The Jewish Calendar – Connect, Reconnect or Stay Connected

By Rose Kleiner

Little do we realize that as we enter the New Year, and start a new Jewish calendar, we are doing much more than marking time and following a schedule. Unlike the secular calendar, the Jewish calendar facilitates our entry, on a daily basis, into the world of our 6,000 year heritage, history, culture and civilization.

What the Jewish calendar does is to connect us, or reconnect us, each year with our roots, where we came from. Whatever the level of our observance, however busy we may be, the calendar makes available to us the rich aspects of our heritage, our environment, and, most important, our current Jewish world community.

With its Hebrew months and their special dates, its Shabbat and holiday candle lighting times, and its listed readings of the Torah and Haftarah, the calendar creates an environment that can keep us connected, meaningfully, all year, and can help us integrate into a community of our choice, something that is not always easy in the age of the internet.

Since Jewish calendars contain many more details than was mentioned above, and often also have an aesthetic dimension, they can serve as a means of enriching our daily life in numerous ways.

Beautifully decorated calendars engage us with the aesthetic side of our culture. The illustrations of precious, centuries old objects, or contemporary items, can enhance our home and bring to life many aspects of our culture.

In the Universe (Publishing) wall calendar (above), an illustration of a New Year Greeting from 1930s Netherlands, written in Hebrew and in Dutch, gives us a sense of kinship to the person living across the ocean who sent this card in those ominous years before the start of war.

The above-mentioned illustration is found in the 2020 Jewish Wall Calendar whose illustrations come from the collection of the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. In the same calendar there is a joyous illustration of a page from the Esther scroll created in the Netherlands in the 1700s.

The two wall calendars from Pomegranate both take us on a journey of discovery into our past, and into contemporary celebrations of Jewish life. Pomegranate’s Jewish Museum Calendar (above) with illustrations of works from New York’s Jewish Museum, features Solomon Alexander Hart’s stunning oil painting (1850), The Feast of the Rejoicing of the Law at the Synagogue in Leghorn, Italy.

Another one of its illustrations presents a page from the famous Russian Jewish artist, El Lissitzky’s, Had Gadya Suite (1919). The illustration comes with both Yiddish and Hebrew calligraphy.

Pomegranate’s second wall calendar, Jewish Celebrations, has paintings by contemporary artist Malcah Zeldis. Her vibrant and colorful folk-art works illustrate the union of the spiritual and domestic that characterizes Judaism. Each of the bright monthly illustrations comes with notes on the traditions which they portray. Zeldis’ work is in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Jewish Museum.

A lovely desk calendar (p. 2, bottom), decorated with an abundance of Judaica treasures, comes from Universe Publishing. The items on display are from the holdings of New York’s Jewish Museum collection. The images in this fine desk calendar range from items that are contemporary (Marsha Penzer’s Mezuzah Carried Into Space in 1985) to those that are centuries old, yet sparkle with their original beauty, such as the magnificent Marriage Contract from Trieste, Italy (1774) which is painted on cut-out parchment.

Other countries represented by Judaica treasures in this desk calendar include the Russian Empire (1900), Persia (19th century), Galicia (Poland/Ukraine 19th century), Istanbul, Turkey (1735), Germany (1550), Morocco (19th century), Uzbekistan (18th century), India (20th century), Lithuania (1800), Ireland (1863) and many more.

This desk calendar’s most unusual feature is its comprehensive guide in concise form to all the Jewish holidays, feasts and fast days. Among the many categories covered in this guide to each of those dates there are columns for the theme, significance, mood and customs of each of the listed holidays, feasts and fast days.

Last but not least is My Very Own Jewish Calendar for youngsters, from Kar-Ben Publishing. Full of fun, facts, trivia and the joy of being Jewish, this delightful calendar is a great way for the young, and young at heart, to connect with their heritage. This calendar, too, spans the centuries while connecting us to what it means to live Jewishly.

On the same page that we learn of Rosh Hashanah wishes that go back to the 14th century, we also learn that September is National Honey Month. We learn that Syrian, Moroccan and Iraqi Jews recycle their lulav’s palm branches by using them before Passover as fuel to burn the chametz.

With Thanksgiving almost here, the question is raised, what blessing can we offer during this most meaningful universal celebration, to give it a Jewish character? The most fitting blessing, according to the calendar’s survey, is “Shehecheyanu.” Kar-Ben Publishing produces several other calendars, among them a very handy small one for the purse.
Editorial


Dani Shapiro grew up an only child in a suburban Jewish neighborhood in New Jersey. Her father’s family was Orthodox and her mother was Jewish but secular. Before marriage her mother agreed to follow Orthodoxy. Shapiro says her mother was a pathological narcissist who had a borderline personality disorder, which made it difficult for people (including Shapiro) to get along with her, and her father was depressed but Dani adored him.

When Shapiro was 23, and attempting to make sense of her life, her parents were in a car accident. Her father died from the injuries shortly afterward. Her mother was critically injured and Shapiro helped take care of her for the next two years.

Several times throughout her life Shapiro is told that she does not look Jewish. Frequently she felt out of place, as if she did not belong, and dark eyes probably did not help.

At age 25, Shapiro finds out the method of her conception was artificial insemination. Her mother said she and her father never had sex. Although she received unconditional love from her 93-year-old aunt who on p. 136 tells her, “I’m not giving you up.” When Dani starts weeping her aunt continues, “And you’d better not be giving me up.” Now Dani is sobbing and her aunt finishes, “And you are my brother’s daughter.”

On p. 176 she writes, “The clues screamed in neon. But I had not seen them. After all plenty of people look or feel “other” than their parents or siblings. Biology doesn’t promise similarity. Traits skip generations. Characteristics emerge, seemingly out of nowhere. Our parents seem alien to us.”

The reason I loved this book might be different than why others like it. Besides being a riveting mystery and difficult to put down, it seemed as if the teachings in the book match our mission that we set forth when my father handed the publishing torch to me almost 20 years ago: “To protect, promote, and preserve time-honored Jewish values such as “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Scattered throughout the book Shapiro includes some of these Jewish values. She writes poetically about sitting with her father in shul as a young girl on pgs. 170–171: “I could feel the way his body relaxed when he davened, the way his voice became stronger and fuller within the plaintive melodies of the Hebrew liturgy. The synagogue was his home. When he shook his tallis from his velvet pouch and wrapped it around his shoulders, he became larger, almost mystical. Here in shul, prayer was our secret language, our way of connecting. We had the choreography down. We knew just what to do. Here we stand. Here we sit. Here we sway. Here we close our siddurs. Here we sing Ein Kelohenu. Here we kiss each other’s cheeks and say: Good Shabbos.”

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I am happy to give over some good news.

Two terrorists were recently killed. Both were leaders of big terrorist organizations, one in Iraq and one here in Israel, in the Gaza strip. The following day the terrorists fired over 200 rockets and mortar shells at Israeli cities and highways, but by many miracles, no one was killed.

Recently these and many other terrorist organizations have been losing support and power. Our world is getting better and better all of the time. Almost all of the governments and regimes that supported terror have fallen and disappeared. Now about 98% of the countries of the world are working to make all people safe, happy and healthy! In the past, the stronger nations would go to war to conquer the weaker nations. Now the stronger nations are instead making big efforts to help and strengthen the weaker nations and bring peace to the entire world.

We are witnessing the fulfillment of the words of our prophets. They told us that a time would come when there will be no evil, no war, no suffering or sickness. This period is referred to as the end of days, the days of the Moshia'h (Messiah) who will usher in our complete and final redemption. After 2,500 years, this is finally happening!

I personally also have good news to share. My health is doing better. Three months ago I started a new diet, and I am feeling better. Fifty years ago I suffered from Hepatitis, which left me quite weak. For a year and a half I tried different diets and medicines, but nothing really helped.

Then I tried macrobiotics, and right a way I started to take thyroid hormones, and that helped a little. A year ago I started to take vitamins, and other vitamins and supplements, and that helped a little.

For a year and a half I tried different diets and medicines, but nothing really helped. Then 3 months ago I started about a different diet. It is called the 80/10/10RV diet, which is short for 80% calories from carbohydrates, 10% calories from proteins, and 10% calories from fats. RV stands for raw and vegan. This diet was similar to my previous diet, but with three major differences. Before, about 70% of the calories that I was consuming were from the fat in the foods and oils that I ate. Now I try to keep my fat calories down to only 10%.

Before, I was always tired. I was tired a lot and needed to sleep a lot. A year ago I started to take thyroid hormones, and that helped. Then 3 months ago I started about a different diet. It is called the 80/10/10RV diet, which is short for 80% calories from carbohydrates, 10% calories from proteins, and 10% calories from fats. RV stands for raw and vegan. This diet was similar to my previous diet, but with three major differences. Before, about 70% of the calories that I was consuming were from the fat in the foods and oils that I ate. Now I try to keep my fat calories down to only 10%. Before, I ate very little sweet fresh fruit. Now this is the majority of my diet. Now I eat less cooked foods.

I decided to give this diet a try. Within three days I was feeling better. Now my memory is much better, my mind is working better, and I have more energy, without vitamins, hormones or supplements. If you want to feel better, look into this diet. And especially because it is strictly Kosher! Just be careful to remove any tiny bugs and worms from fruits and vegetables.

I don't keep this diet 100%. To honor the Sabbath and holidays we are commanded to make Kiddush and eat some bread, and a little fish and chicken.

