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## EMAG PESACH SAMEACH



Cover Art by Karin Foreman  
(see About the Cover on p. 2)

# About the Cover

Passover

By Karin Foreman



“Passover/Pesach” is a mixed media piece using paint with add-ins like fiber and molding pastes, coarse pumice gel and a mixture of other gels, various gesso, and blue and gold Interference paint that has the unique ability to “flip” colors when viewed from different angles. It changes between a bright opalescent color to its complement.

This piece features many elements from the Passover story found in Exodus. The pyramids represent the enslavement of the Israelites, the funnel-like cloud signifies death sweeping through the land of Egypt from Exodus 12:29 “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.” The moon stands for midnight. The swirls and waves symbolize the turbulent time between the awful plagues and the parting of the Red Sea to freedom from slavery. The three *matzot* are traditional elements used at today’s *Seders* linking the past to the present. They are symbolic of the three castes of Jews – Priests, Levites and Israelites. Some link the three *matzot* to the three measures of fine flour that Sarah used to bake some “bread” for the visitors, which supposedly happened during Passover. They can also represent Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Regardless, *matzah* reminds us of liberation from bondage and redemption.

**Karin Foreman** creates artwork, graphic designs, and award-winning inspirational nature photography. She has won The Exposure Award and is featured in The Nature Collection. Her photography was honored at a private reception at the Louvre Museum in 2015. Her work was also featured at 4Times Square in New York, the Amsterdam International Art Fair at the Beurs van Berlage, the Architectural Digest Design Show in New York, The Monaco Yacht Show, Spectrum Miami during Art Basel Miami, Artexpo New York and just recently the LA Contemporary Artshow.

See more of her work on her website at [www.karinforeman.com](http://www.karinforeman.com). She can be reached by email at [karin\\_foreman@yahoo.com](mailto:karin_foreman@yahoo.com). ★

# Seen on the Israel Scene



BY SYBIL KAPLAN

PHOTOS BY BARRY A. KAPLAN

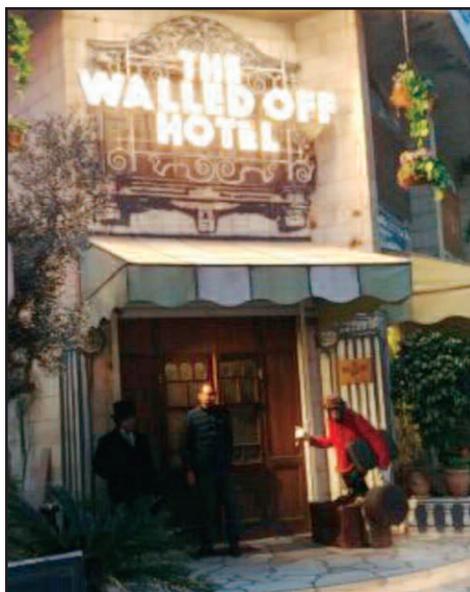
## Going to Bethlehem

Submitted 2-11-19

Since December 1995, Bethlehem has been under the complete administration and the military control of the Palestinian National Authority. As such Israelis cannot go freely into any Palestinian Authority controlled area, however, journalists with an American passport and permission from the Israel Defense Forces can. Friends of ours, the Baptist minister and his wife, invited us to go with them and do a story.

The road out of Jerusalem goes past the Mar Elias monastery, a 6th century monastery guarding the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road; opposite is Tantur Ecumenical Institute where scholars, priests, ministers, members of religious communities and lay persons may take a sabbatical and participate in continuing education programs designed for research, study and touring the Holy Land.

Nearby is the modern Tantur Hills Hotel. In the five miles you have driven in 10 minutes, you are at the Bethlehem checkpoint. It was already dark, but it was very interesting to drive throughout the city, seeing all of the open shops.



One sight we wanted to see is described in an article by Jack Moore, in *Newsweek*, in March 2017 – Banksy Opens ‘Walled Off’ Hotel on Separation Barrier in Bethlehem.

“The infamous but anonymous graffiti artist Banksy is looking for wise men and women to trek to the West Bank city of Bethlehem but to a very different resting

place – his new hotel.

“The ‘Walled Off Hotel,’ a nine-bedroom boutique establishment, is fashioned to host tourists and to give the community in the city – famous as the purported birthplace of Jesus – an economic boost.

“The artist from the English city of Bristol is touting the hotel as offering the ‘worst view in the world,’ with the windows opening to reveal the grey concrete of the 8-meter high wall.

“Palestinian and Israeli rights groups have criticized the barrier for imposing restrictions on the movement of Palestinians. The Israeli government claims it constructed the barrier to prevent Palestinian suicide bombings, and points to figures that show a significant decrease in such attacks since its construction began.

“Inside the hotel are exhibitions for Palestinian artists, Banksy works and colonial decoration with a depiction of the signing of the Balfour Declaration, the British letter signed in 1917 that signaled the creation of the state of Israel. It includes artwork typical of Banksy, provocative and political.”

According to *The Guardian*, “Banksy planned to start accepting guests at the hotel at the end of March 2017, taking bookings online. He reportedly wants guests from both sides of the conflict to stay at the hotel and experience Bethlehem.”

We drove around Manger Square where the church of the Nativity was built over the cave where Christians believe Jesus was born. We drove through the suburb of Beit Sahour and saw the shepherds’ fields, where Christians believe the shepherds received word of the birth and where Ruth gleaned under Boaz. We stopped for pizza at a new, modern delicatessen and then toured the largest grocery store in Bethlehem just for fun.

## Background

After Jordan became part of the Six-Day War in 1967, Bethlehem was liberated by Israel, along with the rest of Judea/Samaria and Israel took control of the city. In 1995, Israel turned it over to the Palestinian National Authority in accordance with the Oslo peace accord. On Dec. 21, 1995, Israeli troops withdrew from Bethlehem, and three days later the city came under the complete administration and military control of the Palestinian National Authority. Those with an American passport can enter Bethlehem with no problems.

## The God of Isaac

Submitted 2-17-19

Why have I written this article? If you happened to be in Jerusalem (as we are)

(see Kaplan/Israel, page 17)

# Editorial

When I was thinking of what to write for this Passover edition, I thought of the story below because the holiday takes place in the spring. It is a time of rebirth and renewal, and many *Seder* tables are adorned with flower bouquets. Rabbi David Zeller, z"l, taught that *Pesach* is an opportunity. He said, "it's not just a historical celebration, not just a great time to have family and friends get together for a good meal. *Pesach* is a breakthrough in time from the realm of eternity. It is the breakthrough in the world of hiddenness to that which can be revealed. What happened 3,000 years ago can be repeated, not just commemorated on *Pesach* night. *Pesach* – and this is true of all of the holidays – offers that opportunity. *Pesach* is a time to sit at your *Seder* table, go through the *Haggadah* and experience a breakthrough."

I had heard this story in 1992 at "Joys of Jewishing", a week-long summer camp of learning and recreation, ending with a spirited Sabbath celebration. It was sponsored by the Aquarian Minyan, a Jewish Renewal group in Berkeley, but was held at a campground about three hours northeast of there.

The story was told by a co-founder of the camp, Rabbi Hanan Sills, (see photo, top) a charismatic teacher who at the time was the Hillel rabbi at the University of Oregon in Eugene. He explained that he had heard it from a middle-aged woman who had come to him wanting to learn about Judaism. She had just found out she was Jewish. Her parents were Jewish, but during the Holocaust she was left with non-Jews who had raised her and did not tell her about her biological parents.

## Vision Quest

The story is about a Native American girl who at age 13 is preparing for a Vision Quest. This is something all tribe members do at that age to show they are ready for adulthood. She will take a journey by herself and use all the skills that she has been taught to see what helpful vision she can bring back for the benefit of her tribe.

She saddles up her horse with her bow and arrow and all of the supplies that she will need, including food and water to last a few days. She mounts her horse and waves goodbye to her tribe. She rides all day until just before dusk in time to set up camp for the night.

She falls asleep comforted by the sounds of all the little creatures that share the countryside with her. She rises at sunrise and continues on riding during the day, setting up camp before dusk in order to have a good night's sleep to be



Rabbi Sills (R) at "Joys of Jewishing" in 1992.

rested for the next day. All the while she is looking for signs, keeping an open mind for some message she can bring back and share with her tribe.

This continues for a couple more days, but nothing comes to her. She decides that she must go back soon even if there is nothing to share. The next day she is awakened early by a magnificent sunrise. The sky is filled with the most vibrant colors she has ever seen. As the sun rises in the sky and dries up the dew on the grass, she notices next to her a field of beautiful white flowers.

She decides to pick a few to take back with her. She reaches down to pick one that has a lot of petals, but she notices one of them is torn so decides not to take that flower. She looks at a second one with all of its petals intact, but it has a weak stem, so she leaves it in the ground. The third one she sees has a strong stem and nice petals, but a leaf is missing.

She becomes frustrated because every flower she reaches for has some small imperfection. She finally decides to overlook the tiny flaws of each flower and randomly picks a bunch of them. Together they make a beautiful bouquet!

When she arrives home from her travels, she must face the tribe with her message. She tells them about her trip and how she was afraid there would be no message. Then she uncovers the bouquet of white flowers. She explains how fragrant they are and pleasing to the eye, but that individually each one has a flaw.

She says the flowers are like the members of the tribe. Each one has some strong points and some weak points, but when they all work together, the total is more than the sum of the parts. Her message to the tribe is not to look at the flaws in each member, but rejoice in the strength of the tribe as a whole.

I was thinking about this story because a supportive community can provide needed strength when one is facing difficult challenges such as illness or loss of a loved one. The idea that people have to be independent, not needing each other, is not a Jewish one. This is especially true in today's world where it is easy to feel alone

# Inside this Issue

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>About the Cover</b> .....  | 2  |
| <b>Sybil Kaplan:</b><br><i>(Seen on the Israel Scene)</i> .....   | 2  |
| <b>Jennie Cohen: (Editorial)</b> .....  | 3  |
| <b>Rabbi Benzion Cohen: (Chassidic Rabbi)</b><br>Special Times – 2 .....  | 4  |
| <b>Amy Lederman: (Jewish Educator)</b><br>Searching for Family<br>on Mount of Olives.....   | 4  |
| <b>Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein, D.D.:</b><br>Acts of Kindness .....   | 5  |
| <b>Magidah Khulda bat Sarah:</b><br><i>(Gather the People) Gravity</i> .....  | 6  |
| <b>Jill Weiss Simins: (Posting the Past)</b><br>Walking with Dr. King.....  | 8  |
| <b>Rabbi Jon Adland: (Shabbat Shalom)</b><br><i>Pekudei, Exodus 38:21–40:38</i> .....   | 9  |
| <b>Miriam Zimmerman: (Holocaust Educator)</b><br>Vital Addition to<br>Holocaust Filmography .....   | 10 |
| <b>Jim Shipley: (Shipley Speaks)</b><br>We Are Different.....   | 12 |
| <b>Rabbi Irwin Wiener: (Wiener's Wisdom)</b><br>Complicity in Silence.....  | 12 |
| <b>Melinda Ribner: (Kabbalah of the Month)</b><br>Meditation for Passover<br>and Its Preparation.....                                       | 13 |
| <b>Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel: (Media Watch)</b><br><i>I Feel Bad</i> .....   | 14 |
| <b>Rabbi Israel Zoberman: (Book Review)</b><br><i>Shalom Lakanaim: Shalosh Machshavut</i><br>Searing Pessimism &<br>Consoling Optimism..... | 15 |
| <b>Rabbi Israel Zoberman:</b><br>Obituary & Tribute to Amos Oz.....   | 15 |
| <b>Rabbi Susan Nanus:</b><br>"Why Me?" .....  | 16 |
| <b>Sybil Kaplan: (My Kosher Kitchen)</b><br>Passover Recipes .....  | 18 |
| <b>Ted Roberts: (Spoonful of Humor)</b><br>The 11th Commandment –<br>Spice up Your Passover .....   | 20 |

*The Jewish*  
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and cut off from society. This story will be included in a soon to be published book about classes I attended and interviews I did with some prominent teachers who lived or visited the San Francisco Bay Area when I resided there from 1986–1993. *Chag Pesach Sameach!*  
**Jennie Cohen, April 1, 2019** ✨

# Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

B.H.

## Special Times – 2

In my last column (IN-8/22/18), I wrote about the special times we are living in. That almost all of the nations of the world are trying hard to live in peace with each other and end war. How atomic bombs are being dismantled, and the uranium is being used to produce electricity. Here we are beginning to see the fulfillment of prophecies of the true and complete redemption: that in the end of days a time will come when there will be no more war. This period, the end of days, is also referred to as the days of the *Moshiach* (Messiah).

