do we do with our lives as Israelis? We created miracles – in culture, in agriculture, in industry, architecture," he said.

And Israelis can continue to create miracles. To do so, though, they must look inward and reflect. While writers take on the perspectives of other people, everyone has the potential to connect with other identities.

"In every Israeli there's a Palestinian, in every Palestinian there is an Israeli," Grossman said. "We have been shaped by the same conflict for over a century." He said that the tensions between Israelis and Palestinians are tragic, on both ends.

"I live all my life in conflict, a bleeding conflict," Grossman said. Jews used to survive so that they could live their lives. They never had a physical place to call their own, only the dream of a homeland. Now that Israel is a reality, they live in order to survive, Grossman said. So much of the Israeli conscience is focused on, and shaped by, survival.

"I am afraid we will end up as a suit of armor without the knight inside of it ... "In the part where we are yearning to be saved, we fail ourselves. We paralyze ourselves," Grossman said.

He said he has pushed for peace for many years, but that it has become difficult to continue the fight. There is a popular, distorted idea that peace is a luxury that is not worth pursuing.

He remarked that Israel cannot reach its full potential when so much of its time and energy is intended for the military. A country nourished by innovation is held back by fear. Real peace will not just dispel the threat of war. It will provide the mental breathing room necessary for Israelis to reach their full potential. More money and resources can be contributed to technological innovation and creative endeavors.

"Only when we have peace, if we have peace, but I prefer to say when, only then can Israel live the life that it deserves," Grossman said. He considers himself a firm believer in peace. A house, or a country, must be more than a place for refuge. It must be a home. Therefore, there must be peace in Israel.

Grossman's advice to young writers: Don't interfere with the process. He said he listens to his stories: he is drawn to them, as if they are magnetic fields. He tells them how they wish to be told. While writers have interests, literature should not be used to further a wife's opinion, or a prime minister's cause. It doesn't belong to anyone but to the characters it holds.

"It's a couplehood. The writer and his book. Or her book," he said. "Like any good couplehood, we change each other."

Naomi Farahan is a rising junior at Indiana University. She is majoring in Journalism and Jewish Studies, and is in the Hutton Honors College. This summer, she is studying abroad in London. ✨

Media Watch



BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Abortion in two comedies by Jewish women

Crazy Ex-girlfriend and *Obvious Child*

On *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, a limited but loved CW series, producer-writer-actress Rachel Bloom plays Rebecca Bunch, a high-earning but socially awkward New York attorney who decides to give up her practice and settle in West Covina, Calif., in order to pursue her teen crush from summer camp, Josh Chan (Vincent Rodriguez III), a Filipino-American jock interested in surfing, sci-fi and siren girlfriends.

Let's we suspect something a bit elitist in Rebecca's assumption that she can win Josh at whim through dedicated deviousness aimed at both him and his family, the show reassures us constantly (and even in its opening song) that Rebecca is whacky and that all of her flaws are part of her charm since all the humor is self-deprecating, anyway. But, of course, Rebecca's assumptions are elitist – not to mention, selfish – nonetheless.

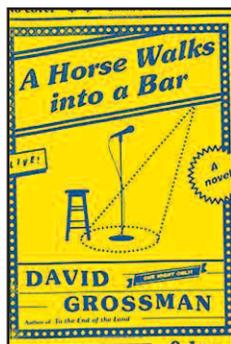
Rebecca quickly becomes the star of a second-rate West Covina law firm. The perky and meddlesome office manager, Paula (Donna Lynne Champlin) soon becomes, after brief initial antagonism, the Sancho Panza to Rebecca's Quixotic quest, or the Ethel to Rebecca's obsessed Lucy.

I reviewed the first season of this series on the Feb. 15, 2016 "Jewish Currents" blog (<http://jewishcurrents.org/crazy-ex-girlfriend-as-televisions-jewish-woman/>) and do plan to deal with the second season, which ended several weeks back. But one theme, treated mainly in a single episode (Nov. 11, 2016), was particularly significant.