This diet also recommends exercise. I have been exercising more, and feel that this helps. It also says that feeling good and happy is also important for good health. For this, get some advice from (see Benzion, page 6)
To Everything There is a Season

In October of 1965, Columbia Records released a hit song by the Byrds called “Turn, Turn, Turn.” But while my friends and I loved its beautiful harmony, I never suspected that its words would accompany me through life, spanning decades of historical and personal events from the Vietnam War to the birth of my children and years later, the death of my husband.

Initially written by Pete Seeger in the late 1950s, “Turn, Turn, Turn” is derived directly from the Book of Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3:1–8. Called Koheleth in Hebrew, its authorship is attributed to King Solomon, and is included as one of several “Wisdom Books” in the Book of Writings (Kituvin), along with Proverbs and Job. It stands as a remarkable compendium of insightful poetic prose and offers a philosophy that contemplates the cyclical nature of life and the precarious quality of human existence.

Originally written in Hebrew, Koheleth has been translated with varying degrees of sensitivity to its organic poetry and meaning. The King James version is most often cited as authoritative; its words forming the lyrics of the Byrd’s song. “To everything, (turn, turn, turn), there is a season (turn, turn, turn) and a time to every purpose under heaven.”

Growing older provides a perspective that comes from having lived in the trenches of life through its many “seasons.” For many baby boomers, retirement is just around the corner and with that, a new season of life begins – a season of possibility. For those fortunate enough to have the health and the means, there are limitless possibilities to spend time and resources differently – to travel, volunteer, spend more time with family and friends, exercise more regularly. Many have the privilege of watching their children marry and have children of their own. Ask any grandparent and you will hear that the season of grandparenting is one of the most cherished of all.

But age also brings an awareness of the precariousness of life as we enter a season of change that often heralds diminution and loss. For while the retirement years may offer us new possibilities, they can be accompanied by limitations as well. And while there is much written about what we can do to counter aging positively – from simplifying daily demands to engaging in physical exercise and increasing intellectual stimulation – there is no way to stop the ticking of the clock.

Everything has a season – Jewish wisdom dating back thousands of years that offers a mantra to live by at every age and stage of life and reminds us of the temporal nature of things and that change is inevitable.

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.

The Night Before Hanukkah

’Twas the night before Hanukkah, boychicks and maidels
Not a sound could be heard, not even the dreidels.
The Menorah was set on the chimney, alight
In the kitchen the Bubble hut gehapt a bissel bite.

I put on my slippers, eins, tsvey, dree,
While Bubble was now on the herring and rye.
I grabbed for my bathrobe and buttoned my gotkes
While Bubble was busy devouring the latkes.

To the window I ran and to my surprise
A little red yarmulka greeted my eyes.
When he got to the door and saw the Menorah,
“Yiddishe kinder,” he said, “Oy, Kenehora.”
I thought I was in a goyisha hoise,
But as long as I’m here, I’ll leave a few tos.
With much geshreyn, I asked, “Du bist a Yid?”
“Avada, mein numen ist Schloimey Claus, kid.”
“Come into the kitchen, I’ll get you a dish, a guppell and a schtickala fish.”
With smacks of delight, he started his fressen,
Chopped liver, knaidlach and kreplach gegessen.
Along with his meal, he had a few schnapps,
When it came to eating, this boy was the tops.

He asked for some knishes with pepper and salt,
But they were so hot, he yelling “Oy Gevalt.”
Unbuttoning his haizen, he rose from the tisch,
And said, “Your Kosher essen is simply delish.”
As he went to the door, he said “I’ll see you later, I’ll be back next Pesach, in time for the Seder.”

More rapid than eagles his prancers they came,
As he whistled and shouted and called them by name:
“Now Izzy, now Morris, now Yitzak, now Sammy,
Now Irving and Maxie, and Moishe and Mannie.”
He gave a geshreyn as he drove out of sight:
“Chag Sameach to all, and to all a good night.”

Salami, pastrami, und a glessala tay
And zayerah pickles with bagels, oy vay!
Gezunt and geschmack, the kinderlech felt
While dreaming of tagelach and Hanukkah gelt.

The clock on the mantlepiece away was tickin’
And Bubble was serving a schtickala chicken.
A tumult arose like a thousand brauces, Santa had fallen and broken his tuches.
I put on my slippers, eins, tsvey, dree,
While Bubble was now on the herring and rye.
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HAPPY HANUKKAH!!!!
According to Torah, a Jewish holiday is not just a celebration of a particular historical event; rather it is a spiritual transmission of cyclical energies that were available when the historical event originally occurred. Hanukkah is all about light shining amidst the darkness. The main observance of Hanukkah is the lighting of the menorah. Taking place at the darkest time of the year, Hanukkah teaches us that there is light within darkness. At the darkest time, there is light and there will be light. Actually, the light shines even more brightly because of the darkness that surrounds it. Hanukkah restores hope and faith.

On December 21st we begin the holiday of Hanukkah by lighting one candle on the extreme right of the menorah. With each night of Hanukkah we add an additional candle until we have eight lights shining brightly.

Eight is symbolic of that which is beyond the natural order, the level of miracles. On Hanukkah, we are reminded that the Jewish people live on the level of miracles.

Hanukkah is the world’s wake up call to the True Reality. There is a God in the world! And God loves us! These eight days of Hanukkah are a special time to receive and bask in the light of the Divine, the light of miracles, the light of love, the light of joy. We know we are coming close to God when our hearts open and we feel gratitude for the privilege of being alive.

Hanukkah brings joy and clarity.

Take time to meditate each night when you light candles. Sit with the candles, gaze at the candles, meditate and “Listen to Light”. When we quiet the chatter of our minds, we know how to hear the message of the candles. Each night the candles have a unique message. During this time of candle gazing and meditation, take time to become aware of your gratitude for all the blessings in your life. Gratitude opens the doors of blessing. Be mindful particularly during the holiday of Hanukkah to express gratitude. Be mindful to not complain during this time.

Let us be a spiritual practice during the week of Hanukkah to spend time each day thanking God for all the good in your life, thanking others for all the good they bring to you and others, and even thanking yourself for all the good you do.

Complaining only brings harshness, pain and challenge in our life. If we complain, it is a sign that we are not happy with God, with ourselves, with others. We are not open to receive blessing in our lives. What a shame to deprive ourselves and not be open to the wonderful light available during Hanukkah. If this reminder helps one person to refrain from complaining even one time, it is worth a lot.

With the light of Hanukkah, may we see the truth of who we are as individuals. May we see the truth of who the Jewish people are and the awesome privilege it is to be a Jew. With the light of Hanukkah, may we overcome our challenges and be ignited to do what only we can do in this world.

Message from my beloved teacher Reb Shlomo Carlebach, z”l, on Hanukkah: “Everybody knows that Hanukkah is the culmination of the High Holidays. We are accustomed to think that joy and bliss are the highest a human being can aspire to, but our holy rabbis teach us that light is even deeper. So after Simchas Torah, when we experience the greatest joy in the world, we come to Hanukkah. Hanukkah is the Festival of Light. Hanukkah is when we initiate the Third Temple, which shall be rebuilt soon. The week of Hanukkah is when every Jewish home is a little bit of the Holy Temple, which gives us the strength to hold out until the Holy Temple will be here always.

“Let this Hanukkah open the dates for all of us – the lights of Hanukkah show us how holy everyone else is. Let this Hanukkah give us the strength to bring light to the whole world. Let the light of Hanukkah show the world how deep life is, how deep it is to serve God.

“The Holy Ishbitzer says the greatest blessing one Jew can give to another is to feel at home with Torah. So many of our generation are assimilated only because nobody made them feel at home with Yiddishkeit. You and I should be privileged to kindle light at the gate of everyone’s heart to make everyone feel at home.” Love, Shlomo

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

### Hanukkah Recipes

Selected for Hanukkah from Jewish Cooking by Marlena Spieler, Hermes House, 256 pp. (Reviewed by Sybil Kaplan 3/5/03.)

#### Matzo Meal and Cottage Cheese Latkes

(About 20)

- 1-1/4 cups cottage cheese
- 3 eggs, separated
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2-1/4 cups matzah meal
- 1 onion, coarsely grated or 3-5 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 3 Tbsp. plain yogurt or water
- vegetable oil
- ground black pepper to taste

In a bowl, mash the cottage cheese. Mix in the egg yolks, half the salt, the matzah meal, onion, sugar, yogurt or water and pepper. Whisk the egg whites with the remaining salt until stiff. Fold one-third of the whisked egg whites into the batter, then fold in the remaining egg whites.

Heat oil in a heavy frying pan to the depth of about 1/2 inch, until of cube of bread added to the pan turns brown immediately. Drop tablespoonfuls of the batter into the pan; fry over a medium-high heat until the undersides are golden brown. Turn carefully and fry the second side.

When cooked, remove the latkes from the pan with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Serve immediately or place on a baking sheet and keep warm in the oven.

Variation: To make sweet latkes, omit the onion and add 2 Tbsp. sugar, chopped nut sand some ground cinnamon. Serve topped with a spoonful of jam or honey.

#### Cranberry Apple Sauce

(4 servings)

- 5 green cooking apples or combination of cooking and eating apples
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1/4 lemon
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cups cranberries

Peel, core and roughly chop the apples and place them in a heavy pan with the cinnamon stick.

Pare the rind from the lemon, then work in kabbalistic meditation and healing, she is also a spiritual psychotherapist and for more than 30 years has used kabbalistic wisdom as part of treatment. She offers a free newsletter on meditation, healing, kabbalistic energies of the months, holidays, and more. www.kabbalahoftheheart.com. Email: Belmiriam@msn.com.

