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Tending Gardens

Wildflowers bloom,
A field of colors,
A meadow on a hillside,
Untamed and free,
Tended by the sun and the rain,
Gently painted by the will of the earth.

Another place of delight,
My garden blooms,
A blueprint from my heart,
Guided by my hand,
Tended with love and with affection,
Planted according to my design.

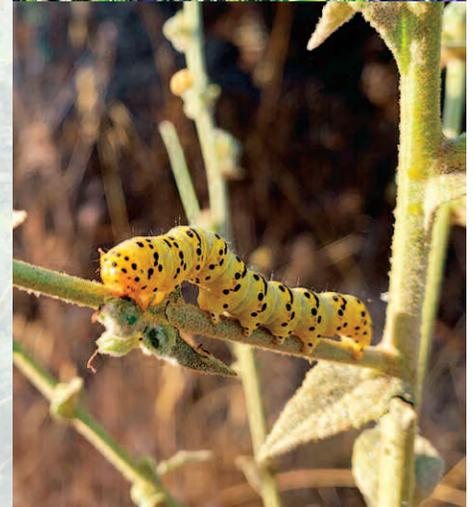
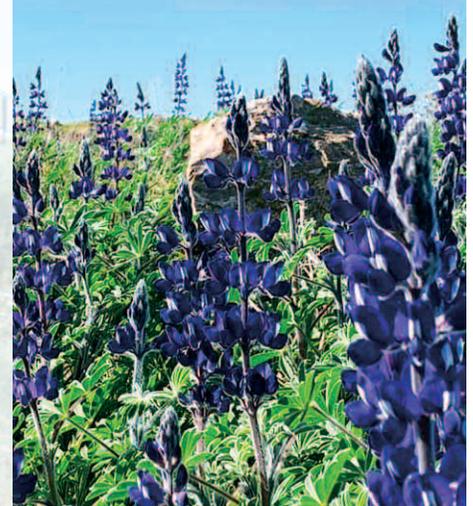
God of splendor,
Grant me the willingness to
Plant gardens
And the wisdom to leave
Other gardens To You.

Teach me the beauty of doing
And the glory of not doing.
Grant me the power to act
And the strength to refrain.

Let my will to create,
And my willingness to accept,
Find balance and harmony
In my heart and in my hands,

So that my doing,
And my not doing,
Serve Your will
And Your world.

Poem/Prayer from the book, This Precious Life and flowers photos taken in Israel by Alden Solovy. (See About the Cover on p. 2)



Seen on the Israel Scene



BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Going to Jericho After the Pandemic June 2021

Participating in a “pioneering” International Christian Trip with Pastor Al Nucciarone and his wife, Billie, is an exciting experience. “Pioneering” because it was his first trip as the pandemic is opening up.

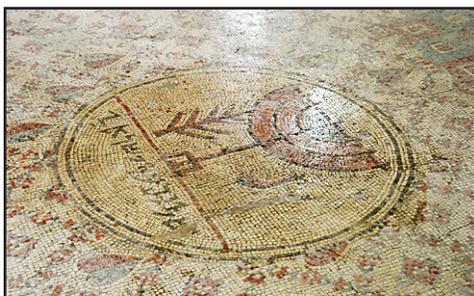
International because the 55 people on our bus were either living, working or visiting from: England, Armenia, Bhutan, Guatemala, the Philippines, India, Korea, Canada, Switzerland, the Ivory Coast, Haiti, Lebanon, Holland, Finland, Poland, Malawi (southeastern Africa), Uzbekistan, Benin (west Africa), and the United States (New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Illinois).

Christian Pastor Al leads the Baptist Church in Jerusalem and has been a good friend of mine and my late husband’s for 15 years. He and Barry were in *Ulpan* (Hebrew class) together. Billie surprised us with her home-made chocolate chip cookies.