Paula, who had determined to fulfill her dreams and her potential by quitting her job in order to attend law school, discovers that she is pregnant just as her children are becoming old enough for her to return to school.

As usual, Rebecca is self-absorbed in her quest for love, having driven not only Josh, but his best friend, troubled intelligent Italian-American bar tender Greg (Santino Fontana), her rebound romance, away, or, rather, toward fulfilling his dream of finishing school. She is thus totally inattentive to Paula's pain. Paula's husband is not much more sensitive. He reassures

(see Gertel, page 16)



GERTEL

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her: “Chardonnay won’t hurt. You’re only a little bit pregnant.” Does writer Erin Ehrlich paint him as further insensitive or as enlightened with his next line: “You sure you want another baby? There are options, you know. We just won’t mention it to the priest; he won’t tell God.” In any case, Paula’s initial reaction is clear: “I’m a married mother of two. Those options are for teenagers, the week after winter formal.”

Though urged by her husband to tell Rebecca, Paula insists that her best friend will not respect a decision to leave law school because of a pregnancy, and that, besides, poor Rebecca is trying to get over two breakups.

Then there is a little comedy. Paula’s husband fails to discipline their eldest son after he is expelled from school for literally playing with fire. Dad also burns the chicken and forgets to pick up the younger son – some typical dad-not-as-organized-as-mom stuff. Paula then declares that she will not attend law school, though she is complimented for a presentation in behalf of the firm and told she would make an excellent lawyer.

The next thing we know, Paula is recuperating in bed, the doorbell rings, and her eldest blurts out: “Mom, I’ll get it because you just had an abortion.” Rebecca does visit Paula, who has called in sick, and, while resolving not to let “outside relationships define me,” she finds a moment to ask Paula what is wrong. “You know,” Paula says, “I had a thing. I figured it out. I’m just so glad to see you.”

Was this the first time in TV history that abortion was used purely as a plot device to highlight the self-absorption of a character?

The use of the abortion theme here reminded me of another production starring a talented Jewish writer-producer-comedian. I refer to writer-director Gillian Robespierre’s film, *Obvious Child* (2014). In that movie as in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, the protagonist, Donna Stern (Jenny Slate), is obsessed with her Jewish ethnicity. Stern, an aspiring stand-up comic, asks her audience point blank, “Who saw my face and thought that it belongs in a bagel store in a synagogue?” Later, she observes: “A lot of people say I look like Anne Frank. I would never have survived the Holocaust.”

Stern’s stand up is raw and tasteless. Yet her best friend, Nellie (Gaby Hoffmann) – a Paula-like character, though also Jewish – affirms: “What is so great about you is that you’re unapologetically yourself on that stage all the time.” When Donna disintegrates on stage after the breakup in a vulgar and vindictive manner, her friend compliments her again, “I think a lot of people learned a lot about the Holocaust tonight.”

Clearly, however, not everyone is impressed with Donna’s in-your-face yourself-ness. Her boyfriend breaks up with her for ventilating in public about their relationship (though Robespierre dismisses him as a passive aggressive cheater). After stalking her ex-boyfriend and his new lover (inspiration for *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*?) and drinking herself into more than one stupor, Donna meets a young man, Max (Jake Lacy), at the neighborhood dive where she performs. Max is handsome, employed, and good-natured, and, fortunately, has just missed her vicious, self-pitying and vulgar act. Donna proceeds to get drunk again, this time with Max, and they have unprotected sex resulting in Nellie’s convincing Donna to take a pregnancy test, which confirms their worst fears.

With Nellie’s full support, Donna decides to have an abortion, though she avoids making the appointment on the same date as her mother’s birthday. She resolves not to tell the father, Max, whom she’s not so sure she can locate, anyway. But quite by chance, during a rare visit to her mother, she runs into him. As it turns out, he is a star pupil of her Columbia Business School professor mom (Polly Draper). He has even sought Donna out at the failing bookstore where she works. Each time she is rude and evasive, and more so after she learns she is pregnant.