### Hanukkah Recipes (continued from page 4)

Chassidic Rabbis. In general, learning Torah and doing good deeds will not only bring happiness to you and those near you, but will also bring closer our complete and final redemption, at which time we will all be completely healthy, forever and ever.

We wish all of our readers a very happy Hanukkah.

Rabbi Benzion Cohen lives in K’far Chabad, Israel. He can be reached by email at benzioncohen770@gmail.com.

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Pare the rind from the lemon, then
The J over his T – an evil and a snow white

RECIPES

Clever possessed him. The one victim/host to another. Now it he pondered, it must be a of this mattered when his thoughts strayed stolen his neighbor’s plow horse. But none powers. The seeker even brought a list of palace deep in the woods. The King was several hours now – searching, searching his life. He must find the king; only he make his daughter well. He must find the head was whirling. Only the King could through many pages of maps, but still his speak to the King. You should not have to the King’s palace. This very morning I missit. T urn right there on the pebbled road and in less than half a mile there is the King’s palace. I know the way since I visit the King often. Just do as I say.”

Invigorated, the seeker followed his directions only to find that the pebbled road ended in a thick, impenetrable wilderness. Devastated, he sat on a stone ledge and waited for something. He knew not what. But hark, someone was coming. “Where oh where is the King’s palace? I was told it was at the end of this road.”

The stranger laughed softly. “How fortunate that you encountered me. I am the only inhabitant of the forest that knows the pathway to the palace. Whoever told you those directions couldn’t even find his own elbow. No, no. Recall you passed a fork in the main road. You took the right fork; you must go left. At the end of the left fork, there you will find the radiant palace of the King. But listen, why wander in this dangerous wilderness – buy one of my maps – only 20 rubles.”

The seeker leaped to his feet reinvigorated. “Ah, thank you, but no need. I’ll follow your directions.” And this time, taking the left fork, he walked many leagues only to find himself on the banks of a broad, turbulent river. No palace in sight. His spirits sank. Again, the wrong path and not the slightest glimmer of the King’s palace. He lay face down on the riverside grass and shed bitter tears.

A hand tapped his shoulder. “Stranger,” he said, “now is not a day for tears. The trees are as green as the grass and luscious fruit provided by the King for your journey hangs from their boughs. While above, the sun smiles upon the King’s world of beauty. And not accidently lights the path to his palace.”

The seeker nodded through his tears. “Yes, I know, but I seek the King in vain. I’ve crossed and re-crossed the forest wherein he resides – with no luck whatsoever.”

“Today is your lucky day. How fortunate you encountered me. I am the only inhabitant of the forest that knows the pathway to the King’s palace. This very morning I spoke to the King. You should not have listened to those other wanderers lost in the woods. They never scanned the map to the King’s abode. Now listen carefully. Just continue on the left fork by the brook. You must turn off where the grove of Orange trees stands. Walk half a mile and there facing you with all of its splendor in the sun the King. And you know he welcomes all who come to him.”

Up jumped the seeker bound on this new navigational solution. Need I tell you the results? Same, same, same – nothing – a foggy swamp as different from the imperial palace as the wilderness of Cush from the

Spoonful of Humor

BY TED ROBERTS

The Seeker

Since he was of the human race, troubles swarmed around his life like gnats surround a dead cow on the meadow. The rent was overdue, he had a sciatica around a dead cow on the meadow. The rent was overdue, he had a sciatica

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HANUKKAH RECIPES

(continued from page 6)

Rugelach (48-60)

Rugelach are thought to have come from Poland where they are a traditional sweet treat at Hanukkah.

1/2 cup unsalted butter
1 cup full-fat soft white (farmer’s cheese)
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 egg
1/2 tsp. salt
2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 generous cup melted butter
2 cups golden raisins
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 generous cup superfine sugar
2 tsp. ground cinnamon

Put the butter and cheese in a bowl and beat with an electric mixer until creamy. Beat in the sugar, egg and salt. Fold the flour into the creamed mixture, a little at a time, until the dough can be worked with the hands. Continue adding the flour. Kneading with the hands, until it is the consistency that can be rolled out.

Shape the dough into a ball, then cover and chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Divide the dough into six equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, roll out each piece into around about 1/2-inch thick, then brush with a little of the melted butter and sprinkle over the raisins, nuts, a little sugar and the cinnamon.

Cut the rounds into eight to ten wedges and carefully roll the large side of each wedge toward the tip. Arrange the rugelach on baking sheets, brush with a little butter, and sprinkle with the sugar. Bake for 15-30 minutes until lightly browned. Leave to cool before serving.
Reform vs. Conform

According to Webster’s Dictionary, reform means to improve or to change something for the better. And thumbing through the pages of this very same dictionary we stop at the word conform, and we learn that its meaning is to make or become similar; to be in agreement. These meanings, to me, indicate the turbulent storm that has erupted in the Judaism’s Reform Movement.

On the one hand Reform Judaism was designed to give meaning to today’s world. And today’s world includes yesterday, today and tomorrow. As the world turns, so does our understanding of its purpose and significance. The understandings of yesterday do not fit neatly into the world we live in today.

Yesterday contained no computers or space travel. Yesterday was filled with disasters that boggle the imagination. Yesterday was good for one thing: To bring us to today with all the new discoveries and means to adapt these revelations to life as experienced right now.

Today we accept modernization and experimentation as a way of life not a fragment of some dark corner of the mind that has taken us to sinister places. Today we know that the vastness of the universe reminds us that the ability to accomplish things is as endless as time and space.

We have learned through trial and error that we are not committing sins of omission but rather methods by which growth can be maintained. We are not destroying the fabric of human existence but rather enhancing its possibilities. Growth can only be maintained with continuous speculation.

Reform Judaism understood that the past is an essential ingredient in reaching for the future. One cannot assume to know the goodness or proficiencies of human endurance without regard for the past.

I, certainly, am not an expert on Reform Judaism. Nor am I a participant in its deliberations and pronouncements. What I do know of it I learned from experience and from books. But what I extracted from all the research and living as a Reform Jew and Reform rabbi was one vital fact: Reform Judaism was created to bridge the gap between traditionalism and secularism.

Having been trained in traditional Judaism enables me to fully appreciate the value of Reform Judaism’s approach to the universal understanding of God.

Reform Judaism’s most potent weapon was a small word, inclusion. It understood that Judaism could not and would not continue to grow and develop if it remained in a vacuum. Telling fellow Jews that if they did not fit into a narrow definition of religious completion that they would forever be isolated was an enigma.

Reform Judaism teaches that there is no value to Judaism if it does not seem relevant or necessary in everyday life. Where is the future of the Jewish People if we live only in the past without trying to reach for the present and the future? That is the underlying characteristic that makes Reform Judaism important for the continuity of the generations and the perpetuation of a dream that began with a man called Abraham.

Even the rabbis of the Talmud were forever engaged in making Judaism relevant for their generation. There are constant references to the learning centers of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. Shammai was considered more rigid and inflexible while Hillel was more liberal in the transmission of religious thought and its interpretation. Reform Judaism follows the standard set by Talmudic expression and relates to this definition of relevancy.

On the other hand I have noticed a resurgence of traditional expressions in Reform Judaism. I have always marveled at the somewhat intimidated attitude that can be found among Reform rabbis. It is as though they consider themselves inferior to their more traditional counterparts. They are more deferential to Jews who profess to be true Torah adherents. Perhaps some think that they are not legitimate and therefore must resort to introducing a different kind of Jewish acceptance.

Inclusion, which was the hallmark of Reform Judaism, has been replaced by exclusion. Tampering with traditional attitudes now seems to be a repudiation of religious living. We see Reform congregations building Mikvahs (ritual baths) for conversion or other purposes. We find Reform rabbis refusing to participate in interfaith marriages.

When people reach out and our hand is not there to take theirs, what have we done? Alienation is not the road to acceptance. If Judaism is to remain vibrant and relevant then we need to be as inclusive as we possibly can, not to dilute but to be an example. To teach that even today Shammai is still relegated to the next world as described in the Talmud. To make clear that Hillel is the path to involvement and continuation.

Perhaps when Reform rabbis feel secure in who they are, we too will feel comfortable in Reform Jewish fervor. If our people are not afraid to identify, in whatever form, why should we Reform rabbis tell them to change or be sidelined?

Are we reformists or conformists? That is the question. It should be a continuing debate that should be in the forefront of attempting to bring relevance to an ancient faith that deserves better than excluding many of its adherents. I wonder if the Conservative Movement realizes that the Reform Movement is the new you!

There is a classic story about a man who came to the saintly sage, the Ba’al Shem Tov and remarked that his son had abandoned God. In desperation the man asked, “What shall I do, Rabbi?” And the Ba’al Shem Tov answered, “Love him even more than ever.” Is that not what the founders of Reform Judaism going back to Spinoza had in mind when they sat and determined that the future of Judaism was not only in yesterday but in today which will guarantee tomorrow? Which will it be reform or conform?

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Jojo Rabbit and Law and Order S.V.U.

Jojo Rabbit

Writer-director Taika David (Cohen) Waititi’s film, Jojo Rabbit, tells the story of Johannes “Jojo” Betzler (Roman Griffin Davis, in an affecting and memorable performance), a ten-year-old boy growing up in Nazi Germany. Infatuated with Nazi power and propaganda, Jojo is, when we first meet him, scampering to attend a Nazi Youth program. But he is humiliated when he is unable to kill a bunny, and thus branded a coward and given the nickname “rabbit.”