Another prophecy is that in this period the world will be full of the knowledge of G-d. We can see now that this prophecy is also beginning to be fulfilled. When I was growing up 60 years ago communism was very strong. One of the super powers of the world was communist, and they were trying very hard to conquer the entire world. Even here in America communism had some popularity, and many colleges and universities had communist youth groups. Communism opposed belief in G-d and religion, calling it the opium of the masses. Teaching belief in G-d was a major crime. Those who lived in the Soviet Union had the choice: forget about religion and belief in G-d, or live in constant fear of the secret police.

In Israel there was a similar situation. The government at that time was leftist and anti-religious. They fought against belief in G-d and religion. In America the situation was not much better. Instead of worshipping G-d, many people worshipped the dollar, and all of the physical pleasures that the dollar could buy. People advised me that since I have a good head I should learn a good profession. Then I would be able to earn a lot of dollars. Then I could buy myself a beautiful house and a fancy car. This was my “religion”.

Even science was weakening belief in G-d. For thousands of years we understood that there is a Higher Power that created us and is giving us life. But two hundred years ago science came up with different ideas. According to the theory of evolution, life just came about by accident. If so, then there is no need to believe.

The results? My siblings and I like many millions grew up with little or no belief in G-d. However, when I turned 17, things began to change. In June, 1967, the world held its breath. Israel was at war, and was vastly outnumbered. Then G-d showed us  
(see Benzion, page 5)

# Jewish Educator

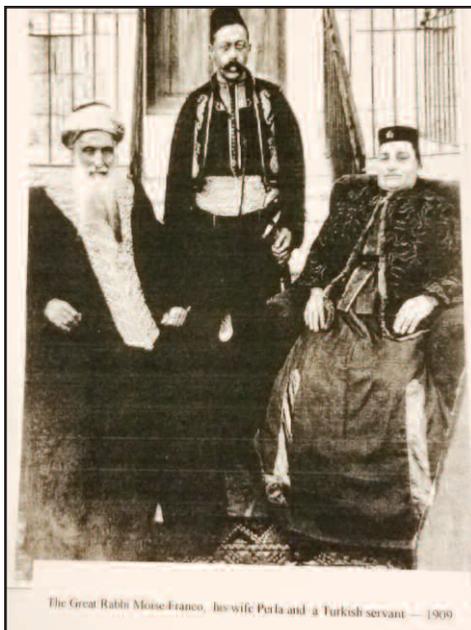
BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN



## Searching for Family on Mount of Olives

On a cold and windy day in February, I drove an hour and a half from Haifa to Jerusalem in search of my great-great-grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Yehudah Franco. I had learned about him from stories my mother told me and a family tree carefully constructed by relatives who were deeply committed to preserving our family history. But I actually saw him numerous times, staring out from a gilded frame on my mother's bedroom wall, with his long white beard, dark caftan and silk turban. The photo below shows a serious looking man, his grim-faced wife and a towering servant; sitting together, they created a triad both somber and mysterious.

Rabbi Moshe Franco's life began in 1837 on the island of Rhodes. But centuries before, the Franco family had its origins in Northern Spain, most likely in the region of Galicia or Navarra. Then, on March 31, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued the Alhambra Decree requiring all Jews to leave Spain within three months or face death. My family, along with between 100,000–165,000 other Jews, fled to neighboring countries such as Portugal, Italy, France, Morocco, Greece, Egypt, and Turkey.



Rabbi Moshe Franco (L) and his wife, Perla, along with a Turkish servant – 1909.

My great-great-grandfather learned *Torah* from his father, known in our family as

Yussef “Kodja” Franco, a great scholar and sage who peddled goods on the side to support his wife and five children.

At the age of 40, my great-great-grandfather was appointed chief rabbi, or *hakham bashi*, of Rhodes, where he served for more than 30 years in this highly esteemed position. In 1911, at the behest of the Sephardi community of Palestine, which was experiencing great internal conflict, he was brought out of retirement at the age of 72 to serve as the *rishon le-Tzion* or *hakham bashi* (head rabbi of the Sephardic rabbinate in Jerusalem), the highest religious position a rabbi could hold.

From 1911 to 1915, he attempted to arbitrate between the Sephardic factions as he continued to serve as the authorized representative of the Sephardim in Jerusalem. He retired as the last *hakham bashi* before the advent of World War I and the establishment of the British Mandate.

I drove as close to the entrance to the Mount of Olives as I could, skirting tour buses and construction workers from the neighboring Arab village of Silwan, before finding a place to park. The Mount of Olives is considered by many to be the holiest Jewish burial ground, dating back over 3,000 years to the First Temple period. In the Second Book of Samuel 15:30, it is written that “David ascended the Mount of Olives, crying as he ascended, with his head covered, going barefoot.”

I almost did the same as I stared into the awesomeness of Zechariah's Tomb and looked up at the more than 150,000 gravesites (estimates range between 70,000 and 300,000) that cover this sacred site. Directly opposite the Temple Mount, three millennia of revered figures have been buried here. From Biblical Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi to rabbinic sages like Nachmanides (the Ramban), from modern day leaders Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Henrietta Szold (the founder of Hadassah) to the father of modern Hebrew, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, and Nobel Prize laureate Shai Agnon, this cemetery holds some of the greatest Jewish personages in history.

From the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 until the 1967 War, the Mount of Olives was under Jordanian control, during which time thousands of Jewish graves were desecrated, vandalized and destroyed. Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 now affords it control over these sacred grounds and a continuing opportunity to repair and protect the gravesites.

What I encountered when I arrived was a far cry from what I had imagined. The small metal kiosk that housed the attendant to whom I had spoken on the phone the previous day, was locked and shuttered. Sadly, the man who had assured me he  
(see Lederman, page 5)

# Acts of Kindness



By RABBI MICAH D. GREENSTEIN, D.D.

The bumper sticker, “Practice Random Acts of Kindness,” as with so many other great ideas, is rooted in Judaism. The values of doing for others (*gemilut chasadim*), improving the world (*tikun olam*), *tzedakah* (charity), and kindness (*chesed*) are central to Jewish life and practice. Passover, like these values, is active. We don’t simply recall the symbols of our experience in Egypt, we eat them! *Pesach* is dynamic and full of life; it’s the story of how our people moved from darkness to light, from sorrow to joy, and from slavery to freedom.

What acts of kindness are you planning to do as springtime emerges? The following are ten suggestions among the 365 on the *A Kindness A Day Calendar*, published by [www.areyvut.org](http://www.areyvut.org). This press uses Jewish lessons to make the world a better place. Each suggested act of kindness is accompanied by a Jewish text for you to reflect upon and a goal for you to accomplish.

As Passover approaches, I hope these acts of kindness, in no order of importance, infuse your life with core Jewish values. May this year’s holiday be for you, and those you love, a deeply meaningful one.

Here are the some ideas for your consideration:

1. Passover celebrates freedom. Consider people in other parts of the world whose freedom is in jeopardy, and actively do something to help them. *“If the Holy One, Blessed be God, had not taken us out of Egypt, we would still be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.”* (Passover Haggadah)

2. Call or visit someone who is sick. *“Just as God visited the sick, so you must visit the sick.”* (Talmud Sotah 14a)

3. Call or visit a relative that you haven’t seen in a while and ask if there is anything you can do to help them. *“Joseph provided all the needs of his father, his brothers, and all his family, down to the very youngest.”* (Genesis 47:12)

4. Work on minimizing one of your negative traits like anger, jealousy, laziness, or lack of focus. *“Create in me a pure heart. Purify me so that I may serve God and life better.”* (Jewish Liturgy)

5. If you are upset with someone, talk to that person about it instead of talking to others. *“Righteousness and peace have touched each other.”* (Psalm 85:11)

6. Expose your children and yourself to people who are different than you. *“The personalities of God’s children differ just as their faces differ.”* (Talmud Berachot 58a)

(see Greenstein, page 6)

## BENZION

(continued from page 4)

amazing miracles. In only 6 days Israel overcame all of her enemies! Since then we have seen many, many miracles, large and small. During the gulf war in 1991 Iraq fired around 70 scud missiles at Israel. Some of these missiles were shot down, but many struck cities here in Israel, destroying and damaging hundreds of houses and apartments. Miraculously, not even one person was killed!

In 1976 Israel held elections, and the parties who opposed belief in G-d lost. Now the government of Israel is not fighting belief in G-d. In 1990 communism almost completely died a sudden peaceful death, and now hundreds of millions can safely believe in G-d. In fact, now the governments of the former Soviet Union actually support religion, and religious schools and institutions. Belief in G-d is growing stronger every day.

Today even science can be used to strengthen our belief in G-d. Take for example DNA, the genetic code. According to recent research, DNA is an amazing combination of at least 3,500,000,000 components, all exactly arranged in a special order! Compare this with the 32 volumes of the Hebrew Encyclopedia, which altogether have less than 100,000,000 letters. If someone would tell you that even one page of the encyclopedia just happened by accident, you would think that he was crazy. And where is all of the amazing mind boggling information of the genetic code? Inside of tiny, tiny, cells that you can only see with a microscope! Today, any person who reads this and is honest with himself cannot say that life is just an accident.

Yes, we are living in very special times. We look around and see that belief in G-d is getting stronger and stronger. On one hand, this is a result of all of the miracles that G-d is showing us. On the other hand, we also have a hand in this. The Lubavitcher Rebbe has helped me and many millions to believe in G-d and to work hard to help all of mankind to strengthen their belief in G-d! It is indeed up to each of us to strengthen our own belief in G-d, and to help others to strengthen their belief in G-d. Until soon,



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very soon, the whole world will be full of the knowledge of G-d.

How do we do this? Go to your local Chabad House and learn the secrets of life.

Learn how to recognize all of the small miracles that G-d does for each of us every day. Learn about the true and complete redemption, the days of *Moshiach*, that we are already beginning to see. If you live near a Chabad House, offer the Rabbi your assistance. If you don’t have a local Chabad House, go to one of the Chabad websites and learn. You can become the emissary of the Rebbe in your community, and strengthen belief in G-d and Jewish observance. It is up to each of us to strengthen belief in G-d and knowledge of G-d. Thus we will all help to bring *Moshiach* now!

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## LEDERMAN

(continued from page 4)

would help me locate my great-great-grandfather’s grave was nowhere to be found. I scanned a tattered map posted on the kiosk but it was clear that finding his grave would be more difficult than locating the proverbial needle in the haystack, because my haystack was complicated by 3,000 years of history, conflict and rubble.

The sky darkened and rain clouds threatened as I found the huge section dedicated to Sephardic Jews. Like a mountain goat, I climbed over rocks and shattered pieces of headstones in search of Moshe Yehuda Franco. It took less than an hour to realize the futility of my search. But then I came upon a plaque that helped me understand that I was not alone. A family headstone simply said: “In honor of our mother who is buried somewhere within this area.” While I couldn’t actually find my great-great-grandfather’s grave, I still had the opportunity to honor him.

I stood overlooking the valley of Kidron, one of the most hotly contested pieces of real estate in the world, and silently said the Mourner’s *Kaddish*. There was nothing more I could do.

As the rain began to wash over the headstones at my feet, I felt both comfort and connection, knowing that somewhere in this great morass of graves, my great-great-grandfather had been laid to rest.

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

# Gather the People



BY MAGIDAH  
KHULDA BAT SARAH

## Gravity

What makes the world go round?

Our rabbis say: "*Al shloscha devarim haolam omeid.*" The world "stands" on three things: the *Torah*, the service of God and loving kindness. *Al hatorah, v'al haavodah, v'al gemilut chasadim*, we sing. The Hebrew word here for "stand" is "*omeid.*" The image is one of the world balancing on our shoulders, or rather, on our service and lovingkindness.

But a lot of us might argue: "The world doesn't stand on me! I stand on it!" And of all the possible human qualities of character, we might ask, why pick kindness? Why not justice or any of a hundred other things? And some of us might also be thinking (to ourselves): What's the big deal about kindness, anyway? Everyone knows that nice guys, and gals, finish last.

We give it lip service, of course. We tell our children: Blah, blah, blah, be nice! Blah, blah, blah, don't fight! But, if we had to pick one particular thing on which our children's futures depended, it probably would not be kindness. Getting a good education and a stable job, gaining a foothold in the world are more likely to be at the top of the list. So, maybe kindness is overrated?

Our rabbis answer us: Where there is no kindness, there can be no stability. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains, the word "*omeid*" literally means "stands." And, "that on which something 'stands' constitutes its foundation; if it loses that, it will fall."

It reminds me of that movie *Gravity*, you know the one, where two astronauts (played by Sandra Bullock and George Clooney) are "stranded in space after the destruction of their space shuttle by a Russian missile strike on a defunct satellite, which has inadvertently caused a chain reaction forming a cloud of debris in space," according to Wiki. The two astronauts try to make their way "on foot," so to speak, to a space station. They're constantly falling head over heels through space.