Finally, she decides to inform Max of the pregnancy and of her decision. She invites him to her performance the night before the scheduled abortion. Knowing that he might turn up, she loads her monologue with her thoughts and emotions about having an abortion. Given her previous outbursts, it is hardly a surprise that she plans to so ventilate. Right before she goes on stage, in response to Nellie’s, “You are going to kill it out there,” she retorts with what proves to be her first one-liner on the theme of abortion: “I definitely have an appointment to do that tomorrow.”

Upon first meeting Max, Donna exclaims, “He is so Christian, he’s a Christmas tree.” Nellie encourages, “Be the candle on top.” Donna can only blurt out, “I’m the menorah on top that burns it down.” But no Evangelical Christian is Max, who is incapable of advocating against abortion, though Robespierre (teasingly?) has him chirp on a first date that he looks forward to being a grandfather some day. Max is a lap dog who keeps returning no matter how badly he is treated. He sees only good in Donna, no matter how vulgar or cruel she can be. Which one is the “obvious child”? Is it Donna or Max, or perhaps her father (Richard Kind in one of his most pleasant roles), who coddles and encourages her no matter what?

Or is the “obvious child” Donna’s professor mom? Reluctantly, and maybe regressively, Donna decides to tell her mother about the impending abortion. Mom’s first reaction is one of relief. She tells Donna that she was more worried that her only child would move to California. Then Mom confesses that when she was in college her mother drove her to New Jersey for her abortion. Thus have the generations of Jewish women in this family bonded. Robespierre even brings the synagogue into it. Donna jokes with Nellie that her biggest fear about discussing the abortion with her mother was that Mom would tell her that she could never return to the synagogue. Then Donna admits facetiously to fantasizing about not having to return to a place where “breaths are so bad.”

Jewish women in this film bond over abortion. Nellie reassures Donna from personal experience that an abortion takes only five minutes, and that there are no “snips,” only some cramps as in a woman’s monthly period. On abortion morn, Nellie encourages Donna, “We’re aborting in style.” By this film’s definition of female Jewish bonding, that comment renders Nellie, officially, a Jewish woman. (A Birthright Israel joke has already passed between them.) The Jewish women in *Obvious Child* are matter-of-fact, even, or especially, in the face of pain and grief. Max will fit well into their bonding rituals. For a second date, he accompanies Donna to the abortion clinic. The Jewish women in *Obvious Child* have a mysterious effect on others and on one another, while they send others away, walk away, and return when it suits them.

The same is true of Rebecca and her mother in *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, but in that TV show’s abortion it is not the Jewish woman who must make the decision about abortion. In both productions, however, Jewish women introduce the abortion theme as a plot device and therefore as a comedic contrivance.

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. ✪

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My Kosher Kitchen



BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Kebab and appetizers for Yom Yerushalayim

Kebab or shish kebab refers to small pieces of meat and vegetables cooked on a skewer. *Kebab* is the Persian word for grilling and *shish* is the Persian word for skewer. Nowadays grocery stores in Israel carry bags of charcoal and various sizes of grills, since Israelis love grilling and picnics. Below are some kebab recipes including one you can even make atop your stove.

Turkish Kebabs

(8 servings)

Marinade:

1/4 cup olive oil
1 1/2 cups wine vinegar
1/2 cup dry red wine
2 medium chopped onions
2 minced garlic cloves
1/2 tsp. cinnamon

For Skewers:

3 pounds lamb, boned chicken cutlets or beef, cut into small cubes
6 quartered onions
2 cubed eggplants
1/2 cup olive oil

In a bowl, combine olive oil, wine vinegar, wine, onions, garlic and cinnamon. Marinate meat or chicken 3 hours. Thread meat or chicken with onions and eggplant on skewers.