Overcompensating for his embarrassment, Jojo carelessly exposes himself to a life-threatening danger and the resulting injury changes his life. Indeed, the point of the movie is that Jojo’s “rabbit-like” innocence, decency, and “fear” to do harm save him from ideology, culpability and from what could have been irredeemable betrayal on his part and devastating personal guilt.

Throughout the film we learn that Jojo’s mother, Rosie (Scarlett Johannson) is putting herself in harm’s way to post placards against Hitler’s war and to help dissidents. She is concerned about his allegiance to Hitler Youth programs, but knows how to provide him with quality time with lasting messages. When they see people who have been hanged in the town square for helping Jews or rebelling against the German war effort, Jojo asks: “What did they do?” His mother responds: “What they could.”

In one of the film’s most memorable scenes, when Jojo is angry and near rebellion against his mother, Rosie dresses as her husband, putting on her face soot from fire place to suggest that he is in battle, and says in his name: “Take care of your mother.” Jojo will emulate such ruses in his relationships with others.

Jojo Rabbit would be effective enough as a movie about a mother trying to impart values to her son in a Nazi environment even as she risks everything to fight the Nazi effort. But Waititi adds another element; Jojo finds out that his mother is hiding a young Jewish woman, Elsa (Thomasin McKenzie) in the attic.

Elsa fears that Jojo will turn her in. But she quickly senses that “rabbit” quality of decency and modesty in him and realizes that she can turn the tables of fear on him by pointing out to him what his mother is risking, by threatening to kill him, and also by invoking imaginary Jewish powers to keep him in line. At first she comes across as vicious, but it becomes clear that she wants to protect Jojo’s family as well as herself.

Encountering Elsa, Jojo decides to use the opportunity to write an expose on Jews. He enters anti-Semitic canards, both learned and of his own fantasies, into a large notebook with childish script and illustrations.

Nazi officials are amused by Jojo’s anti-Semitic obsessions, not suspecting that he knows a real-live subject. For her part, Elsa uses these encounters to instruct Jojo via sarcasm. When he asks her to tell him everything about the Jewish race she responds: “We’re just like you [Germans], only human.” When Jojo asks her why she doesn’t have horns, Elsa replies to his satisfaction that Jews don’t grow horns until they turn 21, and then adds that Jews can read minds, but not German minds, because German skulls are too thick.

Elsa’s sarcasm toys even with reverse psychology when she communicates her hunger to Jojo by quipping that Jews are allergic to food, especially biscuits. Yet she can also come right out and say very striking and moving things about being Jewish: “I am descended from those who wrestle angels and kill giants. We are chosen by God.”

Jojo makes a power play at end that he knows is wrong, and he does it to keep Elsa’s friendship. She is sensitive enough to slap him and to forgive him immediately.

Indeed, the plot about hiding a Jew and all the attendant risks is powerful and suspenseful enough, let alone the anti-Nazi resistance activism outside the home. But Waititi was still not satisfied that these would attract or grip an audience. So in addition to whatever parody of the Nazis is provided in his other plots, he adds the tease of Jojo’s imaginary friend – none other than Adolph Hitler. This allows for lines like Hitler’s description of Elsa as a “female Jesse Owens” and for provocative graphics like the Fuhrer’s prancing around sporting his suicide wounds.

Does this represent ingenious avant-garde humor? Waititi’s approach asserts that pushing the envelope, whether of taste or humor, is the best way to get attention for a Holocaust-themed film and maybe the best way to teach the subject to future generations. So, whether justified or not as artistic pedagogy, Jojo Rabbit can serve, even if by default, as a teaching moment, both on the Nazi era and on the question of what pushing the envelope does to the quality and taste of Holocaust-related films and their audiences.

The first question that any good educator would ask is why American soldiers had to be depicted at the end of the film as responsible for the summary execution of an unlikely hero in the resistance with an occasional link to Jojo. Why turn the Allies into villains?

Law and Order S.U.V.

One of Law and Order: Special Victims Unit’s most moving episodes (11-7-2019) deals with girls and young women abducted from small villages in China and sold into New York sex trade “spas” to pay off family debts. The writers take pains to point out the regrets of a Chinese American socialite who enables such crimes. Passion and conviction characterize the plot and dialogue.

I was crestfallen when I saw the aplomb with which the writers depicted two of the villains in this drama – a father and son named Olin, who are clearly intended to be Jewish. Both are without scruples, regrets or conscience. They rent commercial real estate. The vain son, Rick Olin, has been taking cash from the sex trafficking ring and arranging for his squash friend to commit rape on a weekly basis. The conniving father, Avi Olin (complete with beard and Hebrew first name), has been renting property to the “spas” in eleven locations, and taking cash in order to bypass building inspectors. Avi prides himself on being a “great deal maker.” He agrees to identify the syndicate behind the trafficking operation if his son receives no jail time.

The writers suggest that the son is dim-witted. Is this intended as an excuse? What about the father?

For more than 40 TV seasons I have pointed to such ugly depictions of Jews in TV and film. Beginning with one of my first reviews, of The Adventures of Duddy Kravitz (JPO Jan. 30, 1981), I suggested that it is the obligation of writers who depict Jews badly to point out that such behavior is not consistent with Judaism. Seeing that time and space and money considerations mitigated against this, I pointed out that writers and producers should realize that negative images of Jews (see Gertel, page 10)
As I write these words, Oct. 29, 2019, a total of 15 fires rage in northern California’s wine country and in the Los Angeles area. Twenty-five million people are under red flag warnings, with a confluence of winds, temperatures, and humidity creating conditions conducive to additional fires. The increased temperature of the land, caused by climate change, makes forest fires an imminent threat throughout the state.

Fifty years ago, I never anticipated such an outcome when my husband Richard whisked me out of Indiana to the promised land of Palo Alto, Calif., during his third year of Stanford Law School.

We met as teenagers under the auspices of NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) during a conclave in his hometown of Lafayette, Ind. Back in the 1960’s, there were not many Jewish teens in small town Indiana, so the intercity weekends, or “conclaves,” served multiple purposes – educational, social, and religious.

For 50 years, when asked why he left Indiana, Richard replied, “Two reasons: summer and winter.” My silent thought during his recitation follows: “Who would ever leave the Gan Eden (Garden of Eden) that is the Peninsula of the San Francisco Bay Area?” I knew from day one that I never wanted to leave California.

Last year, Richard and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary and 40 years in the same house. Last weekend, we celebrated his 50th law school reunion. We returned to Evanston, Ill., for my 50th Northwestern University reunion two years ago. Richard and I are two Hoosier hicks who went to good schools.

I have been fortunate to experience Richard’s thoughtfulness countless times during our 50-year marriage. Last year, he encouraged me to submit a proposal to the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Associations (IAJGA). All those years earning tenure as a college professor, writing proposals and making presentations, paid off. Proposal ironically accepted; presentation made. Ironic, because I was not even a member of IAJGA; it is Richard who is the dedicated genealogist.

Every three seconds when it first ignited, and, at this writing, “has scorched more than 75,000 acres in and around Northern California’s Sonoma County since last week,” an area twice the size of San Francisco.

I awakened to this news report, which also predicted hurricane force winds in southern California this evening. Daily, I check which way the winds are blowing in Los Angeles, because our son Josh and his family live in a western suburb of Los Angeles. The winds determine which way the fires spread. Josh and his wife Erin have bags packed in their cars, with snacks and extra bottled water. They keep their gas tanks full. In 1968, who would have thought that “historically powerful” winds could become such an enemy?

About 90,000 people have been evacuated in Northern California, with tens of thousands more under evacuation orders. Richard thoughtfully reached out to a friend of our younger daughter with a husband and two young children, and to our son-in-law’s parents, all of whom live in possible fire danger. He extended to them an invitation to stay with us, should they need to relocate.

Me with my cousin, Michael Loewenstein, Ph.D. – our fathers, z”l, were brothers.

The California fire season had not yet begun on July 28, 2019, when the conference began, at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Cleveland. The topic was Richard’s idea. “After the Shoah, Honor Your Family by Restoring German Citizenship, Stolpersteine, and the Ancestral Tour.” My cousin, Michael Loewenstein (above), co-presented with me. He helped me with the proposal and added his family pictures to our slide show. Michael conducted a great deal of genealogical research to find the German towns in which our forebears lived.

At the genealogy conference, Michael
Eye contact was in short supply at IAJGS conference meals and receptions. Nametags measured four inches by seven inches, providing enough room for five family names and locations (photo left). Participants were encouraged to read one another’s nametags with the purpose of finding lost relatives. IAJGS even printed your name and contact information multiple times, on perforated cardstock. Inserted into the back of your nametag, the tear-off cards enabled you to provide quickly your contact information to any potential relative.

The unintended consequence, focusing on one another’s chests rather than eyes, made me feel alienated from my fellow attendees. Perhaps I was not so hungry to connect with potential cousins, since I am completely happy with the ones I know about. Yet on the Stolpersteine walking tour of my ancestors’ hometowns, I discovered I had many more relatives “ermordet in Auschwitz,” murdered in Auschwitz, than I previously realized. We also discovered relatives of my grandfather, whom we knew nothing about, when we visited the historical museum in Brilon, his hometown.

For years, I answered the question, “Where are you from?” with “I live in California, but Indiana will always be my home.” But something transformed in me between the Cleveland conference and the start of fire season in California.