The movie got panned. The reviewers said: great special effects, lousy plot. At first I agreed with them. But I had to wonder. What's so "special" about these effects? And why do we like them so much? Why go to a place (even in our heads) where there's nothing human, nothing to breathe,

where even gravity is in short supply?

Maybe it's because of what's *not* there. Maybe it's because, as Robert Frost put it, we'd "like to get away from earth awhile and then come back to it and begin over." Maybe we crave space. If you've ever been to the desert, you know the feeling. In such a place, we're thrown back on ourselves. We're forced to focus. These are also the conditions of space, of course. Unlike the desert, though, there's nothing to stand on.

In such a place of nothingness, what is it that keeps us from falling? Gravity is often described, as per Albert Einstein, as the "bending" of space and time in the presence of a mass. Or as the University of California at Riverside website puts it: "When we pass through time, the distortion of space-time by the presence of the earth accelerates our bodies towards the center of the earth. When our feet touch the ground, it exerts a force on our feet in an upwards direction which pushes us up in the opposite direction." It keeps us from falling. I understand just enough of all that to feel confident in putting my feet on the floor when I get out of bed in the morning.

My question is: Is there a moral equivalent? Is there something which draws us toward our own moral center and keeps us from falling? Is there such a thing as moral gravity? For example, if there is no stability without kindness, could we then compare kindness to gravity? Can kindness "bend" human internal time and space? And if so, what would it look like?

The short answer is: It looks like Avram. It doesn't look like Sodom.

As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch tells us, the downfall of Sodom, and Avram sitting before his tent, are placed in one picture in our minds. The bad example and the good example are placed next to each other. What we know to be humane may be reinforced by looking at its opposite.

But perhaps we think we already know about the bad example, the crime of Sodom. Do we? It may not be what we think. What exactly happened in Sodom?

The scripture tells us that Lot, the nephew of Avram, was sitting in the gates of the city when a couple of strangers arrived. Now, if you knew your way around Sodom, as Lot did, you would know that they would find no hospitality there. Aware that they would have to spend the night in the street, Lot talks them into coming home with him. Reluctantly, they agree.

But then, just as they're settling in for the night, an angry mob of Lot's neighbors suddenly shows up. In a blind rage, they surround the house, banging on the walls and demanding that Lot send out his guests. If we know the story, we know what the neighbors have in mind to do

## GREENSTEIN

(continued from page 5)

7. Go out of your way to cheerfully greet people you interact with today, whether in person or on the phone. "*A merry heart makes a cheerful face, the spirit is broken by a sorrowful heart.*" (Proverbs 15:13)

8. Call someone who has lost a loved one within the past few months to see how he or she is doing. "*When my cares are many...Your comfort delights my soul.*" (Psalms 94:19)

9. When your parent, spouse, or loved one asks you to do something, respond immediately. "*A love that is not dependent on anything will never cease.*" (Pirkei Avot 5:16).

10. Pray for someone who is having a difficult time. "*And God heard the cries of the Israelites, and God remembered the eternal covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*" (Exodus 2:24-25)

**Rabbi Micah Greenstein** has served Temple Israel of Memphis for 26 years, 16 as its Senior Rabbi. Named among the city's most significant leaders, he was recognized as the first "Memphian of the Year" by Memphis Magazine in 2013. In 2012 and again in 2013, he was named as one of "America's Top 50 Rabbis" by Newsweek/The Daily Beast. This is from their April 7, 2006 bulletin. ✨



with them. They have in mind to rape them. When he does not cooperate, they threaten to harm Lot himself.

But we have to ask: Why are they so angry? What did Lot or his guests ever do to them?

Rabbi Hirsch answers our question. This "was not just a rabble of curious people, these were '*anshei ha'ir*', the townspeople, and moreover '*anshei s'dom*', citizens, representatives of the state, who came to oppose this unheard-of attack on the old established laws, customs and privileges of their town." But what old established laws are we talking about?

The evil of Sodom, our rabbis say, lay in its failure to show kindness to strangers. And the measure of that evil lay in the fact that the city had actually made it a crime to provide hospitality to strangers. Why would they do that, you might wonder? Presumably, the inhabitants didn't like the idea of having to share the goods of their luxuriant city with others. In violating their law, Lot had revealed himself to be at odds with their interests.

It's interesting to note here that the word humane is derived from the word human. Their sin at its core lay in their not recognizing their visitors as *human beings* and treating them accordingly. In their failure to do that, the residents of Sodom

revealed their inhumanity.

The failure to treat strangers with kindness is a source of great evil, say our rabbis. As Rabbi Hirsch explains, our enslavement and oppression at the hands of the Egyptians had its root in their first treating us as strangers. In no less than 36 (some say 46) places does the *Torah* warn us about this sin. We are reminded time and time again of the risk inherent in failing to treat strangers as human beings. The danger is that we may then feel that we can do as we like with them. They become objects to us, or worse yet, obstacles.

Lot had dared to flaunt these laws and *that* is what infuriated his neighbors. For this, he and his guests were to be punished. An example had to be made of him and his visitors to make sure it never happened again.

And just in case you're thinking this bad example has nothing to do with us in our own time, think again. Sodom is not unlike those modern communities who give bus tickets or plane fare to the homeless to get them out of town (and as far away as possible) in order to avoid spending precious local resources on them – see the *New York Times* (June 3, 2016) article entitled: "Aloha and Welcome to Paradise. Unless You're Homeless."

That's the bad example. And the good? That we find in Avram. The scripture says: "Then God appeared to him in the groves of Mamre and he was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day." It was three days from the time of Avram's circumcision (the time when, our rabbis say, the wound would be the most painful) and it was hot. And yet, he sat in the door of his tent on the lookout for weary wanderers. And sure enough, just as Avram was communing with God, three strangers appeared.

It's interesting that Avram does not wait for them to find him. And he does not delay in prayer. He is really looking for an "opportunity" to practice kindness. He sees kindness to strangers as an opportunity, not a burden. And when three guys (who turn out to be three angels) show up, he invites them to dinner. He literally runs, leaving his prayer, his communion with God, to show hospitality to them.

Now, this may not seem like much to us. And yet, for this seemingly small act of kindness, Avram is characterized by our sages as *amud hachessed*, a "pillar of kindness," meaning that he is one of the ones, referred to by Simon The Just, on whom the world stands, as noted above.

A pillar, of course, is something or, in this case, someone, who holds up something else. But what exactly is he holding up? Perhaps the answer seems obvious: the physical survival of those whom he fed and sheltered. And yet how could that alone hold up the world? Even if it did, it

wouldn't do so for long. With Avram's passing, this "holding up" would come to an end.

It has to be something bigger than Avram, something that could potentially affect the whole world, something that, like gravity, could "bend" space and time. But do we really even think that's possible?

Most of us act as if it's not. The effect, we would say, is way out of proportion to the deed. So, he invited some people to dinner. That's nice, but it's not exactly earthshaking. We see only the smallness of the deed. Perhaps that's because we don't see the consequences. Or maybe it's because if we ourselves are going to do a kindness, we want it to be something big. Unfortunately, doing something big often has us waiting for a big opportunity. And in the meantime, we ignore all the smaller opportunities that land right on our doorstep.

It's ironic, because most of us know the value for ourselves of being treated kindly, in big or small ways, and we certainly expect others to treat us that way. And yet we often underestimate its value in the lives of others. We don't believe what our rabbis say: One good or bad deed draws another in its train.

For example, we ourselves don't like being cut off in traffic, but we don't calculate the effect of cutting someone else off. We don't see the anger of the person who's been cut off (who's already driven away) and the effect of their anger (road rage) on others. We don't see that to prove that he or she is not a person to be cut off, he or she cuts someone else off. And then, perhaps, an accident ensues, resulting in injury or death. But we don't see it. And so, for us at least, it doesn't count.

One small act of kindness can interrupt this chain of events. Someone who recognizes the image of God at our core, who treats us humanely, can remind us that we are human beings, not objects. And, conversely, when we recognize the image of God in another person and treat them humanely, we begin to believe the same of ourselves.

This is Avram's gift to the three guys who visited him. It is also his gift to us. If we recognize our humanity, we may act like Avram and we may have the privilege of causing others to recognize it in themselves.

At our core we have a spark of the divine – our moral free will. We have the capacity to live large in the image of God. But not unlike the inhabitants of Sodom, we sometimes lose sight of that. We fail to recognize that we and they contain the image of God. To be humane is to recognize the human in ourselves and in the person standing before us.

When we do this, the space between us and God shrinks. And so does the space

between us and other humans. Even time shrinks in this equation. After all, we remember the act of Avram, who, thousands of years ago, performed an act of kindness.

This is our *gravity*. To be a "pillar of kindness," to show loving-kindness and to remind others of their own capacity for loving-kindness.

And, it is possible to perform such kindness even in a place of little or no gravity. Remember the last scene in the movie? We find Stone (played by Bullock) having returned to earth, struggling to adjust to earth's gravity once again. But what is it that got her there? Was there something in particular to which we could point that made that possible?

To answer this question, we must rewind to that moment in which the two astronauts, running out of air and maneuvering power, try to grab onto the International Space Station, as they fly by it. In the attempt, Stone's leg becomes caught in the parachute cords of a deployed Soyuz (Soviet spacecraft). She then grabs onto a strap on Kowalski's suit. But it quickly becomes clear that the cords are not strong enough to support them both. If they remain together, they will both die. In order to save her, Kowalski, over her protestations, detaches himself from the tether. She is pulled back toward the International Space Station while he floats away.

Ironically, he fills a gap by creating one, which, at that moment, cannot be filled by anything or anyone else. Our rabbis say, in a place where there is no true human, be that human. Be humane. Be a pillar of kindness. It's such a small gesture, undoing a tether. But it's *always* like that. Some little, unannounced, seemingly inconsequential deed is the one that saves us. I leave you with this poem.

### **All Things Are Made of Smaller Things**

What does it take  
To bring about  
The kingdom of God on earth?  
We search  
And never know  
The kingdom's end.  
We strain  
To find an order in the skies,  
To find our place  
And count our part.  
The moon, the stars—  
Which are we?  
Dust.  
Small stones  
Skipped into a summer sea.  
And yet,  
The largest things  
Are made of smaller things.  
Drops divide the waters of the sea,  
And drops divide those drops.

(see bat Sarah page 9)

# Posting the Past

BY JILL WEISS SIMINS,  
INDIANA HISTORICAL BUREAU



## Walking with Dr. King

*The Civil Rights Legacy of Rabbi Maurice Davis*

“Last Sunday I went for a walk . . . I did not walk alone.”

With these simple words Rabbi Maurice Davis described his 1965 trip to Selma to the readers of the *Jewish Post*. Rabbi Davis’s “walk” was a protest, led



Reb. Davis

by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. against institutional racism, voter suppression, and violence against African Americans. When King asked civil rights leaders from around the country to join him, Davis had no question that it was his duty to march. The Indianapolis rabbi had long worked for civil rights through both secular and faith-based channels. He advocated for community action in his sermons, led several civic action councils combating segregation and poverty, and extended his appeal for civil rights to the entire city through his column in the *Jewish Post*. Mostly, however, Rabbi Davis marched at Selma “because it was right.”

Maurice Davis was born in Rhode Island in 1921 and served the congregation of Adath Israel in Lexington (1951–56) before coming to Indiana. In March 1956, Rabbi Davis became the spiritual leader of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (IHC). He immediately attracted 80 new congregants and was praised for advancing the reform ideas of his predecessors. The temple president called Davis “a spark for us which turned into a flame.”

While IHC welcomed Rabbi Davis and his family, other Hoosiers made them feel “something less than welcome.” In 1959, the *Jewish Post* reported that Davis’s son was denied entry to the Riviera Club’s swimming pool. The rabbi told his congregation that unfortunately the boy learned first about the club’s “wonderful slide” and then its anti-Semitic policies. Davis went on to investigate other offending institutions and to advocate for an end to such segregation.

Rabbi Davis not only responded to discrimination when it was personal. He believed that it was the responsibility of religious leaders to work for moral justice for all people facing oppression. He stated, “A decent and sensitive America is good for all Americans and we must help her be so.” Indianapolis’s African American community noticed. The Indianapolis



Photo Courtesy of the Jewish Post Archive. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. leads marchers from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. Rabbi Davis can be seen just behind King and to his left.

branch of the NAACP twice named Davis its “honorary chairman” and the *Indianapolis Recorder* reported regularly on his efforts to fight segregation and racist home loan and mortgage policies.