Brush with oil and broil 10 minutes, turning so all sides are cooked and basting several times with marinade.

Lamb or Beef Kebabs

(12 servings)

Marinade:

1/2 cup red wine vinegar
2 tsp. dry mustard
1 tsp. dry rosemary
1 tsp. dry thyme
4 crushed garlic cloves
1/2 cup olive oil
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 Tbsp. soy sauce

For Skewers:

3 pounds cubed lamb or beef
green pepper chunks
small onions
red pepper chunks
zucchini rounds
cherry tomatoes

Night before serving: Mix wine vinegar, dry mustard, rosemary, thyme, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and soy sauce in a bowl. Add meat, cover and refrigerate overnight.

Next day: Slide meat onto skewers, alternating with vegetables. Broil 10 minutes, turning so all sides cook. Baste with marinade several times.

Skillet Kebabs

(8 servings)

Marinade:

2/3 cups olive oil
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
1 bay leaf
1/2 tsp. oregano
1/2 tsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. sugar
salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce

For Skewers:

2 pounds cubed beef
8 small, cooked, quartered potato
16 cherry tomatoes
2 green peppers cut into squares
squash, mushrooms or other vegetables

Place oil, red wine vinegar, bay leaf, oregano, paprika, sugar, salt and pepper and Worcestershire sauce in a bowl. Add meat and marinate several hours or overnight. Skewer meat alternately with vegetables. Place oil in a frying pan. Place skewers in hot oil. Cover frying pan and cook 10 minutes. Turn skewers, cook 5–10 minutes without cover.

Appetizers

Pita Chips

6 pita breads, quartered
1 cup melted butter or margarine or 3/4 cup canola or olive oil
1 Tbsp. dry parsley or cilantro
2–1/4 tsp. dry basil
1/2 tsp. dry dill
dash red pepper flakes or chili powder or paprika

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Add spices to melted butter or margarine or oil in a bowl. Place pita on cookie sheet. Brush spiced butter or margarine or oil on pieces of pita. Bake in preheated oven 13 minutes. Let cool then keep in covered can.

Israeli Eggplant Appetizer

(12 servings)

2 eggplants
2 crushed garlic cloves
1/4 cup minced onions
2–4 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup olive oil
salt and pepper to taste

Heat a grill to medium. Prick eggplants with a fork. Place on the grill and cook

The Wedding Plan

A new movie by Rama Burshtein (Director, Writer), *The Wedding Plan*, playing in New York and other cities, is coming to Indianapolis on June 2. Burshtein won Ophirs (Israeli Oscars) for best film and best director for her first feature, *Fill the Void*, which was Israel's official entry for the Best Foreign-Language Oscar.

Burshtein was born in New York in 1967, and raised in Israel. She graduated from the Sam Spiegel Film and Television School in Jerusalem in 1994. During those years she became deeply religious and upon her graduation dedicated herself to promoting film as a tool for self-expression in the Orthodox community.

Nominee for Best Film at the 2016 Venice Film Festival, one cannot find an entertaining film like this anywhere that blends romance with Jewish faith and tradition.

In *The Wedding Plan*, Michal, age 32, is finally looking forward to the comfort and security of marriage, when she is blindsided by her fiancé's decision to call off the wedding with only a month's notice. Unwilling to return to lonely single life, Michal decides to put her trust in fate and continue with her wedding plans – dress, venue, and all – believing Mr. Right will appear by her chosen date.

During her month-long search for a spouse, Michal enlists the help of two different matchmakers and goes on a series of disastrous blind dates – all while dismissing pleas by concerned friends and family members that she reconsider her risky plan. As the day of the ceremony grows closer and no suitor appears, Michal puts everything on the line to find happiness.