Fifty years ago, I took a risk and emigrated from the Midwest to the West Coast. I followed the love of my life, for whom I will be forever grateful. He introduced me to a whole new world and Weltanschauung (philosophy of life) not available in my provincial hometown. I discovered that the “Left Coast” ethos fits my own coming-of-age-in-the-soaring-1960s mentality.

Despite the ever-present threat of earthquakes, I felt safe in California. But now, with the very real danger of wildfires, spontaneously and unpredictably flaring up all over the parched state, for an ever-increasing number of months per year, I wonder if it is time to emigrate once again. Clearly, my ancestors did so. Why can’t I?

Richard and I have options. As Jews, there is always Israel. On the other hand, we could follow our daughter Leah and return to Germany. Munich, where she lives – that does not speak to me. Perhaps I could call one of the idyllic little villages in Westphalia, where my ancestors walked home. Or, I could return to my hometown of Terre Haute.

The real answer is “none of the above.” Despite the new challenges to living in this state, with climate change an everyday reality and not something 20 years in the future, I pulled back from my fantasy travel and realized that my home is where I am. And, I am here to stay.

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**Mediscope 2019, Mossad Movie, and Aboriginals**

Each year in October, members of Hadassah–Israel, from throughout the country, gather at Hadassah Hospital, Ein Karem, for Mediscope, a day of hearing doctors speak about their departments. English speakers gather in one hall, while Hebrew speakers meet in another room.

This time, the event was opened by Professor Yoram Weiss, director of Hadassah Hospital in Ein Karem for the past six years. He told participants that they treat patients from Syria, Jordan and Iraq, and that is part of the story of Hadassah as they try to “provide a bridge to peace in our region.”

Hadassah Ein Karem treats a million patients a year and they are “proud and thankful for the people who work here.”

**Rehabilitation:** First on the program, was a nice-looking young man who said “you are the people who changed my life.” In a matter-of-fact and poignant way, he described how 17 years ago in June 2002, he was with a group of youngsters on a field trip. They did not know mines had been planted by a field gate, and he stepped on a mine.

Today, he is married with two children and has had 30 surgeries at Hadassah and is working as a guide at the hospital. His most recent surgery, six months ago, was to repair nerve damage in his feet by a German trained doctor.

Information about the Rehabilitation Department of Hadassah Mount Scopus was presented by Dr. Isabella Schwartz, head of that Rehabilitation department. In addition to outpatient needs, the inpatient ward has 38 new electric beds which were recently funded by Hadassah Israel.

A new center for rehabilitation is now in the early stages which will have 132 beds and an outpatient rehabilitation unit. Among the units is a gym for the disabled.

**Hadassah School:** Members of the staff described the activities of the Hadassah School for Hospitalized Patients. The school is located on two campuses with 12 departments, 90 multicultural staff members and 220 students a day, K through high school, short term or long term.

The staff meets from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. then they work from 9 a.m. to 12, break for lunch, and return to work 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The curriculum is built out of the children’s needs, and they use ipads for children to see their classmates in the classroom. They have 20 different programs such as a therapy doll, preparing for blood tests, swallowing pills and syrup and radiation.

**Ophthalmology:** Representing the Ophthalmology Department was Dr. Shahar Frenkel, an ophthalmologist and ophthalmic surgeon. The Department of Ophthalmology was founded in 1922. They have an ocular oncology service with the highest level of research in Israel and 3 operating rooms where they perform 6,000 surgeries a year with a staff of 50 clinicians and 150 employees. This department also has an international outreach service to Africa, the Palestinian Authority, Ethiopia and Guinea plus research and education.

**Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases:** Professor Alon Moses directs the Department of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases. He told the audience the astounding news that, world-wide, one in 10 people admitted to a hospital will acquire an infection while in the hospital. There is a 70% chance, once a patient acquires an infection in the hospital, it will be a resistant bacteria.

Each year, 4,500 patients acquire a hospital infection and die in an Israeli hospital. Compare this to 450 people who die in Israel from a motor accident! Thus the infection control unit has changed things in the past 15 years with standard and isolation precautions and cleaning guidelines. Their goal is to lower the number of hospital acquired infections.

**Pediatrics:** Professor Eitan Karem heads the division of Pediatrics. He explained in a detailed the challenges of treating 44% of children with chronic diseases on Mount Scopus in Israel where children represent 30% of the population. He cited the fact that 80% of the children with cancer, for example, are cured.

Among the chronic disorders which impact children’s daily lives are asthma, obesity, ADHD, learning disabilities, cancer survivors and survivors of premature birth. When they reach adulthood, many are dependent on public programs and have a lower quality of life.

Children with chronic disorders need to live with the chronic disease, undergo regular physical checkups, have frequent contact with medical personnel and follow medical advice. They often have cognitive, emotional, and social development issues. Their parents need to go through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression in order to have acceptance.

“The birth of a sick child gives birth to a sick family and sickness within society.”

Hadassah is the “medical home to help children and their parents to cope with disease. Here they find one-stop care, all support services, patient oriented care and disease oriented care conducted by managing people and a case manager.”

**Mossad Movie Review**

Do you keep track of Israeli movies when they come to your community – for yourself or for your organizations to use as a fundraiser? Do you like funny, action comedies, sometimes silly? In June, a movie opened in Israel, and by the next weekend, 30,000 tickets had been sold.

In mid-September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Press Office offered a special showing to foreign correspondents and diplomats with free parking for four hours in the garage, and free popcorn and a drink at Cinema City.

Knowing that according to the film critic of the Jerusalem Post, Hannah Brow, this is “a phenomenally high figure for an Israeli film” and “many screenings…were sold out – a rarity among Israeli movies,” we were excited to view the film.

Most people who have been to Israel or have a serious interest in Israel know that
Mossad is the institute for intelligence in special operations. Inspired by David Zucker's film classics *Airplane*, *Top Secret*, and *The Naked Gun*, director/screenwriter Alon Gur Arye created this spy comedy which is really a parody. U.S. director David Zucker actually served as the onset adviser to the film.

Without spoiling the experience of seeing the film, the plot involves Mossad Agent, Guy Moran, who is recruited to rescue an American tech billionaire, kidnapped while in Jerusalem, from the "really bad guys" (RBG) terrorist organization. The Mossad agent teams up with a female CIA operative, whom the CIA sends, so as not to depend on Israel. If the mission fails, the Mossad director will be unable to light one of the Independence Day torches, which is his goal.

The acting is great, and everything about this comedy is good except the English-language captions move almost too fast to be read. Will non-Israelis enjoy this film? They may have some difficulty understanding the nuances of Israeli culture.

A little know fact – Aboriginals in Palestine

In September, the Government press office sent us an invitation to a ceremony, at the Semakh Railway Station on September 25, commemorating the Australian Aboriginal Troopers in World War I. It surprised me because I knew very little about the Aboriginal men and even less what they had to do with Palestine.

Aborigines are Australia’s indigenous people, about 2% of Australia’s total population who arrived in Australia about 30,000 years ago. A statue has been designed by an Australian artist, Jennifer Marshall, depicting an Australian Aboriginal Trooper, Jack Pollard, of the 11th Light Horse regiment, with an army issue bible in one hand tending to the grave of a fallen white Australian mate.

Unveiling the statue will be Australian Ambassador Chris Cannan; Mark Pollard (grandson of Trooper Jack Pollard); descendants of Aboriginal Troopers; and a director of the Australian Light Horse Association.

What is the connection of Aborigines to Palestine? Some of these Australian soldiers, mounted on horseback, fought against German soldiers in northern Israel (Palestine). The battle took place at Tzemach.

In an article on the Infoplease web site by Ricco Villaneuva Siasoco, I learned that the Ottomans built a railway line from the Tzemach area, which was linked to Mazrib in Syria and Der'a in Transjordan. The Tzemach station building is one of the eight original buildings constructed along the railway line within the territory of the Land of Israel. It is a known fact, however, that the Tzemach station building and most of the surrounding facilities were already in place by spring 1907.

The station was intended to serve the entire region around Tiberias. The First World War spurred a huge development of railway lines in the Land of Israel. The war required troops to be transported, and at a time when roads and cars were less developed, the train was the most effective form of transportation for moving troops and supplies quickly and efficiently.

In Autumn 1918, when the British started their large-scale offensive to capture the north of the country and Syria from the Turks, the combatants considered the Tzemach station particularly important, because it was an intersection between the land route around the Kinneret, and because of the railway line over the Yarmuk River. The site’s strategic importance is discernible in the decision taken by the German commander of the Ottoman forces, Generalleutnant Otto Liman von Sanders (1855–1929), to try and delay the British advance.

Von Sanders appointed a German officer to command the railway station’s defense, and to augment the defense with German units equipped with machine guns. Many soldiers in the British Army fought in the Middle East in WWI and, in fact, came from the east of the British Empire – India, Australia and New Zealand. As part of the British war plan, the Fourth Light horse regiment, part of the Australian Fourth cavalry division, was tasked with capturing the township of Samakh and the area around the railway station. The battle to capture Tzemach would be one of the last offensive cavalry battles.

The Australian forces advanced from the south on horseback, riding only during moonlight. On September 25, 1918, at dawn, they came under heavy fire from German machine guns. The Australian commander immediately gave the order to charge, and the cavalrymen drew their rifles and galloped in the dark – two companies of the 11th cavalry battalion galloped to the eastern edge of the township and two companies from the 12th battalion to the west. Fighting was particularly difficult around the station, where the Germans concealed themselves in the stone buildings (the buildings in Samakh were made of clay). The Australians managed to ride into the station, dismounted, and then continued hand-to-hand combat with rifles, bayonets and swords, as battle doctrine dictated. The fighting ended one hour later, at 5:30 in the morning, just after dawn.