While his actions speak for themselves, we are lucky to have his words as well, recorded in his often fiery column for the *Jewish Post*. For example, in September 1963, he responded to the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Alabama where four African American children were killed. Davis blamed not just the bomber, but “every American citizen who participates in prejudice or fails to oppose it.”

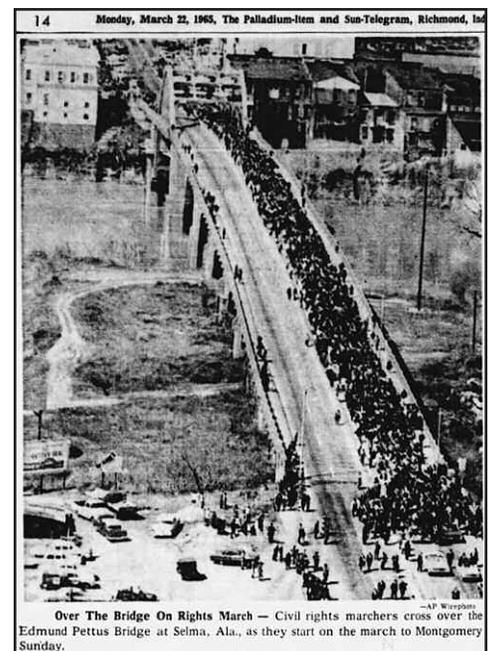
By 1965, the civil rights movement peaked nationally with three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. On March 7, the protesters, led by John Lewis, began a peaceful march, but were stopped at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma by state troopers and county police. In an incident remembered as “Bloody Sunday,” police violently attacked the unarmed demonstrators with clubs and tear gas.

On March 9, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. flew to Selma and called for others to join him. The night of the second march to the bridge, a group of white men killed Unitarian minister James Reeb who had traveled to Selma to join King. Related protests erupted across the country and King called for a third march.

When civil rights leaders and supporters from around the country arrived in Selma on Sunday, March 21, Rabbi Davis was among them. He was driven down a road “lined with National Guardsmen” to Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church where Dr. King also arrived at 10:45 a.m. Davis was asked to represent the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and was placed next to King on the platform. The two spoke briefly before King began his sermon. Davis wrote, “When King speaks, you are not an audience. You are participants. And when he finished we were ready to march.”

The demonstrators organized into rows with the first three rows chosen by Dr. King. Davis stated, “Before the march began a list of 20 names were read to accompany Rev. King in the first three rows, and my name was one of them. I marched proudly at the front . . . Behind us the thousands began to follow.” The marchers passed people who “waved, wept, prayed, and shouted out words of encouragement” and others with signs reading “dirty communist clergy go home” and “integrationist scum stay away.”

Rabbi Davis walked for twelve hours without resting or eating. Unfortunately, he did not get to finish the march. Instead, he was called to fly to Cincinnati that night to be with his father-in-law who had been hospitalized with a serious illness. When Davis returned to Indianapolis, he was welcomed with a threatening phone call.



Over The Bridge On Rights March – Civil rights marchers cross over the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, Ala., as they start on the march to Montgomery Sunday.

Caption reads: “Over the Bridge on Rights March – Civil rights marchers cross over the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Selma, Ala., as they start on the march to Montgomery Sunday.” – AP wire photo. (Richmond Palladium-Item, March 22, 1965, p.14, accessed Newspapers.com.)

A man asked if he was “the rabbi who went to Selma.” When Davis answered affirmatively, the voice continued: “Let me check this list again... You are No. 2 in Indianapolis.” The implication was that Davis was the second on a hit list of activists. The man ended the call by saying, “It won’t do any good to call the police... it’ll be too late when it goes off.” From his statements to the press, it seems the rabbi was less afraid than hurt that the threats were possibly coming from fellow Hoosiers. He told the *Jewish Post*: “Monday night my life was threatened. Not in Selma. Not in Montgomery. Not in

(see Simins, page 9)

# Shabbat Shalom



BY RABBI JON ADLAND

**Pirke Avot 4:21** – *Rabbi Yaakov said, this world is like an entrance chamber before the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the entrance chamber so that you may enter the banquet hall.*

**March 8, 2019, Pekudei**  
**Exodus 38:21–40:38, 1 Adar II 5779**

These words come near the end of this *parashah*, “When Moses had finished the work, <sup>34</sup>the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of Adonai filled the Tabernacle. <sup>35</sup>Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of Adonai filled the Tabernacle.”

This holiest of places was so filled with God’s presence that Moses couldn’t enter it. We know that this isn’t the continuing model of God in holy places. We know that God’s presence was always at the *Mishkan*, but the Israelites were able to bring their offerings. The same goes for the Temples in Jerusalem and the same in our sanctuaries today. The holiness of God’s presence at these sacred spaces helps many pray and connect to God and their spiritual inner *Shechina*.

This presence of God at our holy places was defamed today in the worst way possible. *Nashot haKotel* – Women of the Wall went to pray at the *Kotel* for *Rosh Chodesh Adar II*. It was the 30th anniversary of this group who struggles to gain egalitarian access at the *Kotel*, a holy space which belongs to all Jews. Read this account in italics of what happened:

*The unfolding drama this week takes us to the center focus point for all Jews from time immemorial. Reports of angry mobs showing up to kick, fight, spit at, and rip off the tallitot and kippot of those coming to pray and celebrate with the Women of the Wall on the occasion of their 30th anniversary, filled the air of the Western Wall plaza this morning. Rabbi Noa Sattath left bloodied but unbowed, and Yizhar Hess, head of the Israeli Conservative (Masorti) Movement wrote that in “ten years of praying at the Kotel each Rosh Hodesh, (Rabbi Josh Weinberg) had never seen such hatred, such violence, and such rage in their eyes.”*

*This was the place that was meant to be for worship, for pilgrimage and as the single symbol meant to unify our people. The Temple Mount is the single most important symbol that we have as a people. It served as the focal point for all of Jewish society while it stood, and its memory served as the most*

## BAT SARAH

(continued from page 7)

And sands of moons  
And distant stars  
Are also small.  
And none is lost.  
And so  
Are all small acts  
Of kindness  
Like drops of water  
That can wear away a stone  
To its very heart,  
Or make a well  
Spring up,  
Or wash away  
A shadow on a soul  
And help to bring it  
In the light.  
Which are we?  
And where?  
A little lower  
Than the angels.

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



*important force in keeping us alive during our centuries of exile.*

Here Jews are fighting Jews, Jews are beating other Jews because they are offended by their manner of prayer, and observant Jews are desecrating religious ritual objects because they are offended that women are wearing them.

With the continuing rise of anti-Semitism in the world and in the United States, with a Democrat US representative using classic anti-Semitic language, with the rise of white nationalist anti-Jewish groups being viewed as good people, with leaders in this country talking to Jews and using the words, “your country” when referring to Israel, with cemeteries being defaced and swastikas brazenly painted anywhere, Jews shouldn’t be fighting with each other ever, nevertheless over whose prayer rituals are correct and not, in one of the places deemed holy to the Jewish people.

The peacefulness of the image presented to us at the end of Exodus with God as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night that leads us on our journey and whose presence fills the *Mishkan* (though not so much that we can’t enter) is an image and feeling I hope to have when I enter a synagogue’s sanctuary, any sanctuary, throughout the world.

Regardless of whether you wear a *kippah*, put on *tefillin*, or drape yourself

## SIMINS

(continued from page 8)

Atlanta. In Indianapolis.”

Like King, Davis used the incident to draw attention to the civil rights cause. Just days after the threats on his family, the *Jewish Post* published Davis’s sermon explaining why he felt called to join King in Selma. Davis wrote, “I know now what I was doing in Selma, Alabama. I was worshiping God. I was doing it on U.S. 80, along with 6,000 others who were doing precisely the same thing, in 6,000 different ways.”

Rabbi Davis continued to work for civil rights in Indianapolis and never forgot his march with King. In 1986, he reflected in the pages of the *Jewish Post* about a first for the country:

“You hear a song, or sniff an aroma, and all of a sudden you are miles and years away... It happens, too, with birthdays. January 20 was a very special day. The first national observance of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. I hear them say the words, pronounce the name, and in the twinkling of an eye I am suddenly in Selma, Alabama with some 80,000 other people; Jews, and Protestants, and Catholics, and atheists, and agnostics... We were there because of a man whom we admired as much as we loved, and whom he loved as much as we admired. We were there because he was there. And he was there because it was right.”

Read an extended version of this story on the *Indiana History Blog*: <https://blog.history.in.gov/walking-with-dr-king-the-civil-rights-legacy-of-rabbi-maurice-davis/>

**Jill Weiss Simins** is a historian and a musician with a love for uncovering the lesser-known stories from Indiana history. She has worked for the Indiana Historical Bureau since 2008. Her ongoing project, created in concert with the United States Holocaust Museum’s History Unfolded initiative examines what Hoosiers knew about the events leading up to the Holocaust through their newspapers. You can follow her posts at: <http://blog.newspapers.library.in.gov/>. She lives in Irvington neighborhood of Indianapolis with her husband Russell. ✨



in a *tallit*, God knows that you are there. The trappings are for us and what makes us comfortable in our prayer. It shouldn’t matter to the person sitting next to me whether I wear a *kippah* or not. Unfortunately, there are Jews who become offended and angry and even mean when women pray with ritual items that they believe shouldn’t be worn by women. How absurd! This is just wrong to judge another by your own standards of rituals in prayer.

(see Adland, page 11)

# Holocaust Educator



By DR. MIRIAM L. ZIMMERMAN

## Vital Addition to Holocaust Filmography

Multitalented filmmaker Roberta Grossman just completed a feature documentary, *Who Will Write Our History* (WWWOH)? Having seen other Holocaust and Jewish-themed films by Ms. Grossman, including 2008's *Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh* and 2013's *Hava Nagila, The Movie*, I can think of no other filmmaker better suited for this film than she. Grossman wrote, produced, and directed this important film. For my earlier article about WWWOH while still in production, browse to [https://jewishpostopinion.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NAT\\_7-15-16FFF.pdf](https://jewishpostopinion.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/NAT_7-15-16FFF.pdf) (pgs 15-16).



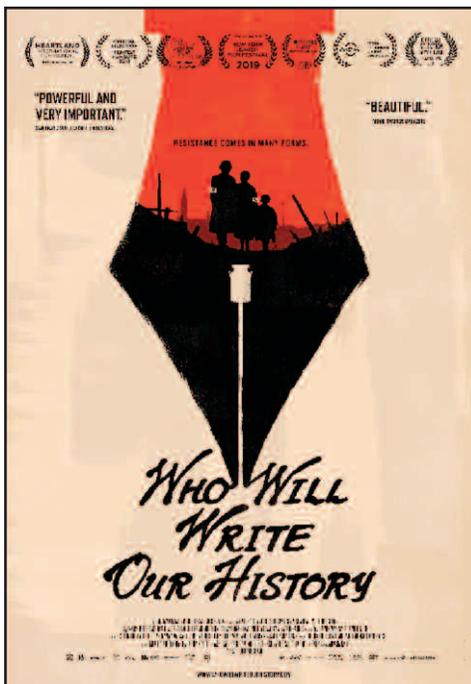
R. Grossman

The World Premier of WWWOH occurred in the summer of 2018 in the Palo Alto, Calif. venue of the Jewish Film Institute's San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. Unfortunately, I missed it. But, I was able to view it online before its national release on Jan. 27, 2019, International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Based on the book by Samuel D.Kassow, Ph.D., *Who Will Write Our History? Rediscovering a Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*, the film faithfully reenacts the story of how historian Dr. Emanuel Ringelblum's group, *Oyneg Shabes*, or "Joy of Sabbath," documented the Warsaw Ghetto experience. The film "mixes the writings of the Oyneg Shabes archive with new interviews, rarely seen footage and stunning dramatizations to transport us inside the Ghetto and the lives of these courageous resistance fighters."

This clandestine group included journalists, artists and art critics, statisticians, historians, rabbis, scholars and intellectuals, teachers and authors, social workers and economists; secular as well as religious Jews; and children as well as adults. They fought the Nazis with words and spirit, not with weapons. Dr. Ringelblum wanted to ensure that the world would remember Jews not through the distorted lens of Nazi films, but in terms of the Jews' own lived experience.

The Germans sent film crews into the



Warsaw Ghetto to create propaganda for the benefit of the Polish people, whom they wanted to "protect" from the Jews. Their propaganda depicted Jews as vermin, as not interested in personal hygiene, as scum. Ringelblum did not want this perspective to characterize how Jews would be thought of in the future.

"Will the Germans write our history, or will we write our history?" The historian's vision was to ensure that Jews documented their experience in the Ghetto so that Jews defined their legacy, not the Nazis. Dr. Ringelblum's greatness, according to the film, was that he brought together an extraordinarily talented group of people and let them do their thing.