It is in Hebrew with English subtitles. ★



until soft (30–40 minutes). Instead, you can place eggplants on a cookie sheet and bake in 400°F. oven 40 minutes. Cool eggplants then cut in half lengthwise and scoop out flesh to a bowl. Chop well then add garlic, onion, lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Stir well. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

My Favorite Tunisian Eggplant Appetizer

(12 servings)

1/2 cup olive oil
4–6 minced garlic cloves
2 finely chopped onions

(see Kaplan/recipes, page 18)

KAPLAN/IS

(continued from page 20)

Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (Nachmanidis or Ramban) and Pablo Christiani in front of King James I of Aragon, with Franciscan and Dominican monks witnessing. Shlomo and Gershon, Nachmanidis sons, and his grandson were also witnesses in this amazing play, with a cast of 14, written by Roy Doliner.

“It was completely faithful to the events, but there were two different transcripts of the event – one in Latin and one in Hebrew written by the Ramban,” said Doliner. “It is not a word for word version; I mixed it with modern missionary arguments. This is its world debut. There were readings elsewhere but there was never a full production,” added Doliner. “The play made *aliyah* with me two years ago!”

In the original disputation, there were three issues – (1) whether the Messiah had appeared or not, (2) whether, according to Scripture, the Messiah is a divine or a human being and (3) whether the Jews or the Christians held the true faith. In the play, the majority of time revolved around the first issue.

The play was performed in Jerusalem’s Khan Theatre, which was built on the ruins of an ancient inn from the Crusader period. It served caravan travelers who arrived in Jerusalem after nightfall when the gates of the Old City were locked. In later years, the building housed a beer-cellar and a carpentry workshop.

The backdrop of the stage is the natural Jerusalem stone; in the center hung a tapestry of Jesus. The play will be performed at the Khan May 16, 17, and 23 and in Gush Etzion May 18. For more information, contact the producer, Yael Valier, yael@tremendousearth.com.

Another side of Passover – Seder at Baptist Church

Over the past years we have lived in



Kimmie Sado, wife of seder leader/tour guide, Sahar Sado, brushes lamb blood on the lintel.



Pastor Al Nucciarone, accompanied on the piano by his wife, Billie, leads songs after the seder.

Israel, this experience has been enhanced by a relationship many immigrants (and many Israelis) do not have – friendship with Christians. When Barry went to *Ulpan* to learn Hebrew, shortly after we arrived, he became friendly and then friends with Al Nucciarone. He learned Al was Pastor of the Jerusalem Baptist Church and they made a pact not to try to convert each other!

Soon his wife Billie and I were brought into the friendship. We have observed various programs at their church where members know us, and they have observed events at our synagogue where our members know them.

The evening before the *seder* was one of the unusual experiences which we have observed at the church – Messiah in the Passover and a model *seder*. More than 120 Christians came to participate in a model *seder*, led by a Messianic Israeli (who happens to be a tour guide and is married to a lovely American Christian woman). The people used a specially prepared Passover *Haggadah*.

For many, this was their first experience at a Christian model *seder* where Jesus plays a role, interspersed with Old and New Testament scripture readings. A number of pastors and professors were also present to add their thoughts during the *seder*. After part of the service was completed, participants lined up for a sumptuous buffet dinner, including lamb, carved by a chef from Bethlehem.

At one end of the room, set up for dining, were two columns with a lintel overhead. After reading in Exodus 12, verse 7 that the Lord told Moses to have each Israelite family kill a lamb, the verse continues: “And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it.” When the Lord went through Egypt that night to smite the first born, he would know that these were the houses he would pass over.

One of the professors then explained that in order to give the people there an

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- 2 eggplants, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1/3 cup tomato paste
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 cups pitted small green olives
- 1-1/4 cups drained, cut-up marinated artichoke hearts
- pinch basil
- pinch tarragon
- pinch oregano

Saute garlic and onion in oil in a frying pan 6–8 minutes. Add eggplant, stir and cover. Cook 15–20 minutes, checking to see eggplant does not stick; add oil if needed. Stir in tomato paste and vinegar and cook 5–10 minutes. Add olives, artichoke hearts, basil, tarragon and oregano. Chill. Serve at room temperature.