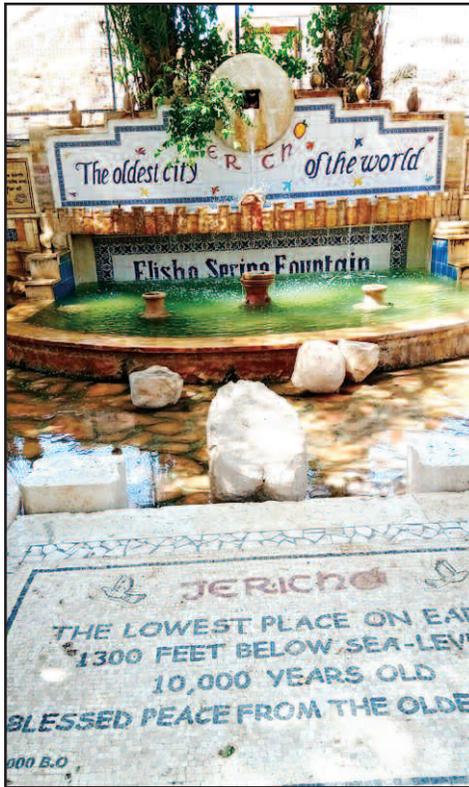
I was the sole Jewish Israeli going along officially as a correspondent with Israel Government Press Credentials. We were accompanied by another full bus of people from Romania with their own guide.

The first half of the trip was focusing on Samaria with a stop at Jacob’s Well. This deep well is located within the complex of an Eastern Orthodox monastery of the same name, in the city of Nablus (Shechem).

Jews, Christians, and Muslims all feel a connection to Jacob, whom we are told in the Old Testament that when he returned to Shechem, he camped before the city, bought land on which he pitched his tent and erected an altar which is said to be the land on which the well was constructed (Genesis 33:18–20).



7th century *Shalom al Yisrael* Synagogue mosaic in Jericho. (Photo by Barry Kaplan, z”l, c. 2019.)



Sign and mosaic at Jericho.

The New Testament mentions the well as a place where Jesus and a Samaritan woman had a conversation while he was resting there after a journey, and its location was in a church, which was destroyed and rebuilt several times. The site was obtained by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in 1860 and a new church built in 1893 with a small monastery, which was destroyed in 1927 by an earthquake.

A large reconstruction project was organized by Abuna Loustinos, a Greek Orthodox priest in Schechem (Nablus). The well was restored and a Crusader-era styled church with the well was built. One goes through a court yard, down some steep steps, across another area into and through the church and down more steps to reach the well, where one may drink of the water.

Joseph’s Tomb was our next stop, however for reasons that were unclear to us, the guard would not open the gate for us to go inside and see it. It is located at the eastern entrance to the valley that separates Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, northwest of Jacob’s Well, on the outskirts of Shechem (Nablus). Samaritans consider it their second holiest site.

One biblical tradition identifies the general area of Shechem as the resting-place of the biblical patriarch Joseph and his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh. The present structure, a small rectangular room with a cenotaph dates from 1868, but there are conflicting stories about this location, and there is no archaeological evidence establishing the tomb as Joseph’s.

It fell under the jurisdiction of the

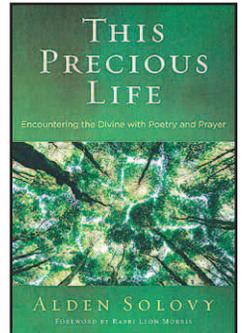
About the Cover

Alden Solovy spreads joy and excitement for prayer. An American-Israeli liturgist, poet, journalist and educator, his work has been used by people of all faiths throughout the world. He’s written more than 800 pieces of new liturgy, offering a fresh new Jewish voice, often challenging the boundaries between poetry, meditation, personal growth and prayer. Alden’s writing was transformed 12 years ago by the sudden death of his wife from catastrophic brain injury.



Alden Solovy

In addition to *This Precious Life*, (see review in *Editorial*, p. 3) Alden’s first books in this trilogy published by CCAR Press are *This Grateful Heart: Psalms and Prayers for a New Day* (2017), and *This Joyous Soul: A New Voice*



(see Solovy, page 3)



Jordan River with divider, Jordan on the other side. (Photo by Barry Kaplan, z”l, c. 2019.)

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) following the signing of the Oslo Accords, but it remained under IDF guard. At the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, it was handed over to the PNA. Following the reoccupation of Nablus during Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, Jewish groups returned there intermittently. Between 2009 and 2010 the structure was refurbished, with a new cupola installed, and visits by Jewish worshippers have resumed but controversy about who may visit when remains.

The lookout point on **Mount Gerizim** mentioned in Genesis 12:6 was our next visit. Mt. Gerizim is one of the two mountains near Nablus (Mount Ebal is the other); it is one of the highest peaks in Judaea/Samaria, 2890 feet above sea level. The Samaritans consider it the location G-d

(see Kaplan/IS, page 4)

Editorial

As the High Holidays approach, studying the book that is reviewed below, can be an excellent way to prepare for them or it can be a wonderful complement to your High Holiday Prayer Book.