Ringelblum placed value on the lives of ordinary people. He felt that the history of the Jewish people was not the history of rabbis and philosophers, but of the whole people. He loved the masses and the language of the masses, Yiddish. Thus, he wanted his group to record everyday experience. The actors reflect Dr. Ringelblum's approach, toggling between Yiddish and Polish, depending on context. The film is subtitled and available in English, Polish, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and closed captioned.

The members were given notebooks and stipends so that they could record eyewitness testimony. They wrote reports from the streets as well as literary pieces, poetry, jokes, diaries, commissioned works about refugees from surrounding areas, illnesses, smuggling, the situation of the Jewish child, the role of women, and the songs of beggars. Everything submitted "had to pass the critical eye of Dr. Ringelblum," according to Hersh Wasser, one of Dr. Ringelblum's two executive secretaries.

Everything had to be kept secret.

Members did not know one another. Dr. Ringelblum kept in touch with them via Hersh Wasser and his other executive secretary, Israel Lichtenstein. Only those three knew where the archives lay hidden. They had to act clandestinely, because documenting German crimes was punishable by death.

In addition to the writings, Dr. Ringelblum instructed some of the members of the group to collect items from the Ghetto to add to the archive. Such artifacts included pronouncements from the German government, tickets to cultural events, ration coupons, letters and postcards, photos, theatre posters, labels on Ghetto goods, the obligatory white ribbons with the Jewish star worn on the arm, newspapers, and even candy wrappers; in short, the detritus of any recycling bin from today's world. Surprisingly, the Ghetto published six Yiddish dailies and two Polish dailies. These artifacts served as further evidence of the living conditions in the Warsaw Ghetto.

A better term would be "dying conditions" in the Warsaw Ghetto. According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), 80,000 Jews perished in the Warsaw Ghetto from the appalling conditions; overcrowding, starvation, disease, and shootings by the Nazis. "By August 1941, more than 5,000 people a month succumbed to starvation and disease." Most of the original 50-60 members of the Oyneg Shabes group did not survive.

Rachel Auerbach was one of only three survivors. Dr. Ringelblum was not one of them. Thrice-nominated Academy Award actress Joan Allen narrated the film in Rachel Auerbach's voice, using Auerbach's words written after the war. Academy Award winner Adrien Brody supplied the voice of Dr. Ringelblum.

As an educator, my top criterion for a Holocaust documentary is whether or not I plan to show the film to my students. The film dramatically portrayed issues so difficult for students to understand, such as the early persecutions and humiliations, the gradual creation of a ghetto, the rationale for smuggling, the effects of starvation rations on a population, and overcrowding.

In 1939, about 30 percent of prewar Warsaw was Jewish, about 350,000 people. It was the largest Jewish community in Europe. The Nazis divided the city into three ethnicities: German, Polish, and Jewish. To create the Ghetto, the Nazis transferred Poles out and Jews into the designated area, only 1.3 square miles. On Nov. 15, 1940, the Nazis sealed the Ghetto.

Subsequently, the Warsaw Ghetto also served as a transit camp, as the Nazis dumped Jews from the surrounding area into the Ghetto before deporting

them to an extermination camp (usually Treblinka). At its height, about 450,000 Jews were crammed into that same area of 1.3 square miles, resulting in 7.2 people per room.

I predict that the vividness of the footage and the high production values throughout the film will quickly engage and sustain today's student; no mean feat given competing technologies that I believe have changed the ways in which people's brains process images.

Ms. Grossman seamlessly wove together archival footage, dramatic reenactments, and scholarly interviews. The scholarly talking heads did not dominate the film nor interfere with the dramatic tension established by the actors. Technology allowed her to superimpose her actors onto archival footage. The result is that the viewer feels as if the actors are, in fact, living in the horrific conditions of the Warsaw Ghetto.

Seeing this technology at work in the film reminded me of the admonition of Holocaust survivor and activist Elie Wiesel, of blessed memory. Wiesel was against representing the Holocaust in artistic form. He warned that since art, by its very nature, transforms and beautifies, there is a danger it will transform the Holocaust into something it is not, something beautiful. He was adamantly against fictionalizing the Holocaust.

I believe Ms. Grossman is cognizant of Wiesel's admonition. She wrote in her Director's Statement that, "While striving to avoid 'tricks' that would 'fool' an audience, the film does employ transparent visual effects such as compositing actors shot against green screen with archival footage. The goal here is to bring the past to life while *balancing against the high standards for veracity in a documentary* (emphasis added). To achieve this goal, we blended archival and dramatic footage, pulling from the tools of *dramatic feature storytelling* (emphasis added). While fully aware of the complexity of these techniques, I reached for these visual tools because *Who Will Write Our History* tells the story of a place that no longer exists (the Warsaw Ghetto), about people who are long dead, and about a period of history captured primarily in black-and-white film and mostly by Nazi propaganda photographers and cameramen. I want people not simply to learn from the film, but to be engaged and deeply moved."

Grossman justifies her use of dramatic storytelling as a means of achieving her goal, to create an engaging film that will be seen. My dilemma is to decide if the advantages of using dramatic storytelling outweigh any disadvantages. One could argue that a documentary is no longer a documentary to the extent that fictional

devices are inserted into the work. Questions for me arise: is this film a work of art or is it a documentary? If the former, is Wiesel's warning relevant? Is the film sufficiently nonfiction such that an educator like me will not have to worry that students will become confused, not able to distinguish archival sequences from dramatic enactments? Will the use of this technology render future audiences skeptical about the veracity of the archival footage because so much of the images are created and thus fictional?

Undeniably, the film is historically correct. Grossman added another layer of rigor by employing scholars to help her and her crew achieve historical authenticity. "In order to ground the film's cinematically dramatized scenes in historical accuracy, the production design team worked with scholars for six months before we started filming. This process ensured that every pen, shoelace, and wall color was spot-on for the period." In addition, "The words spoken by actors in the film come directly from the writing of the *OyNEG Shabes Archive* and/or in the case of the film's narrator, Rachel Auerbach, from her post-war writing."

Just before the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Dr. Ringelblum realized the time had come to hide the precious archive. In milk cans and boxes, he buried the archive in three different caches in the Warsaw Ghetto. After the war, just two of the caches were found. The third is thought to be located under the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw. "...the archive comprises some 35,000 pages, including documents, materials from the underground press, photographs, memoirs, *belles lettres*, and much more."—USHMM website, "The Warsaw Ghetto OyNEG Shabes — Ringelblum Archive Catalog and Guide."

Today, the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (JHIW) houses the archive's writings and artifacts. According to JHIW, on January 27, 2019, during International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the film was screened worldwide – in cinemas, theatres, churches, synagogues, mosques, universities, museums, culture centers. See more at <http://whowillwriteourhistory.com>.

JHIW continued, that at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, an audience of about 1500 diplomats from all around the world took part in a discussion with Nancy Spielberg [executive producer], Roberta Grossman, Samuel D. Kassow and Stephen Smith, head of the USC Shoah Foundation. The discussion was transmitted live in social media, on the film's profile page.

Grossman pointed out that "In 1999, three document collections from Poland were included in UNESCO's Memory of

## ADLAND

(continued from page 9)

I celebrate this 30th anniversary with Women of the Wall. I send them my strength and hope that those who were hurt will recover soon. Instead of fighting with each other we need to be Jewish-strong together. When you light your *Shabbat* candles this week, light one for the Women of the Wall and all who pray with them and support them. Light the other candle and may its light be unifying to all Jews.

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the World Register: the masterpieces of Chopin, the scientific works of Copernicus and the *OyNEG Shabes Archive*."

By accomplishing its goal of collecting and recording thousands of eyewitness accounts of Jewish life in the Warsaw Ghetto and the surrounding areas, Dr. Ringleblum's *OyNEG Shabes Archive* defeated Nazi propaganda with truth. UNESCO elevated the accomplishments of OyNEG Shabes with the artistic accomplishments of Chopin and the scientific truths of Copernicus.

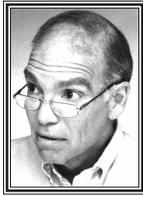
Grossman concluded her Director's Statement with the following: "Historians concur that the *OyNEG Shabes Archive* is the richest cache of eyewitness, contemporaneous accounts to survive the Holocaust. Despite its importance, the archive remains largely unknown outside academic circles. It is my hope that *Who Will Write Our History* will change that in the way that only a film can do, by making the story accessible to millions of people around the world."

After watching the film twice and writing this analysis, I have decided to do what I can to help Roberta Grossman accomplish her goal, by showing it to my Holocaust class. It is a superb film, meeting the highest standards of historical accuracy. At the same time, it includes enough elements of dramatic storytelling to ensure that today's technologically saturated student will stay engaged and interested throughout. I highly recommend this film.

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# Shipley Speaks



BY JIM SHIPLEY

## We Are Different

We watched a Netflix program the other night titled *Mossad*. It consisted of interviews with mostly former Mossad Agents and Executives. At one point the interviewer asked “Why is the Mossad pictured in so many nations as a bunch of assassins and terrorists?”

With a slight smile, the ex-agent said “look – we are a different country. We are surrounded by nations who for the most part would like to destroy us and wipe every Jew off the face of the earth”. Can you name another country faced with this problem? No. And the problem of course, extends far beyond that little country in the Middle East.

Deadly Anti-Semitic attacks in France, in Germany – in the United States, for God sake! When there is uncertainty in the world, blame the Jews. There were times in both the distant and not-so-distant past, when attacks on the Jews were more public and more accepted than today. But, the basic canards remain: “The Jews control the banks and the money.” “The Jews control the media.”

The rise of “Populism” has fanned the flames. As nations turn inward, they look for enemies within. They look for scape-goats and those to blame because “times are not like they used to be” or “No Jew will take my place.” And when the leadership allows this attitude to fester and flourish, it becomes dangerous times.

Why more so for Jews than any other ethnic group? Well, we have to go way back for that. The Catholic Church took out after us shortly after they became an accepted religion. The Popes for centuries fomented their populations to blame the Jews for famine, fire, rain and any other mishap that their own religion could not control – but the Jews differed in their faith and their peoplehood and therefore made a perfect target.

You would think that by this time, well past the “Age of Enlightenment” that the human race would have achieved a point where they would accept the fact that our problems are within ourselves and not with a given race, religion or peoplehood.

But here are the Jews. Because we have found a way to survive and even thrive in a world that really did not want us, we are an ideal target. Even if a national leader decided that “they” are the problem and does not mention the Jews – perhaps

# Wiener's Wisdom



BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

## Complicity in Silence

*“O God, keep not your silence; hold not your peace, and be not still O God. For lo your enemies are in an uproar; and they that hate you have lifted up their head. They hold crafty converse against your people, and take counsel against your treasured ones. They have said” ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.’” (Psalm 83)*

If there ever was a time when this scriptural reading had more significance since World War II, it is certainly now. It has reached the heights of the greatest deliberative body in the world and reeks with the age-old bigotries of Jewish scape-goating. The halls of Congress are filled with hate, hate for one another, hate for the duties that are their responsibilities, hate for the decency of commonality, hate for the democratic expressions that gave this country life.

There was an essay written during the 1940s by a Protestant Pastor, Martin



meant no harm or even reference to “Us” – that’s where it usually ends up.

So yes, we are different – always have been, always will be. When the first wave of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe came to the United States – (America!) (“The Golden Medina! – The Golden Place). Well, so, the streets were not paved with gold. Still, there were no Cossacks and there were opportunities!

BUT: Those who came here before this influx were not a welcoming committee. They did not for the most part want to share their piece of “The American Dream.” So, they discriminated against “The Other”. Irish, Italian, Jewish – each took their turn at being “The Other”.

So, what did we do? We tried to “assimilate”. We changed our names: Rabinowitz became Roberts. Cohen became King, Slutsky became Sloan.

We even tried to hide our ethnicity with cosmetic changes. Shirley graduated? *Mazel tov!* Now she can get that nose job!

You know what? It didn’t work (Thank God). In the long run, in realty, a Jew is a Jew. So, slowly we began to reclaim our heritage. During WWII we once again went silent – even further hiding our “identity”. It didn’t help. As the stories began to trickle in from Europe of an

(see Shipley, page 13)

Niemoller in which he wrote, “First they came for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak for me.” Here we are witnessing the same complicit behavior.

If there were to be declarations by members of Congress against African Americans, the Black Caucus would raise their voices in unified condemnation. If there were expressions of anger against people of the Muslim faith, there would be shouting of discrimination. Where are the indignations regarding the vitriol and hate emanating from the people elected to ensure the tranquility of all our citizens? Even members who are of the Jewish faith refuse to stand and condemn these atrocious diatribes.