On the Turkish - German side there were around 100 dead, almost all German soldiers, and many wounded. Altogether the Australians took 365 men prisoners, half of them German. Fourteen Australian cavalrymen were killed, 64 wounded, and almost half of their horses were killed. The Australians estimated that if the attack had been delayed and had taken place in daylight, far greater losses would have been incurred.

In Australian military history, the cavalry attack and capture of Tzemach became a story of heroism that ended with success and relatively few losses (similar to losses in the entire Palestine campaign). It was the very opposite of the appalling casualties in other regions where Australians (and all the other armies) fought in WWI. Another contribution that the Australian army made to the history of Tzemach Station are the photographs that Australian military photographers took in the aftermath of the battle once it ended. They created the best collection of pictures of the station in its early period.

(See Kaplan/Israel, page 15)
Don’t Put Out the Light

Have you ever driven to work and, once you got there, realized that you didn’t remember driving there at all?

It happens to all of us – and not just in the car. And the result is that literally we don’t see; we don’t experience what’s right in front of us. Even Moses had this experience. Moses was shepherding the flock of his father-in-law and he took the sheep out into the wilderness when, the scripture tells us, “he looked” at a bush that was burning and yet not consumed. And he said to himself, “Let me turn aside and see this incredible sight…” (Exodus 3:2–3)

From this, our sages say, we learn that there is no place that is devoid of God’s presence, not even a thorn bush. God’s presence is discernible in all things and all places. Even in something like a bush. The problem is that we just don’t see it. Things only look ordinary to us, however, because we have not yet seen what is truly there. That is, we haven’t made a conscious decision to perceive the extraordinary that is right there in front of us. As the Baal Shem Tov (Rabbi Issrael ben Eliezer, 1698–1760) said, “The world is full of miracles, but man takes his little hand and covers his eyes, and sees nothing.”

So what about the miracle of Chanukah? For all these eight nights of Chanukah, our rabbis say, these lights are holy. We are not permitted to use them, rather only to look at them. And they also say that they call out to us to turn aside from everything else and to see what is really there.

But what is it that we actually see? And what is that small flame to us? Although a better question might be: What are we to it?

In a way, fire is who we are. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) teaches us, aish (fire) is the power that gives movement, alteration and life to all physical beings. We could think of it as life-energy. It is the dark invisible fire by which the eternal, God-given laws of nature work in all of God’s creations. These are the laws that work unconsciously in everything created. And in most creatures, they operate independent of the will of those creatures. But there is one creature for which those laws come for free-willed acceptance. And that creature is us.

By keeping the Torah we consciously and freely take up the position that all other beings occupy unconsciously and without free will. For us the “fire” becomes “law,” referred to in the Torah as aishdat.

Shipley Speaks

What’s a Jew to Do?

Since the first large wave of Jews arrived in the U.S. we have fought for human rights. It is in our own self-interest to do so. We believe in taking care of our fellow man, in equal rights, equal opportunity, etc. You know, the stuff that allowed us when we came to America to take advantage of the system. And, based on our heritage and our history, we have endeavored to pass it on to succeeding generations.

This has resulted in Jews having the reputation of being “Liberals”, “Left Wing”, etc. All this because we tend to take up the cause of the underdog – again, because we were – and in many cases, still are.

For generations, Jews were comfortable in the Democratic Party. Sure – some Jews as a part of their assimilation became Republicans. They felt the philosophy of small government with a light hand was the way this new nation to which they now belonged should be governed. Many Jews who all but worshiped Roosevelt turned to Eisenhower to guide us in the 1950s.

Things change. A terrible Democratic Leadership and a foolish Republican Party that allowed 17 candidates to run for President which allowed a Trump to happen. In the confusion that followed an old Will Rogers quote rang true: “I don’t belong to any organized political party – I’m a Democrat.”

So today, we have a group of Democratic Congresspersons who are really different. I don’t know what he would make of this present gagger of Freshmen and their odd ideas. Let’s take a district in the Bronx. Joe Crowley had been the Congressman from that District as long as anyone could remember.

So long that he didn’t even bother to campaign during the Primary. Result? Only 12% of the electorate turned out to vote in the Primary and today we have “AOC.” She knows so much about the job that she didn’t bother to open a District Office in the Bronx. She said she thought the people would rather have her in Washington – fighting for basic rights rather than wasting time on the problems of the folks who elected her.

Then of course we have Ilhan Omar. She is an African from Somalia. She was raised in a middle class neighborhood of Minneapolis. She has decided to make the centerpiece of her role in the Congress constant attacks on Israel. She has never been there, has no historical knowledge of the country – but considers herself an expert on the Jews and their relationship with their Native Land.

Does she know that even this correspondent has DNA that reaches back to that land? Does she know the story of the First and Second Commonwealths and the birth of the Third? No.

Her Anti-Israel platform barely masks a strong Anti-Semitic bias that leaks into her rhetoric and tweets on an almost daily basis. She has dredged up the oldest and silliest tropes about Israel and then condemns Jews who support their native land.

The Jews. The easy target. AND do not believe for a moment that Omar is alone in her rhetoric and her approach. She said it’s “All About The Benjamins”? Believe me – if you could follow the money (which you can’t) – you’d see substantial “Benjamins” in her bank account from folks who are well grounded in the International conspiracy to delegitimize the Jewish State.

And how easily she slides into the age-old game of Anti-Semitism. Old Tropes or new angles on Anti-Semitism. She serves on the Foreign Relations Committee. Thank God they in truth have little to do with Foreign Policy.

After her first swipes, the Democrats had an opportunity to pass a strong condemnation of Anti-Semitism in all its forms. They didn’t. Instead there was a wishy-washy condemnation of all prejudicial speech, missing the target by a mile.

On the other hand, as Tevye would say, there are the Republicans. But, where are the Republicans? What we face daily is an increase in the number of White Nationalists, no desire by the head of the Party to disown them. Hate crimes are at the highest level in years, but the head of the Party has no desire to discuss it.

On the left there is Omar and AOC. On the right? Why are the good guys so silent? What is a Jew to do?

Jim Shipley has had careers in broadcasting, distribution, advertising, and telecommunications. He began his working life in radio in Philadelphia. He has written his JP&O column for more than 20 years and is director of Trading Wise, an international trade and marketing company in Orlando, Fla. This column was submitted Aug. 26, 2019. ☞
The Eight Nights of Hanukkah

On the first night of Hanukkah my true love gave to me:
Lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the second night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
2 kosher pickles, and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the third night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
3 pounds of corned beef, 2 kosher pickles, and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the fourth night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
4 potato latkes, 3 pounds of corned beef, 2 kosher pickles, and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the fifth night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
5 bowls of chicken soup!

On the sixth night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
6 pickled herrings,
5 bowls of chicken soup!
4 potato latkes,
3 pounds of corned beef,
2 kosher pickles,
and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the seventh night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
7 noodle kugels,
6 pickled herrings,
5 bowls of chicken soup!
4 potato latkes,
3 pounds of corned beef,
2 kosher pickles,
and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

On the eighth night of Hanukkah, my true love gave to me:
8 Alka-Seltzer,
7 noodle kugels,
6 pickled herrings,
5 bowls of chicken soup!
4 potato latkes,
3 pounds of corned beef,
2 kosher pickles,
and lox, bagels and some cream cheese.

Light One Candle

A Song by Peter Yarrow of Peter, Paul & Mary
www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tB_ehpZyN4

Light one candle
for the Maccabee children.
Give thanks that their light didn’t die.
Light one candle
for the courage they needed,
when their right to exist was denied.
Light one candle
for the hope in their hearts,
that justice and freedom demand.
Light one candle
for the wisdom to know
when the peace-maker’s time is at hand.

Don’t let the light go out:
it’s lasted for so many years.
Don’t let the light go out:
let it shine through our love and our tears.

Light one candle
for the strength that we need
to never become our own foe.
Light one candle
for those who are suffering
the pain we learned so long ago.
Light one candle
for all we believe in,
let anger not tear us apart.
Light one candle
bind us together,
with peace as the song in our heart.
What is the memory
that’s valued so highly
that we keep it alive in that flame?
What’s the commitment
to those who have died,
we cry out they’ve not died in vain?
We have come this far,
always believing,
that justice will somehow prevail.
This is the burden
and this is the promise
and this is why we will not fail.

Don’t let the light go out... (3x)

Kaplan/Israel
(continued from page 13)

Historians estimate that as many as 1,000 of the approximately 4,500 Australian soldiers who fought in Palestine in World War I were aboriginal.
Australian Aboriginal soldiers were part of this battle. Thus, a little known aspect of Israeli (Palestinian) history and Aboriginals comes to light.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, lecturer, and book reviewer. She is a former region president and national board member of Hadassah U.S. and former chapter president and current board member of Hadassah-Israel. She is 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 in janglo.net for which Barry is a photographer.

Ben Asher/Bat Sarah
(continued from page 14)

the fiery law. As Rabbi Hirsch teaches, we are the fuel for keeping the fires of godliness burning on earth.

So, on each night of Chanukah, when you look at the flame, think of yourself.
And ask yourself: For what purpose will I use this God-given fire, this life-energy that is mine to direct.