See Kaplan bio page 19. ✨



experiential activity, they would line up, take a piece of hyssop on the table and either dip it in the blood of the lamb they had just eaten or in wine and brush it onto the lintel, to achieve a relationship with the seder. For Barry and me, this was a most unusual side of Passover.

For me personally, this was as amazing to watch because once, many years ago, I went to Nablus to see the Samaritans slaughter and roast 18 sheep, *kosher* them and then put them in pits to roast. Later at midnight, they would cut up the sheep and deliver the meat to the homes for the people to eat with *matzah* and bitter herbs as described in Exodus. At the end of the Baptist Church *Haggadah*, there is a wonderfully written explanation of how Jews observe Passover.

A Haggadah Fair

It is always exciting when friends are interviewed on the English TV news. So it was when a friend from our synagogue, Rabbi Matt Berkowitz (see photo bottom p. 19), spoke about the next evening’s opening *Haggadah* Fair at the Inbal Hotel in Jerusalem.

The fair is sponsored by *Kol HaOt*, a Jerusalem-based organization, established in 2009, which provides interactive, Jewish educational art programs. Recently, they have opened a studio with a gallery, a place for artists in residence and workshops in *Chutsot Hayotser*, the artists’ lane across from the Old City walls, below Jaffa Gate.

Our friend, Rabbi Matt Berkowitz, made *aliyah* with his family from Boca Rotan, Fla., in 2009. He explained on the TV news about the *seder* icons and illuminated *haggadot*. Rabbi Berkowitz is co-founder and director of development for *Kol HaOt*

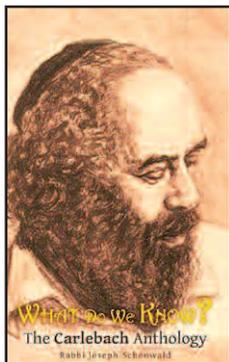
(see Kaplan/IS, page 19)

The Carlebach Anthology

BY REUVEN GOLDFARB

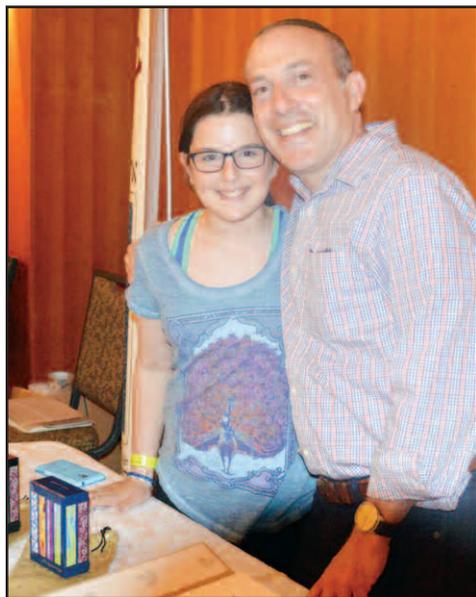
I am pleased to announce the publication of *What Do We Know? The Carlebach Anthology: Essays about Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach with Selections from His Teachings and Stories*, edited by Rabbi Joseph Schonwald with Reuven Goldfarb.

I worked closely with Rabbi Joe Schonwald for four years to bring this *sefer* to birth. There are 480 pages in all. The first 251 pages consist of 22 essays – personal, analytic, academic, and historical – and 7 poems, by 25 authors. The balance is Shlomo’s own words, transcribed from audio and video recordings. In addition, there is an array of photographs and multiple internet links to concerts, interviews, and teachings. We are proud of this book.



You may order copies through Amazon or Book Depository. The base price for the soft cover edition is \$29.95.