At this season of the year, in Jewish Houses of Worship, the holiday of *Purim* is celebrated and the Book of Esther is read. It describes, in vivid detail, the tragic events that had occurred more than 2500 years ago. It is as though we are traveling back in time. Again and again we witness the attempt at eradicating a certain people because of their beliefs and traditions, these same understandings of faith that are part of all religious expression to this very day, whether it be Christianity or Islam.

Soon, Judaism and Christianity will commemorate two holidays designed to remind us of the value of freedom. More than that however, Passover and Easter should awaken our understanding of tolerance because intolerance results in the complete destruction of society. History is replete with these lapses in judgments and civility, and the total annihilation of cultures and countries.

Are there none who will stand up to these bigots? Are there none to understand that hate, in any form, will eventually find its way into everyday living and experiences? Are there none who will realize the destruction resulting from such venom?

All that is being accomplished is the resurgence of perceptions that were thought to have been eradicated by time. Today, more than ever, efforts are being introduced, under the guise of free speech, to rekindle the flames of distrust reminiscent of the past. The world seems to be in flames of xenophobia and enmity.

As a nation, we have weathered the storms of animosity, bigotry, sexism, and racism. There have been pauses and even back sliding, but we persevered because we understood, and should now understand, that only a nation united will stand as a beacon of what the Prophet Isaiah

(see Wiener, page 13)

# Kabbalah of the Month



BY MELINDA RIBNER

## Meditation for Passover and Its Preparation

As Passover is quickly approaching, it is such a busy and intense time. Whether we are rushing around either preparing for the holiday or simply living our lives, doing what we need to do, it is important to remember to give ourselves some time to simply be each day and focus our intention. Just like we eat to nourish the physical body each day, every day our souls require a time for prayer, centering, meditation, and attunement.

Even as you read this note, take a long conscious and deep breath, relax, attune yourself to the present moment, and open your heart. Breathe into the heart. Allow the mind to quiet, let go of thoughts and all the things you must do. Give yourself the gift of the awareness of your breath and life force energy. Open to the experience of being breathed. We do not breathe by our own will but rather we are breathed by Divine will.

Be open to receive the divine support, the love and nurturing in this very moment. How loving and faithful is God who sustains our lives. Every day, and even every moment we receive so much. Experience the stillness in the spaces between the breaths as you slow down the breathing. It is here that you touch the higher levels of your soul. Allow yourself to soar beyond this world.

Come to the awareness that the holiday of Passover will soon be upon us. Passover brings in a new order in your life and the world. Your intention, your *kavannah* is most important. It will shape your experience. This time can be a springboard for you to really go forward in your life to greater freedom. That is if you want it to be.

Are you open to newness? Are you open to living more authentically and with greater meaning, joy and purpose? What do you want to open up to in your life? Will you let go and leave what no longer serves you? Will you stand in the question, "What does God want of me right now?" Take a few moments to breathe and align yourself.

As we approach Passover, we need to remember that we each have our own personal Egypt, that place of narrow constraints that comprise all the energetic blocks, the imagined fears, the unhappy

### SHIPLEY

(continued from page 12)

actual "Holocaust" most Jews refused to believe it. Matter of fact, just about everybody refused to believe such a thing could be happening in the 20th century. Could it? Yes – it could and it did.

While indeed there were some Gypsies and other ethnic groups sent to die, the gas chambers for the most part echoed with the prayers and cries of Jews – overwhelmingly. It is the job of every Jew to tell this story as we tell of the escape from Egypt. We must recognize that the present political atmosphere is not benign – it is dangerous and yes: *We Are Different*.

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ways we feel constrained internally or externally in our lives. Some of us think too much of ourselves, others think too little of themselves. It does not matter what category you are in, for each Passover there is the invitation to go beyond yourself, to leave the box of your personal Egypt and be in the not knowing.

Everything begins with your desire, with your yearning. God can give you only what you are open to receive. Take a moment to accept the invitation that is generously given to you by God during Passover. Be grateful that you do not do this life journey alone. You are not here on your own accord. God loves you and will help you.

Hear these words spoken directly to you. It is good to repeat them to yourself and to share them with others. When *Hashem* says to open your mouth, I suggest that you literally do this. Open your mouth like a baby ready to receive nourishment.

"I am the Lord who has taken you out of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. Tell me what you truly want. Your needs and your desires are important to Me. Pour your heart out to Me.

Make a space for Me in your life. To give you what I want and what you really want, you need to let go of your old habits, change your vessels, open your heart, so you can receive something new from Me. I am your healer and your redeemer. I love you. I took you out of Egypt in the past and I will take you out in the future. I want you to be free and joyful. Passover is a special time for Me to pour my light and love upon you if you are open to receive it.

### WIENER

(continued from page 12)

taught: "For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." Perhaps there are no greater heights to reach for than the Heavens above.

And then, perhaps as Psalm 83 ends, we too will understand: "That they may know that it is You alone whose name is the Lord, The Most High over all the Earth." And, as Shakespeare asked: *What's in a name?* This should teach us that by whatever name we call God, it is the same God who breathed life into us at the beginning, and sustains us to this very day.

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To best receive from Me, go on a Passover diet, eat simply, pray, sing, be happy and have faith and trust in Me especially during this time. If you attach yourself to Me and my Will, I will liberate you. I will bring you close to Me. I will attach Myself to you. You will then know a true love and a joy that is beyond this world. You cannot live this life without Me. You cannot free yourself without My help. I have entrusted you with a very important mission of perfecting My world. I will empower you to do what you need to do. I am here for you. I love you, more than you can imagine."

At the *seder*, take some time to share with others the blessings and the miracles that you have already experienced in this last year as well as what blessings you would like to receive in the coming year. We each have so much to be grateful for. Miracles are taking place all the time.

*Hashem* tells us to eat *matzah* on Passover in the *Torah*. *Matzah* is called the bread of affliction, the bread of humility, the bread of healing, the bread of faith. *Matzah* is all of these things. How special to share this bread with others. We need to become like *matzah*, simple and humble.

When you go to the *seder* and it becomes time to eat *matzah*, eat it without talking. *Hashem* is feeding you all that you need at this time. Do not waste this precious time with idle talk. During the *seder*, I heard that some people even kiss the *maror* (bitter herbs). Wow! That takes faith, love and humility to be grateful for all the hardship because it brought us to where we are in this moment. Try kissing

(see Ribner, page 14)

# Media Watch



BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

## I Feel Bad

The new NBC series, *I Feel Bad*, is clever, but with a biting, dour, sometimes nasty edge. In part diary form and mostly sitcom format, we learn the story of Emet (Sarayu Rao Blue), who is a witty working Indian-American mother of two. Emet is a major artist/designer at a company that produces video games. Her three closest co-workers are self-styled “nerds” of various social and moral levels whom she regards as, and treats, as misfits.

Emet is married to David (portrayed by Paul Adelstein of *Private Practice* fame, a Jewish actor). But not until the December 6, 2018 episode was it stated (loud and clear) that David is Jewish, with very Jewish parents who want to visit for *Chanukah*.

Emet is of Indian-Hindu background, with culturally Hindu parents and a highly critical and confrontational mother. And so the stage was set for what was probably the first Hindu-Jewish interfaith marriage spoof in American popular media. Writers Anthony Gioe and Nick Mandernach offered this fare with relish.

David and Emet hustle to find ways to “convince the grandparents that our kids are growing up in a culturally rich Jewish-‘ish’ home.” They try to give the kids a crash course in Hebrew, but the only word the youngsters master is *shmuck*. (That word is a Yiddish vulgarism that refined Yiddish speakers never used, but virtually all use of Yiddish words in TV comedies and dramas is vulgar. David had used it in an earlier episode before he was even identified as Jewish.)

When David bemoans the fact that “We’ve been asleep at the cultural wheel,” Emet reminds him that they are both so busy with work and child-rearing that there is hardly time for the basics. At that point I was hopeful that the episode would offer some insights into the difficulties of imparting a religious heritage with two working parents even of the same faith, but given what followed, the writers and producers were already committed to slapstick and burlesque. After all, they had begun with the oldest cheap trick in the arsenal of TV “Jewish” humor: reaching right away for standard vulgar Yiddish expressions.

I should add that slapstick and burlesque (in the sense of sexual innuendo) creep into this series in more than one episode, and even involve the children. In one

episode about vanity and aging (October 18, 2018), written by Matthew Harawitz, Emet puts heavy barbells in the garbage bags and bribes her daughter so that her husband will lose weight before a company photo. There is no concern for possible injury in this and in similar scenarios. In another episode Emet and David play chicken with each other, daring one another and putting each other in real physical danger. (Dec. 13, 2018) Is there a suggestion here, denied in an episode about sentimentality, that this is a toxic marriage?

As regards *Chanukah*, Emet and David engage the kids in putting up a *mezuzah* and procure a shiny oversized silver *menorah*. Catching Emet with a *menorah*, her mother castigates her for ignoring Indian customs but suddenly finding time for *Chanukah*. Emet determines then and there to whisk off her folks to a gambling casino, a place that for some gratuitous reason the writers depict them (in other episodes, too) as unable to resist, especially after being given David’s credit card.



Emet is so determined to impress her in-laws with a Jewish home that she does a “pork sweep,” gifting the bacon to her office colleagues and declaring, “My in-laws are coming so I’m Jewish this week.” It would seem that her parents never protested the pork in the house, which is also not in accord with the ideals of Hindu culture.

But why does Emet go through all the trouble of turning her home inside out to please her Jewish in-laws?

It would seem that David’s parents are nice and loving people. Sure, the mom, Irene (Caroline Aaron), adores her son: “I made a handsomer David than Michelangelo.” But she also encourages and compliments Emet, and in a sincere, not patronizingly flattering, way. Irene compliments Emet on looking good in a red dress – and just after we see Emet’s mother, Maya (Madhur Jaffrey), criticize the same dress as “too young” for her. When Emet tells Irene about this, Irene posits that Emet’s mother may be critical “because of a tumor.”

All this, especially Irene’s giving her the family brisket recipe, does wonders for Emet’s self-esteem. And Emet is so anxious for that fix that she blackmails her husband to keep up the ruse that they are living some kind of Jewish life the rest of the year. To discourage him from connecting

## RIBNER

(continued from page 13)

the *maror* this *Pesach*. It feels liberating and expansive just to think about doing it. May this holiday be beautiful, healing, and transformational for you and all of Israel.

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with her parents via face time, she even declares that she regrets not having had a Jewish wedding. David and her father lift her up in a chair and dance, until her parents return abruptly from the trip that Emet had contrived.

Indeed, Emet literally falls out of the chair upon seeing her folks, a rather violent stunt on the part of the writers, foreshadowing physical (even violent) humor and an abrupt reckoning. “Our daughter is starring in a...version of *Yentl*,” her mom, Maya, observes. When Emet tells her mother that Irene compliments her and builds her self-esteem, the latter chimes in that Irene “may have a tumor.”

Emet’s dad points out to his wife that they haven’t been diligent about imparting their own Hindu customs. But his Maya, declares, “This is a cultural war and I must win.” She then engages the children in a paintball-like Hindu custom for spring (a bit premature) which causes them to lose interest to the *Chanukah* party. She then announces that she won “the war for cultural dominance.” The writers are determined to depict Maya as a cold, nasty lady. (I’ll leave it to Indian-American reviewers to comment.)

Suffice it to say that the writers suggest that Emet has inherited a certain coldness and edginess from her mom, rendering Emet at times unsympathetic to David’s sentimentality. (Nov. 1, 2018, Rupinder Gill) The implication is that Emet lies often and naturally because of that “inheritance.” As for David, his sentimentality is highlighted before he is identified as Jewish, but it does not seem to apply, at least consistently, to *Chanukah* or to Judaism.

The writers have the Hindu grandfather insert nervous lines more conducive to Jewish self-mockery: “Their God commands

(see Gertel, page 15)

# Book Review

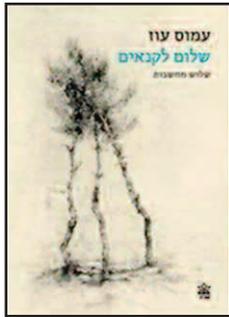


REVIEW BY  
RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

## Searing Pessimism & Consoling Optimism

**Shalom Lakanaim: Shalosh Machshavot (Dear Zealots).** By Amos Oz. Keter-books: Moshav Ben-Shemen, Israel. 2017. pp. 131. In Hebrew.

Amos Oz's latest literary gem, relies on his previously English published book, *How to Cure a Fanatic*. Given that this top Israeli author has enjoyed global attention, it is translated into approximately 20 languages. This is the book's first Hebrew edition since published in 2002, and its present format is both updated and enlarged. The slim volume fits the idiomatic expression, "*Bivchinat mooat hamachzik et hamerubeh.*" (As a small vessel containing much value).