Bar Kappara (tanna who lived in transitional period between tannaim and amoraim) taught: “God said to man: ‘My light is in your hand and your light is in My hand.’ ‘My light is in your hand’: this refers to the Torah; and ‘your light is in My hand’: this refers to the soul. If you guard My light, I will guard your light, but if you extinguish My light, I will extinguish your light.” (Leviticus Rabbah 31:4)

We leave you with a poem called, “Don’t Put Out the Light”:

For You
Who made the light
And blew it into me
Who gave me my soul
To be a lantern
In Your hand,
Saying,
Don’t put out the light!
Let me keep pure
This filament,
My body.
Let it be
According
To Your will,
A sheath for light,
That I may lift
My lamp
Into Your hands.

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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.gatherethepeople.org). Reprinted from a previous edition of this publication.
Israel Needs Separation of Church and State


Israeli historian Dr. Arye (Arik) Carmon studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, earning his doctorate at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He is senior fellow at the Hoover Institute, Stanford University. The author-scholar-activist is founder of the 2009 Israel prize winner, the Israeli Institute of Democracy, which he headed for two decades. In his book that is a must-read for all who care about Israel as it has entered its seventh decade, the author both challenges and alarms us to the threat posed to Israel’s democracy and future by the Orthodox camp whose over-riding loyalty and commitment is to Halachic Judaism.

He is concerned that Israel’s twin pillars, as a Jewish and democratic state, are on a collision course with each other. He points out the risk of no less than a civil war, with American history in mind, and the high cost of neglecting the explosive slavery issue. “Today, in the midst of Israel’s political culture that primarily nourishes democracy in its structural as well as normative dimensions, different narratives are found, two of which are dominant, reflecting opposing views of the Zionist revival. These two narratives have been there since the beginning; they exist in modified degrees almost since the beginning of the Jewish people’s national liberation movement: On the one hand, stand the Political and Practical Zionism’s leaders for whom the revival is a product of a generally secular rebellion against religion’s centrality and particularly against the nation’s awaiting messianic redemption. On the other hand, stand Religious Zionism’s leaders who turned the secular revolution’s products into ‘the flowering’s beginning of our redemption.’” (p. 30)

In the absence of an Israeli constitution and no defining guidelines and boundaries for religious involvement in public life, growing religious forces have utilized this to their advantage while undermining the delicate balance and separation between the Jewish and democratic components of Israel’s identity. Moreover, Orthodox Judaism’s monopoly on Israel’s religious life along with the “official state ban” (p. 61) on the Conservative and Reform streams, have only worsened matters. While the United States had the Federalist Papers to guide its civil development, Israel lacks a similar document, contends Carmon.

Perhaps to avoid a divisive debate on the religious and state divide, David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister, and its leader in the formative period including pre-state, was opposed to a constitution. This was at a fateful juncture where official unanimity was required. However, there was then a unique opportunity, argues the author, to fashion a constitution given that influential religious political leaders such as Zerach Verhaptiag, who was a jurist, supported it. He even headed the committee in July 1948 to accomplish it, with the endorsement of Rabbi Uziel, the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi. Carmon calls this failure, “the loss of a historic moment of grace” (p. 212), along with, “missed was the historic moment to place the foundation for legitimizing definitions of multi-cultural, multi-Jewish identities” (p. 130).

Carmon nostalgically recalls walking to soccer games in Jerusalem of the 1950s joined by Sephardic youth who just finished attending Shabbat services and some smoked cigarettes as long as a Shabbos goy lit them. This scenario is not likely to be replicated in today’s political-social climate. The above Sephardic flexibility is contrasted with the disturbing memories of Ashkenazi Meah Shearim Jews stoning a military vehicle passing by on Shabbat. Israel’s Declaration of Independence uses Zur Yisrael (The Rock of Israel) as the compromise offered by Ben-Gurion in the face of Orthodox representatives who insisted on including God’s name in a critical moment just before sharing the historic Declaration with the world as Shabbat was about to be ushered in. The author admiringly defends Ben-Gurion as a “pragmatic Kohan” but bemoans his not being a “pedagogic Navi” as well (p.131). I believe though Ben-Gurion regarded himself as a secular Zionist prophet.

The author is highly critical of the Israeli government’s policy in the 1950s of forcibly assimilating the flood of new olim into a “New Jew” Israeli identity, disregarding the rich cultural and religious traditions of the Jews from Arab lands while assuming they were primitive and inferior to the Eastern European Jews. He claims that this harsh melting pot approach was a failed experiment. Though a negative residue persists, it overlooks significant accomplishments as well under stressful circumstances. Carmon insists that the Zionist concept of “Sheilit Hagolah,” the total negation of the lengthy Diaspora legacy promoted by a leader of Ben-Gurion’s influential stature, is responsible for creating a dangerous void and imbalance by-passing most of Israel’s history with its rich cultural-religious treasures.

The conscious return to the early Biblical period was modeled on the romantic European national revival of the 19th century. The author harps on his parents and their friends’ warm cultural Yiddishkite they brought from Poland and the inability of the Zionist secular revolution to offer a satisfying spiritual alternative. The varied components of the Jewish experience should have been integrated. However, Amos Oz, renowned author and thinker who is also from the Left, diverges from this analysis. He finds the renewed Hebrew literature and culture and the general Israeli enterprise to overshadow the Diaspora and its rabbinic offerings, such as the Shulchan Aruch (see Oz’s latest book, Shalom Lakanaim, Keter-Books, 2017).

The victorious 1967 War which was euphorically perceived in messianic terms and the resultant settlers’ movement, gave rise to religious-nationalists forces that took advantage of the ideological vacuum and now threaten Israeli democracy’s vital institutions such as the Supreme Court. Particularly the traumatic 1973 Yom Kippur War and the continued military engagements along with terrorist attacks, and with them the shattered sense of security of the Israeli “New Jew,” allowed for the “Old Jew” to reemerge. The watershed 1995 murder of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin by comparison to the ascendency of traditional and Orthodox Jews. Even the IDF sacred cow is not immune to Orthodox pressure with the attempt to separate men and women and curtail women’s role in ceremonies. Critical issues such as returning territories are open to Orthodox rabbis’ opposition, remembering the 2005 Gush Katif evacuation. Also the attitude (see Zoberman/BR, page 18)
**My Kosher Kitchen**

**Reviewed by Sybil Kaplan**

### Israeli Cookbook Review and Recipes


Adeena Sussman has co-authored eleven cookbooks, including the New York Times #1 bestseller *Cravings* – and its *New York Times* bestselling follow-up, *Hungry for More* – with Chrissy Teigen. She is also the author of Short Stack Editions’ *Tahini*. A lifelong visitor to Israel, she moved there in 2015 after meeting an expat American who has since become her husband. She lives footsteps from Tel Aviv’s Carmel Market, where she shops and explores daily, taking inspiration from her adopted country’s seasonal and cultural culinary rhythms. She has written about Israeli food for *Eater*, *Epicurious*, *Gourmet*, and many others.

*Sababa* was named a Best New Cookbook of Fall 2019 by the *New York Times*, *Bon Appetit*, *Food & Wine*, *Epicurious*, *Gourmet*, and many others.

From the Foreword by Michael Solomonov and Steve Cook, whose Philadelphia restaurant, *Zahav*, was named the best restaurant in America by the James Beard Foundation in May 2019:

This was Zahav’s first nomination for the award, given to restaurants open 10 years or more – the culinary equivalent of the Academy Award for best picture. Chef and co-owner Michael Solomonov was named the outstanding chef in America in 2017, the same year that he and business partner Steve Cook won the book of the year award for *Zahav: A World of Israeli Cooking*. The restaurant was nominated for outstanding service in 2017 and 2018.

From there, I was drawn into Adeena’s introduction of her sojourn into the Tel Aviv Carmel Market where she loves to acknowledge purchases with *Sababa*, derived from the Arabic word for “great” or “wonderful” but actually means – everything is awesome.

Adeena and her husband, Jay, live by *Shuk haCarmel* and she writes: “This book is a reflection of the things I like to make from the bounty I’ve found right outside my door.” This book is “a window of how I like to cook right now.”

There are 12 chapters beginning with Kitchen Pantry: spices, spice blends, condiments and other staples with 11 recipes. This is followed by “Breakfast” with 14 recipes such as Zucchini, dill and feta shakshuka; “Bread and Crackers, and Snacks” with 9 recipes such as Cast iron skillet pita; “Salatim” with 14 recipes such as Quick and easy hummus; “Vegetables” with 9 recipes such as Oven roasted artichokes with roasted garlic; “Soups” with 6 recipes such as *Freekah* vegetable soup; “Salads” with 8 recipes such as Toasted challah caprese salad with za’atar vinaigrette; “Pasta and Grains” with 10 recipes such as Roasted tomato and labaneh pappardelle; “Poultry and Meat Mains” with 18 recipes such as Shwarma pargiyot; “Fish and Vegetable Mains” with 16 recipes such as Moroccan fish cakes; “Drinks and Frozen Treats” with 9 recipes such as Date and roasted garlic; “Soups” with 18 recipes such as Labaneh malabi panna cotta – a whopping 141 in all.

If those don’t tempt you, there are 216 beautiful, color photos which show you how these dishes look and entice you to make a shopping list and then start cooking in your kitchen.

What is obvious about these recipes is they are authentic Israeli not custom made to cooks who want Israeli-style cooking in North America.

This cookbook will make a wonderful gift for anyone who has visited and eaten in Israel or who enjoys creative cooking from Israeli culture by a woman who really knows what she is doing!