Goldfarb is a poet, storyteller, and essayist. His work has appeared in dozens of magazines, newspapers, and anthologies, and won several awards. Reuven co-founded and edited AGADA, the illustrated Jewish literary magazine. He and his wife Yehudit live in Tzfat. Email: poetsprogress@gmail.com and website: www.reuengoldfarb.com. ✨



Rabbi Matt Berkowitz and his daughter by the table displaying his haggadah and other works of art at the Haggadah Fair.

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and director of Israel Programs for the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He was formally trained in Jewish scribal art in Jerusalem where he has studied illustration and oil painting.

Haggadot were compiled during the Mishnaic period (1st through 3rd centuries CE) and Talmudic times (70BCE–500 CE). They became well known because of their illustrations in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Matt was exhibiting the *Lovell Haggadah* which he was commissioned to create for a family and which took four and a half years to complete. It is substantive in Jewish art, has an egalitarian approach to the liturgy and creative ideas for the *sefer* evening. There are three components: the *haggadah*; a portfolio, “Passover Landscapes – Illustrations on the Exodus,” with 27 pieces of art; and an anthology of 27 essays. There are only 250 numbered sets of this *haggadah* and 170 have already been sold.



Rabbi Matt Berkowitz points out verses on his tzedakah box at the Haggadah Fair.

Kol HaOt has been sponsoring these fairs since 2011. The theme of this year’s fair is “Signs of the *Seder*: the evolution of symbols and icons in the haggadah,” so with this in mind, Matt has created a *tzedekah* box (which sells for \$450), based on *midrash*, with printed layers on a metal box.

Various artists displayed their *haggadot* at the fair and 15 different ones were for sale at a sales desk. For the program, a professor discussed development of the *haggadah* through its symbols; a designer spoke on iconic designs of contemporary *haggadot*; a rabbi spoke on 700 years of illuminated *haggadot* in *halachah*, history and folklore; and a visual artist gave a live demonstration on the creation of a modern symbol.

Anyone wishing to know more about *Kol HaOt* can contact Fern Allen, director of marketing and public relations at info@kolhaot.com. Rabbi Matt Berkowitz can be contacted at rabbimattberkowitz@gmail.com.



The sapling planted April 14, 2013 (top) in front of The Children’s Museum in Indianapolis as part of the Anne Frank Peace Park has been thriving. The sapling was taken from the chestnut tree that stood outside the secret annex in Amsterdam where Anne Frank hid with her family during World War II. This tree had given hope to her when she was barred from the outside world for two years and she wrote about it in her diary. The bottom photo was taken May 10, 2017. Although saplings from that tree were planted all over Holland in 2009, this was the very first one planted in the United States. Just as the living tree gave hope to Anne, the growing saplings are a symbol of hope that tolerance and understanding will continue to grow bigger and stronger. Its placement in front of the museum is to teach children and adults about the hideous injustice caused by racism. Photos by Jennie Cohen.

❧ ❧

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. She lives in Jerusalem. ✨

Seen on the Israel Scene

BY SYBIL KAPLAN
PHOTOS BY BARRY A. KAPLAN



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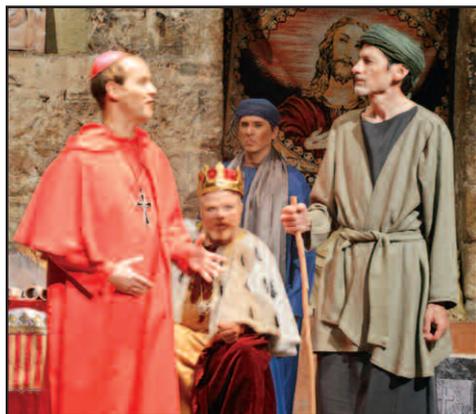
A piece of Jewish Barcelona comes to Jerusalem

Coming to Jerusalem May 8–24, 2017? You won't want to miss a special production at the Khan Theater, May 9, 10, 16, 17 and 23 – *Divine Right*, by playwright Roy Doliner and directed by Yael Valier.