Oz allows us spectacular entry into his heroic wrestling and wounded soul. After all, this distinguish member of Israel's Reform movement no longer represents a prevailing Israeli ideology that the liberal Labor wing once was, and which has given way in recent decades to Orthodox and nationalistic settlers in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) as the new authentic *Chalutzim* (pioneers). Oz, who was a generally admired iconic figure, was painfully exposed to ugly and dangerous charges of being no less than a "*Boged*" (Traitor) by some in Israel's political Right with someone even looking forward to Oz's Treblinka-like death. Oz recalls being called a traitor as well in his Jerusalem childhood toward the end of the British Mandate because of befriending an English policeman who was a Christian Zionist.

All that radical change placed undeterred Oz in an even more pivotal prophetic position, representing those values and ideals that had once endeared Israel to the world. However, he and we cannot ignore the emerging new realities which vulnerable Israel and its tumultuous region contend with. The focus has significantly shifted from a young, altruistic and agriculturally based socialist state perceived as David vs. Arab Goliath to one erroneously regarded as Goliath vs. Arab David, in spite of being a technologically advanced capitalistic start-up

The passing of Amos Oz (1939–2018) is being widely lamented as he was considered Israel's world-renowned premier author and a peace activist. Born in Jerusalem to his Eastern European parents, the famous Hebrew University professor Joseph Klausner was his great-uncle. Oz lost his mother Fania to suicide when he was only 12-years-old. At age 14, he left by himself for Kibbutz Hulda where he changed his surname Klausner to Oz, meaning *courage*. With his center-left political orientation, he supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Oz felt isolated in an Israel that has turned to the political right. He participated as a combat soldier in the 1967 and 1973 wars. This prolific author who was translated into many languages, received significant literary awards, though the Nobel Prize for which he was a perennial candidate somehow eluded him.



Amos Oz  
© Dan Porges

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman

nation with Labor Zionism in spiritual crisis.

Though unofficially a nuclear state and given its limited geography and the double-standard applied to her, Israel faces tough choices of response to aggression. There are increased dangers as well as opportunities linked to the Iranian Shiite potentially nuclear threat confronting Israel along with the Arab Sunni world. But Oz insists, that the Palestinian challenge urgently calls for an overdue two state solution which is vital to Israel's best interests politically as well as ethically, no less than "...a matter of life and death for the State of Israel" (p. 109).

The Arab demographic superiority may likely turn the entire region from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River into a de-facto Arab state with a Jewish minority that Oz emphatically declares he would not want to live in. He is worried that attempting to prevent such a scenario, a dictatorship might arise in Israel. "If two states would not soon be here, it is very possible that in order to forestall the establishment of an Arab country from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, a temporary dictatorship of fanatic Jews will rule here, a racist dictatorship that would quell down both the Arabs and the opposing Jews" (p. 110).

Admitting that Israel's fanatic wing finds a counterpart in the Palestinian camp, Oz seemingly dwells on what he regards as the injustice, humiliation and pain the Israeli occupation causes the

(see Zoberman, page 16)

## GERTEL

(continued from page 14)

them to eat jelly donuts. How can we fight such a glorious God?" The real self-mockery is reserved for David, who persists in throwing in some "*Baruch atta's*" and in referring to his *bar mitzvah* speech.

Do the writers believe that they are mitigating the offensiveness of all this by having the Hindu grandmother insist that "this is not about religion; it's about culture.?"

The grandmothers argue about whose ancestors are more insulted and disappointed. David's parents suggest that they're glad his grandmothers are both dead because at holiday time they were like bats "gnawing each others' ears off." Is one Jewish grandmother depicted pleasantly so that two others can be deprecated in absentia?

Does it matter that the writers often depict Emet in an unfavorable way as – well, a liar? She blurts out that she had promised to raise the children as Jews because there was no rabbi at their wedding. David seems surprised by this, but he instinctively rationalizes in behalf of his wife, "In all fairness most of the Jews we know are only Jewish two weeks a year."

But which two weeks? Is it plausible that hands-on Jewish grandparents focus only on *Chanukah* and are unaware of what children do on the High Holy Days or Passover, and never discuss Judaism with their grandchildren?

In the end, the writers dredge up the old theme of combining faiths, like the "Christmukkah" of *The O.C.* series (2003), or the use of the *menorah* to illumine a Christmas tree on *The Five Mrs. Buchanans* (1993), which I discussed in my book, *Over The Top Judaism* (2003).

The *menorah* is lit with Hindu candles, and the tensions created by "immersion in the Jewish tradition" are relieved by Hindu exercises. This is all so unoriginal and compromising and offensive that it was anticipated 2000 years ago by the Hebrew Sages who fixed a prayer after the lighting of the *menorah* which makes a point of discouraging the use of the candles for syncretistic purposes.

Rabbi Elliot 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. ✪



# "Why Me?"

BY RABBI SUSAN NANUS



ZOBERMAN

(continued from page 15)

Palestinians far more than he does on the rockets raining from Gaza and brutal Palestinian terrorism against Israeli civilians. He does admonish though his Left partners to take seriously the general fear of Arabs by the Israeli public that whether justified or not is an impediment and an important factor to reckon with. Oz's sharp arrows are tellingly aimed not only at the Right's fanaticism but also at Israel's socialist founders who failed to acknowledge the full tapestry of the Jewish heritage, a reference to the patronizing treatment of the Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews who had a moderate approach toward religion and diversity. He bemoans the global resurgence of fanaticism.

While Donald Trump's presidential victory has buoyed the settlers' movement, Oz argues that President Trump won without the popular vote, and that he, the great majority of the American people and the world at large oppose Israel annexing the "conquered territories" (p. 116). Oz may be underestimating the impact of the large block of evangelical Christians and its influence on Trump's White House, along with that of Orthodox Jews and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The author could not foresee the historic recognition of Jerusalem by President Trump as Israel's capital, the relocation of the U.S. embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem and the American walking away from the Iran nuclear deal. He warns that the American alliance with Israel is not forever guaranteed, just as Israel enjoyed passing support from other great powers. He is equally alarmed about the negative impact on world Jewry and particularly its youth, of a Jewish State perceived to contradict their most cherished Jewish and Democratic values.

Of grave concern to him is also the growing conflict between those pressing for an Israel ruled by strict Halacha and

often reevaluate and refocus our lives toward those values.

Is this comforting to someone who has lost a child or been struck with cancer? I'm not sure. However, as noted neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl discovered as a Holocaust survivor, suffering is bearable if it has meaning. If we cannot receive a direct answer from God like Rebecca did, perhaps we can ponder these encouraging words from Rabbi Nachman: "Try to understand this.... No matter how far you fall, never allow yourself to be discouraged. Remain firm and resolute and pay no attention to the fall at all, because in the end

(see Nanus, page 17)

those choosing to preserve democracy. He lauds the multiple accomplishments of a secular Israel reflecting a great and relevant Jewish spirit as opposed to the "Shulchan Aruch" that no longer serves its original purpose. He blames Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion who gave in to the Orthodox "Perhaps in a moment of light mindedness" (p. 93), accepting the argument of Rabbi Yeshayahu Karlitz that Zionism was an "empty wagon" by comparison to Orthodox Judaism's "full wagon."

Throughout, Oz hammers in his overriding message that Judaism's genius is characterized by its humanistic ideals and moral sensitivity sanctified by Israel's prophets, towards society's weak and disenfranchised, and consequently the obligation to curb and limit the establishment's raw power "to hurt." It is thus perplexing that though Oz questionably includes Syria in the Arab block being challenged by Iran's common threat to make peace with Israel, he glaringly omits any reference to the vast Syrian tragedy of genocide so close to Israel's borders.

The book's title, *Shalom Lakanaim* is the author's friendly invitation for dialogue with fanatics as he states in the Preface, "...to ask for the attention of those whose views are different from mine" (p. 5), which is reinforced by the given English title, "Dear Zealot" (three pleas). However, the Hebrew word "Shalom" also implies farewell in the sense of parting ways. Perhaps Oz is suggesting both approaches. Amos Oz, the prophet of pain and promise, doom and deliverance, concludes on a stirring note of both searing pessimism and consoling optimism. "I am profoundly worried about the future. I fear the government policy as well as ashamed of it. And I fear the fanaticism and violence increasing in our midst, which I am ashamed of. But I enjoy being an Israeli. I enjoy being in a country with 8.5 million prime ministers, 8.5 million prophets, 8.5 million messiahs. Every one of us has a personal formula for redemption or at least solution. All are yelling and only a few are listening. It's not boring here. Yes, it's upsetting, revolting, disappointing, sometimes also causing frustration and anger, but more than once it's compelling and arousing. What I've seen here during my life is a lot less but also a lot more of what my parents and my parents' parents dreamed of" (p. 131).

**Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman is the founding rabbi of Congregation Beth Chaverim, Virginia Beach. He is Honorary Senior Rabbi Scholar at Eastern Shore Chapel Episcopal Church in Virginia Beach. ✨**



These are the words Rebecca utters when she finds herself pregnant at the beginning of *Parashat Toldot*. After waiting for almost twenty years to conceive, Rebecca discovers that she is going to have twins, but it is not the blessing that she expected. The text reveals that "the children struggled in her womb," and commentator Rashi explains, "the pain was great." Something is terribly wrong, and Rebecca is not filled with the joy and celebration she anticipated, but rather with suffering, anxiety, and apprehension. Heartsick and in agony, Rebecca asks a universal question of the human condition: "Why me?" This existential query is one that we all recognize, and one that most of us have experienced when in pain – whether physical, emotional, or spiritual: "What did I do to deserve this? Why is this happening to me? Where is God?"

Rebecca was able to turn to God and receive an answer; this rarely is the case today. Trying to understand the reason for suffering is an extremely difficult challenge. What can ever justify the injury or death of a loved one, the onset of illness, the loss of one's home or livelihood? Throughout the centuries, Jewish sages, scholars, and philosophers have wrestled with these questions. Some of their responses – either blaming the victims or advising us not to challenge God's wisdom – have often been unsatisfying to modern Jews. And though the *Kabbalah* teaches that everything happens for a reason and has a deeper meaning, this is not a concept that is easy for most people to accept.

*Hasidic* master and great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov viewed suffering as a natural part of life and necessary for the growth and elevation of the soul: "When the time comes for a person to rise from one level to the next, he must first experience a fall. The whole purpose of the fall is to prepare for the ascent." Furthermore, the great *kabbalist* and philosopher Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto suggested that "Suffering is meant to motivate a person and awaken his heart to repent." They have a point. When we are suffering, our concern with trivialities disappears, as we suddenly comprehend what is truly important and

**KAPLAN/ISRAEL***(continued from page 2)*

and read an interview in the *Jerusalem Post* (as we did) of the up-and-coming production of a play set in Chicago (where I lived for eight years); or if you had received a nice email from the owner of an English-language theatre company telling you one of the actors had recommended Barry and I come to see this play and do a story, you would know why I am writing this article.

**Background**

The world premiere of *The God of Isaac*, which took place at Chicago's Victory Gardens Theatre in 1985, was written by James Sherman. James attended Niles West High School, was a theatre student at Illinois State University in the early 1970s and began his professional career as a writer and performer with "The Second City" in Chicago; he received an M.F.A. degree from Brandeis University. Since 1986, he has been a Playwright-in-Residence at the Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago where he is a founding member of the Victory Gardens Playwrights Ensemble.

James currently teaches Playwriting and Improvisation at Columbia College of Chicago and The Theatre School at DePaul University. He is the author of *Magic Time*, *Mr. 80%*, *The Escape Artist*, *Beau Jest*, *This Old Man Came Rolling Home*, *Jest A Second!*, *Romance in D*, *From Door to Door*, *The Old Man's Friend*, *Affluenza!*, *Half and Half*, *Relatively Close*, and *Jacob and Jack*.

In an interview before the play opened in Evanston in the 1980s, Sherman said, "I wrote the play in New York in the early 1980s, when the proposed march was still fresh in people's memories. The idea of a Neo-Nazi group marching in Skokie was deeply disturbing, particularly since the community was heavily populated with Holocaust survivors at the time."

*The God of Isaac* features Isaac Adams, a Jewish man who has lived his whole life in Skokie, Illinois. In 1977, he learns that Frank Collin has petitioned the Skokie municipality to hold a Nazi rally and march in Skokie, home to many Jews.

Isaac begins a search for his Jewish identity when he asks, how is this going to affect me? Should I be concerned? How should I be involved? He has written a play about himself and plays himself. He stands on a bare stage and relates the whole story like a stand-up comedian's routine, with interruptions and dialogue from his mother, a stereotypical Jewish mother who is overly concerned and judgmental. She sits in the audience, shooting one-liners to him, and offers a huge part of the comedy.