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### Dukkah

*Dukkah* (2 cups)

This is more of a topping than a spice blend. It is traditionally served alongside labaneh with olive oil for dipping with bread.

- 1 cup hazelnuts, preferably blanched
- 1/2 cup raw white sesame seeds
- 3 Tbsp. whole cumin seeds
- 3 Tbsp. whole coriander seeds
- 1/2 cup raw white sesame seeds
- 1 tsp. salt

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Place the hazelnuts on a rimmed baking sheet and toast until the nuts are lightly browned and the spices are fragrant, 9-10 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool completely. If the nuts have skins on them, rub them between two clean kitchen towels to remove and discard as much of the loose, papery skins as possible.

While the hazelnuts are roasting, toast the sesame seeds in a medium dry skillet over medium heat, stirring often, until golden and fragrant, 3-4 minutes. Transfer to a plate to cool.

Add the coriander and cumin seeds to the same skillet and toast until fragrant and the seeds begin to pop, 1-2 minutes. Transfer to a separate plate to cool. Grind the cumin and coriander in a spice grinder until powdery and transfer to the bowl of a food processor. Add the hazelnuts, pepper, salt and sugar and process until the mixture looks like fine sand, being careful not to over process the nuts into paste, 15-20 seconds. Transfer to a bowl and add the sesame seeds. Store in an airtight container for up to one month.

### Rough-Chopped Salad with Yogurt & Dukkah

(Serving size varies)

- tomatoes
- kohlrabi
- cucumbers
- carrots
- radishes
- scallion greens
- yogurt
- extra-virgin olive oil
- freshly squeezed lemon juice
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

**Prepare the dukkah before making this recipe. Chop the vegetables to your desired size.**

Spread some yogurt on a plate or in a bowl, put the vegetables on top, drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice, season with...
After Virginia Beach shooting May 31, 2019

BY RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

At this trying and beclouded time of grief and sorrow, we gradually and painfully come to grips with the enormity of our losses diminishing us all as well as our newly discovered vulnerabilities. Our beloved Virginia Beach and the entire Hampton Roads community lost its beautiful but dangerously blinding innocence on that fateful Friday afternoon. How could we imagine that the mass shootings in other regions would not reach us too? Truth to be told no one is insulated and immune in the wide American landscape. What happens around us near and far is bound to affect us at home. However, we are obligated to protect ourselves as best as we can given whatever limitations we face.

We are called upon now to pick up together the shattered pieces of a complex and confounding reality to reemerge rededicated and reenergized to make our threatened world, inwardly and outwardly, a safer home and better place for one and all. Our fallen 12 heroes who so callously and cowardly were taken from their loving families, co-workers, neighbors, friends and all of us, deserve no less. For their cherished memories’ sake and our very survival and future let us engage more than ever with those around us, particularly the ones we deem to be beyond our intimate circle of close associates.

We acknowledge that the social phenomenon of alienation is a hallmark of our challenging times. Pleasant surprises do await us when willing to reach out beyond the familiar and engage others in a wondrously diverse human environment in Hampton Roads in which too many may feel lonely, unnoticed and undervalued. So called “strangers” cease to be strangers once we encounter and appreciate our common humanity and shared American dream in which we all have a critical stake. The Bible wisely instructs us that a celebration is not complete without including the strangers in our midst so they may transform their status, claiming their rightful place in society and in our hearts. Spreading more and more conscious but promising culture of life.

Our democratic and educational institutions on all levels demand our involvement and support that necessary change should occur. Surely prudent and common-sense gun control legislation along with an accountable and responsible mental health system are on the agenda. Are we waiting for more mass shootings’ tragedies, oceans of tears and cries of family survivors of different languages and geographies, and heart-wrenching memorial services to propel us into action? Ought we not teach, beginning at one’s home, that each finite human life is of infinite worth, and each of us is an entire, irreplaceable universe of purpose and meaning reflecting the Most High? We are witnesses to what irreparable damage can be done by a few minutes of unchecked madness and unrelenting evil using weapons of mass destruction equipped with silencers. Let us not allow a corrosive culture of death to replace a promising culture of life.

It would be advantageous for our entire nation to take a day out for national soul-searching and resolve to delve into issues that should be paramount on our agenda. A day in which we engage in discussions and activities toward healing our nation, creating a “National Day of Caring” would create a ripple effect. The slogan “VB Strong” has joined us to the sorrowful and hurting family of previously affected communities, even as we pray and plan (!) that our Virginia Beach is the last in such an unenviable category of suffering. I suggest that we be better served by the slogan, “VB Cares,” which is ultimately the source of authentic strength. What befell us will surely not define us, but we cannot deny it. It may yet refine us to become more compassionate, considerate and connected with each other.

My 99-year-old mom, a Polish Holocaust survivor, called me from Israel that dark day, asking, “What’s happening to America?”

Rabbi Dr. Israel Zoberman is the founder and spiritual leader of Temple Lev Tikvah and Honorary Senior Rabbi Scholar at Eastern Shore Chapel Episcopal Church in Virginia Beach. The Temple meets in The Church Of The Holy Apostles. This article was inserted into the Congressional Record by Congressman Donald McEachin of Virginia’s 4th district.

ZOBERMAN/BR

translated all the quotes. His bio is below

KAPLAN RECIPE

(continued from page 17)

Za’atar Roasted Chicken

Salt and pepper, and top with as much dukkah as you like.

Za’atar Roasted Chicken (Serves 4)

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cut each potato into 6 wedges. In a 9x13-inch metal or glass baking dish, toss the potatoes and shallots with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and the sumac, salt and black pepper. Season the cavity and exterior of the chicken well with salt and pepper.

Zest the lemon into a small bowl, then halve the lemon and set aside.

Add the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil to the bowl along with the red pepper flakes, and gently stir.

Stuff the lemon halves, garlic and thyme sprigs inside the chicken, then rub the chicken all over with the za’atar mixture.

Place the chicken, breast side up, on top of the potatoes. Roast the chicken for 15 minutes, then reduce the heat to 350°F and continue to roast the chicken until the juices run clear and the potatoes are crisp and golden, about another hour and 10 minutes. (The rule is 23-25 minutes per pound of chicken not counting the high roasting temperature at the beginning of the recipe.)

KAPLAN RECIPE

(continued from page 17)

Sybil Kaplan (see bio p. 15)

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APLAN RECIPE (continued from page 16)
Magen David Adom (MDA) is Israel’s official ambulance, blood-services, and disaster-relief agency, serving the nation’s 9 million people. But like every other Red Cross agency around the world, MDA doesn’t receive regular government support. That’s why it relies on people like you.

Since the 1930s, generous Americans like you have provided the vehicles, training, and equipment that’s kept Israelis healthy and strong.

There are many ways to support Israel, but none that has a greater effect on it’s people and it’s future than a gift to Magen David Adom. Your support isn’t just changing lives — it’s literally saving them.

Make an end-of-year donation to Magen David Adom at afmda.org/chanukah today.

And our best wishes for a joyous Chanukah and New Year.
Soccer Player Turned Rabbi: The Story of Snir Gueta

Rabbi Snir Gueta, once a promising player in Israel’s national Under-21 team, is now a rabbi who teaches prominent soccer players the Torah. The 31-year-old former midfielder discusses his personal journey and explains why playing on weekdays, instead of Shabbat, will increase the number of soccer stars in Israel.

Rabbi Gueta (below, on the right) grew up in the Maccabi Haifa’s youth department, played in the Israeli Premier League for Maccabi Netanya, and starred in Israel’s national Under-21 team. Today, he is considered one of the most recognized rabbis among Israel’s younger generation.

Seven years ago, the promising midfielder decided to retire from soccer. Driven by his religious beliefs, he chose to forgo the sport he loved in order to uphold further the halachot (Jewish laws) surrounding the Jewish Sabbath. Today, he is a married father of three. He receives such a large volume of inquiries that he has been helped by an assistant to help respond to the people seeking his advice. Committed to helping others learn the Bible as he has, he dedicates his time to give lessons every evening, throughout the country.

The Rabbi’s lessons are mostly about virtues, courtesy, faith, and what it means to be god-fearing. The audience in his lectures is very diverse – Yeshiva students and Orthodox Jews, sitting amongst well-known and secular soccer players of Israel’s Premier League is a common sight. “Struggling with the modern balance of today’s personal and professional lives, these motivational speeches help us to gain clarity,” said Rabbi Gueta.

When explaining his decision to quit soccer, the Rabbi said, “It was a very long process. Through lessons of various righteous rabbis, I realized that I was not on the right track as a Jew. I found myself at a crossroads. One choice was to wait until I’m 35, finish my career, then begin my path to becoming the rabbi I knew I could be. The other option was to follow my heart and do what I felt G-d wants for me, beginning immediately.” Rabbi Gueta continues, “In the last year of my career, I had plenty of offers from soccer clubs, but I made the decision to retire. I salute my wife – without her, it would have been more difficult to make the decision; she would have been willing to go anywhere with me.”

“Giving up a soccer player’s salary and retiring was not an easy thing to do, especially for those who were in the position I was in, at the time.”When discussing what he feels when thinking of the life he left behind, Rabbi Gueta (right) quickly answered “I’m not missing anything. It must have been the right decision for me. When Football games are scheduled on a Saturday, it automatically keeps a large religious fan base away from the sport. Who knows, maybe a few more soccer stars are hiding in the religious sector, and it’s not worth losing them”, added Rabbi Gueta.