Two years ago this month, Barry and I went to Barcelona for five days. One day was Jewish Barcelona with a special tour guide, Dominique Tomasov Blinder.

I knew my Jewish history and when we paused in a courtyard and she pointed to a room in a building above us, I was particularly excited! This room was part of a major renovation of the Major King's Palace, which was the main hall of the palace and the room where Nachmanides defended Judaism against the Catholic Church in 1263.

Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, commonly known as Nachmanides and Ramban, was a noted medieval scholar, rabbi, philosopher, *kabbalist* and physician. He was born in Girona, Spain, where he was rabbi; later he was chief rabbi of Catalonia, an autonomous community of Spain, located on the northeastern extremity of the Iberian Peninsula. Catalonia consists of four provinces: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona. (The capital and largest city is Barcelona.) Pablo Christiani, a Jewish convert to Christianity, who had been trying to make Jews of the time convert, was sent by the king to order Ramban to respond to charges against Judaism in a religious disputation.



Characters of *Divine Right* (L-R) Pablo Christiani (in red), King James I on throne, Nachmanidis with walking stick

Nachmanides was considered the winner of the disputation, and King James I of Aragon awarded him 300 gold pieces. The role of Nachmanides will be played by Rabbi David Golinkin, president and rector of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem – and a friend of ours.

On the website of Roy Doliner, author, lecturer, and playwright, one reads that he speaks Italian, American Sign Language, French, Italian Sign Language, Hebrew, Latin and smatterings of several others. Today he is a passionate lecturer on Judaism and an eternal student of *Torah* and *Talmud*.

He is playwright for a comedy, *Last Words*, about the private conversations between G-d and Moses, and has had other plays produced in New York, Boston, Los Angeles and Rome. He also writes films, both in English and Italian.

In Manhattan, Doliner founded two different study circles as an outreach to people without a traditional background. He designed a format in which the groups learned Talmud *daf l'daf* (page by page), but in English.

In Rome, Doliner founded and still advises the Cultural Association *Rome For Jews*, with its official mission of teaching the Jewish history of Rome and making it accessible to visitors of all backgrounds, supporting Jewish culture and community in Rome, and building bridges of understanding between the faiths.

Doliner, who made *aliyah* a year and a half ago, happened to hear a woman walking her dog in his neighborhood, speaking Italian to the dog. He told her he was a playwright looking for a director, and she told him she was a props manager in theater. He gave her *Divine Right* to read, and she gave it to Yael Valier.

Valier loved the play and learned Doliner was looking for a female director since the cast of the play were only men. Valier has been involved in the Israeli theater scene



The full cast of the *Divine Right* in Jerusalem.

for the last 15 years as an actor, crew member, director, and writer. She teaches drama at Midreshet EVO (a religious women's program integrating *Torah* and the arts), and voices characters in several children's series for Fox's BabyTV channel. Valier has been a fellow in Rabbi Dr. Nathan Cardozo's Think Tank for eight years and graduated in 2013 from Matan's *Ayanot* program (a women's institute for *Torah* studies), where she specialized in *Tanach* (Bible). She is on the education committee of the Women's *Beit Midrash* of Efrat (a program for *Torah* study for women in the community of Efrat).

Valier says of the play, "it's entertaining and very thought provoking because the issues are contemporary."

Doliner wrote the play in the 1980s when he was living in New York and learned of a scholar who had translated the original manuscript. At the same time, Jews for Jesus were all over New York, and he decided to write the play "to deal with the modern disputation on every street corner of New York."

Various scholars will lead discussions after the *Divine Right* performances which are at 7 p.m. Tickets may be secured at www.TheaterAndTheology.com or by phoning 02 630-3600.

Divine Right – the 1263 Nachmanidis Disputation Play

Last night we were transmitted to 1263 Barcelona to see the famous (or infamous) disputation which took place between
(see Kaplan/IS, page 18)