There are also intermittent entries with

scenes from *Huck Finn*, *On the Waterfront*, *Wizard of Oz*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Grapes of Wrath*. For example, instead of Marlon Brando's "I coulda been a contender" in *On the Waterfront*, the character says, "I coulda been a mensch." Henry Fonda tells Ma Joad, "Wherever there's a delicatessen, I'll be there."

Along the way, Isaac also has visits with two Hassidim promoting laying *tefillin*, a Holocaust survivor tailor, the Tin man, a rabbi, and his father (all played by a rabbi from our Jerusalem congregation).



Isaac visits with two Hassidim in *The God of Isaac*.

Isaac had rejected his Jewish girlfriend, who comes on stage to read her correspondence with him about herself and their relationship from high school; and later married a *shiksa*, who is a fashion model.

He gradually comes to terms with his personal religious identity and grows, learning to confront his problems, relatives and values. All of the members of the cast are very professional actors and actresses who have had roles in a number of productions in Israel.

In an opening night interview with the head of the Ben Bard Players Barak Bard, he told me how he happened to form an English-language theatre company and present *The God of Isaac* as his second play.

Barak Bard is the son of Ben Bard, a stage and Hollywood film actor and acting teacher whose drama school was prominent and respected in Hollywood. Barak made *aliyah* 19 years ago from France where he had been living. "I hadn't done theatre in 50 years; I was in TV production, media, technician, editor, although I grew up in show business."

Three years ago, an author asked Barak to translate a play from French to English. Then the author asked him to direct the play. "I realized I had to create a company, and I named it for my father's company, the Ben Bard Players."

Last year, the Ben Bard Players presented *The Statement*, which was a success. Barak says, later on, he was looking through the Samuel French catalogue and found *The God of Isaac* and wrote to ask about rights. The French Catalogue describes the play: "When Isaac Adams, a second generation American Jew, learns of plans for a

**NANUS***(continued from page 16)*

it will be transformed into a great ascent."

**Rabbi Susan Nanus** is the Director of Adult Programs and one of seven rabbis at Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles. In that capacity, she teaches, preaches, and oversees most of the adult cultural and educational programs at the Temple.

A graduate of the Yale School of Drama, Rabbi Nanus did not decide to become a rabbi until her mid-50s. Before that, she was a playwright and film and television writer in New York and Los Angeles. Her play, *The Survivor*, about the Warsaw Ghetto, was produced on Broadway, Off-Broadway, as well as Los Angeles. As a television movie writer, she had 15 movies on air and won numerous awards. ✨



neo-Nazi group to stage a demonstration in Skokie, Illinois, he wonders, what, if anything, his involvement should be. Determined to find the truth, Isaac ultimately comes to terms with his heritage, his mother, and himself."

Using profits from his first production and other sources, it suited Barak's idea of doing a serious comedy with Jewish content. The play has five performances in Jerusalem plus the opening night in the Khan Theatre.

The Khan 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. Until the Six-Day War in 1967, it was used as a beer-cellar and a carpentry workshop. In the spring of 1968 the building was renovated and turned into a center for theater and cultural activities. The small theatre seats about 70; the stone walls are visible and add a special ambiance to events held there.

Having lived in Chicago, I knew the JDL man who countered the march, I loved the mentions of Marshall Fields and Old Orchard; and Barry and I found the play an utterly enjoyable experience.

**Sybil Kaplan** is a journalist, lecturer, book reviewer, food writer and author of *Witness to History: Ten Years as a Woman Journalist in Israel* and nine cookbooks, including *What's Cooking at Hadassah College*. She lived in Israel from 1970-1980; she and her husband, Barry, came to live in Jerusalem in 2008, where she works as a foreign correspondent for *North American Jewish publications*, lectures to senior citizen residences, leads walks in English in *Machaneh Yehudah* (the Jewish produce market), and writes stories about kosher restaurants on *Janglo.net* for which Barry photographs. She has been reviewing books for 40 years. ✨

# My Kosher Kitchen



BY SYBIL KAPLAN

## Passover Recipes

Several years ago, my Hadassah group held a really fun evening where the hostess did a program from one of the National Hadassah materials on Passover and then we all brought a recipe and told its background. Each of us brought enough copies so everyone went home with a *Pesach* recipe booklet.

Here are four of those recipes:

### Evie's Stuffed Cabbage Rolls

- 1 large or 2 small heads of cabbage
- 1 can tomato mushroom sauce
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 minced onion
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 beaten egg
- 1/2 minced onion
- 1-2 *matzot*
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- raisins (optional)
- prunes (optional)
- mushrooms (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Spray a roasting pan. Boil water in a large pot. Add cabbage and cook until leaves separate easily. Drain. In a roaster atop the stove, combine tomato sauce, water, lemon juice, sugar and 1/2 onion. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer. Break up *matzot* and soak in 1/4 cup water until soft then drain. In a bowl, combine ground beef, egg, 1/2 minced onion, *matzot*, salt and garlic powder. Place cabbage leaves on a towel or flat surface. Place a heaping tablespoon in the center of each leaf. Roll up leaves envelope style. Place in sauce in roaster. Add raisins, prunes or mushrooms if desired. Bake in 400°F. oven until brown. Reduce heat to 325°F., cover and bake one hour longer.

### Solly's Megina via Gayla Matzah-Meat Pie from Rhodes

- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 large diced onion
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 4 eggs
- 3 *matzot*

- warm water
- 2 beaten eggs
- 3 *matzot*

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a rectangular roasting pan. In a large frying pan, heat oil. Brown meat and onion. Add salt, pepper and parsley, cook 1 minute. Remove from heat and let stand 10 minutes. Place 4 eggs in a bowl and beat then add to meat mixture and blend. Soak 3 *matzot* in warm water until just softened then soak in beaten eggs until eggs are absorbed. Place in bottom of roasting pan. Spoon meat mixture on top of *matzot* evenly. Soak remaining 3 *matzot* in warm water until soft. Beat 2 eggs in a bowl then soak *matzot* in bowl until eggs are absorbed. Add to meat filling. Bake in 350°F. oven 45 minutes. Serve hot

### Elinor's Apple-apricot Kugel

- 6 eggs or 4 eggs plus 2 whites
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 6 peeled, grated or sliced apples
- 1/2 cup *matzah* meal
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 cup cut up dry apricots
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F. Vegetable spray a rectangular baking dish. In a large bowl, combine eggs with sugar and mix well. Add apples, *matzah* meal and lemon juice and mix. Soak apricots in hot water for 5 minutes. Drain. Spread half the apple mixture in baking dish, arrange apricots on top, top with rest of apple mixture. Combine 2 Tbsp. sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle on top. Bake in 350°F oven 1 hour until golden.

### Natalie's Very Chocolate Torte

- (8-12 servings per cake)
- 8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 sticks unsalted butter or margarine
- 1/2 cup strong coffee
- 4 eggs

Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two round cake pans with aluminum foil and spray with vegetable spray. In a pan with another pan of water below, melt chocolate, sugar and butter or margarine over low heat. You can also do this in a microwave. Stir frequently. Add coffee, remove from heat and cool a few minutes. Beat in eggs with wire whisk, one at a time. Pour into cake pans and bake in 350°F. oven 30 minutes until cakes crack around sides of top. Cakes will be soft and jello-like in center but it is okay if the top is cracked. It will firm up as it cools. Cool completely, cover with foil and refrigerate overnight or up to 1 week. Remove to plate to serve. To use a

## ROBERTS

(continued from page 20)

My reference? What else? The Book of Exodus. There's a stack of *Haggadahs*, too, for prayers and blessings. But the real story comes from Exodus.

Tell the story to your children, we are commanded. Hmmm, tell the story – not the *Haggadah* parable of the four sons – which I challenge you to explain without a Rabbi standing at your right hand and a *Midrashic* library on your left.

The divine author, say the faithful, transmitted this tale to his obedient scribe, Moses. But often, at our Passover table, there's a cynic or two who even though stuffing themselves on MY roast chicken, picks skeptically at the story like he does at my wife's candied carrots on his plate.

"So Ted, how many Israelites did you say marched out of Egypt?"

"600,000." And I know what's coming next. He's gonna hit me with the logistical argument. How could 600,000 people find sustenance in the Sinai wastes. I hate a roast chicken eating nonbeliever.

And here it comes. He twirls a drumstick, masterfully surveys his audience around the table, and BAM. "You don't really believe that, do you? Pass the tomatoes in vinaigrette sauce."

"Well, yes I do. How's the chicken?"

"Uh, fine."

"Like some more?" said with a menacing look that my friend understands only too well.

"Sure, and maybe some potatoes, too."

"So," says I, (the owner of the chickens and potatoes) "who says 600,000 diners couldn't live for 40 years in the desert? There's manna. And besides, I'll bet back then flocks of chickens as fat as this one were running all over those sand dunes. Or maybe three millennia ago the Sinai Peninsula was as green as Southern Jersey."

My debating partner tries to say "absolutely correct" with a mouth full of chicken breast, but instead makes a mess, so he passionately nods six or seven times and reaches for a drumstick. Good. I hate to lose a home game.

*The humor of Ted Roberts*, The Scribbler on the Roof, appears in newspapers around the US, on National Public Radio, and numerous web sites. Check out his Web site: [www.wonderwordworks.com](http://www.wonderwordworks.com). Blogsite: [www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com](http://www.scribblerontheroof.typepad.com). His collected works *The Scribbler on The Roof* can be bought at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or [lulu.com/content/127641](http://lulu.com/content/127641). ★



spring form pan, prepare 1-1/2 times the recipe and increase baking time to 40 minutes but check at 30 minutes.

See Sybil Kaplan's bio pg. 16. ★

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# Spoonful of Humor



## The Jewish Post & Opinion

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BY TED ROBERTS

### The 11th Commandment – Spice up Your Passover

What is the culinary magic of *Pesach*? Why is it that boiled eggs and salt water, on *Pesach*, taste better than your grandmother's *tzimmus*? Why is it that this same primitive dish of eggs and saltwater that makes your mouth sing on *Pesach* looks and tastes like No. 7 yellow paint on June the 13th? Or any other of 357 days that are NOT *Pesach*. Why does *matza brei* rule the breakfast menu for *Pesach*'s eight mornings, but tastes worse than roof shingles for the rest of the year's breakfasts?

The same riddle applies to sacramental wine. On *Pesach*, it's a soothing elixir that banishes the thought of the kid's orthodontist bill, and the vivid image of your boss tearing up your trembling pay check. On all other nights, to paraphrase the *Haggadah*, we lean toward Coca Cola because that *Mogen David* or Manischewitz

tastes like grocery store cough syrup.

The magic explanation, perhaps, lies in an old story about the *Rebbe* and his *Shabbos* guest. The visitor – a non Jewish neighbor – is charmed by his evening in the Rabbi's home; the spirit of *Shabbos*, the singing. And the food. Ah, that baked chicken – is the tastiest he has ever eaten. He must have the recipe.

A month later the chicken-loving guest meets the Rabbi in the town square. "Such a night I had at your home," he tells the *Rebbe*. "And may I add, such a chicken. But sadly, even though I explicitly followed your directions and ingredients, my chicken

was only a baked chicken."

"Ah, my friend," said the Rabbi, "you left out the key ingredient – the *Shabbos*."

The same applies to Passover. The power of the occasion transforms eggs and water to ambrosia, your aunt Sophie to Princess Di, and your dining room with the stained rug into the Empire Room at the Ritz. Even the kids are angelic.

And that's the way it should be if the Master of the House successfully transports the imaginations of the kids 3,000 years and 8,000 miles away to the sand dunes and sparse oases of the Nile Delta.

(see Roberts, page 18)

### Holocaust Remembrance Week in Greater Lafayette April 6-11, 2019

# EVERY FACE A STORY



For details on events for the 38th GLHRC conference, go to [www.glhrc.org](http://www.glhrc.org). All events are free and open to the public.

### Holocaust Survivor Frank Grunwald Shares His Story at Purdue "The Vast Landscape of the Holocaust" Tuesday, April 9, 5:00 p.m.



Frank (Michael, or "Misa") Grunwald was only six when German troops entered Czechoslovakia in March 1939. By mid-1942, Misa and his family were moved to the Nazi-occupied Terezin concentration camp and a year later to Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland. Misa and his father miraculously escaped the gas chamber in July 1944. More of his biography is on [www.glhrc.org](http://www.glhrc.org).

Mr. Grunwald, a retired industrial designer, lives with his wife, Barbara, in Indianapolis. He currently is a lecturer of industrial design at Purdue University.

Physics Hall, Room 114, 525 Northwestern Avenue, West Lafayette 47906.  
Park in garage across the street at 504 Northwestern Ave.