This Precious Life: Encountering the Divine with Poetry and Prayer. By Alden Solovy. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis Press, 2021. 139 Pages. \$16.95. <http://precious.ccarpress.org/>.

This is the third book in a trilogy. (See the titles and Solovy's biography in *About the Cover*, p. 2.) A review of those first two books can be seen on page 9 of the following link: jewishpostopinion.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NAT_5-20-20.pdf

Bonnie Maurer summed up the first two books with these comments: "Solovy knows that expressing gratitude contributes to the happiness of your life. You are united with your grateful and joyous heart in reading both these collections of prayers. And if praying sustains you, if your heart's desire is to become that "prayer with wings gliding on the currents of your faith," then Solovy's *This Joyous Soul* and *This Grateful Heart* will be your inspirational companions."

This Precious Life, a book of 100 poems/prayers, is divided into two parts. The first is "Encountering God in Our Text" and the second is "Encountering God in Our World". Both parts have seven sections. The first part contains: Creation, the Garden, and the Flood; Patriarchs and Matriarchs; Escape from Egypt; In the Desert and at Sinai; Priests, Sacrifice, and Temple Service; Prophecy; and Psalms. The second part's sections are: The Divine in the World; Time and Stillness; Sacred Struggles; Blessing Each Other; Seeking; Yearning; and Discovery. (See "Tending Gardens" on the cover for one example of the 100 poems.)

In an excerpt from the Foreword by Rabbi Leon Morris, president of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, he describes the book this way. He talks about two kinds of prayers. The fixed prayers like those said in daily services *shacharit* (morning), *minchah* (afternoon), and *arvit* (evening) versus prayers that express the inner life of the one who prays – prayers of the heart. He writes, "Much of Alden Solovy's liturgy occupies the space in between these two conceptual frameworks."

"Here, in the first half of *This Precious Life*, the experience of our ancestors serves as a foundation for our own encounter with God. . . Those ancient stories inspire a creative impulse that fuels our contemporary hopes, dreams, and struggles."

Rabbi Morris mentions a third type of

SOLOVY

(continued from page 2)

for *Ancient Yearnings* (2019). His first two books are: *Jewish Prayers of Hope and Healing* (2013) and *Hagaddah Companion: Meditations and Readings* (2014).

The *Jerusalem Post* called Alden's writing "soulful and meticulously crafted." *Huffington Post Religion* said his "...prayers reflect age-old yearnings in modern-day situations."

Alden's work has been widely anthologized. He serves as liturgist-in-residence for the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. Alden's teaching spans from synagogues throughout America and Limmud Conferences in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom to rabbinical schools, including HUC-JIR and the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem and Leo Baeck College in London. His prayers also appear on ReformJudaism.org, RitualWell, RavBlog, and *The Times of Israel*.

Alden holds an MBA in economics and finance, an MA in Journalism and a BA in English Composition. He's is a three-time winner of the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism. Alden made *aliyah* to Israel in 2012 where he hikes frequently, participates in interfaith prayer and leads ManKind Project Israel. Find his latest work at www.tobendlight.com. ✨



prayer that is modeled by our matriarch Hannah. "From her, the *Talmud* explains, we learn we must direct our heart when we pray. True prayer must be intentional. It should not become rote or formulaic."

"In the second half of, *This Precious Life*, Alden embodies the model Hannah provides – his words emerge from a life fully lived. . . Hannah's prayer is paradigmatic because it is expressed in her own voice. In *This Precious Life*, Alden Solovy once again offers us his unique voice and does so in a way that calls us to find our own and to offer it – and our very lives – as a gift and as a prayer."

A salve for the soul, this book is especially helpful for the challenging times in which we are living. An alternative way to read the book is to simply pick it up, open to a random page, and see how that poem/prayer offers solace to your current situation. Whenever I do this, I feel like the words I am reading are what is "real" and what is going on outside in the world is an "illusion".

In Genesis 32:22–32, Jacob seems to have a holy encounter, a physical struggle with an angel, where he prevails and his name is changed to Israel. In this book Solovy follows in Jacob's footsteps, but with a different type of encounter. Using words only, he triumphs as a Godwrestler.

Shana Tova 5782! We wish all of our

Inside this Issue

Sybil Kaplan: (<i>Seen on the Israel Scene</i>)	
Post-Pandemic Tour to Jericho.....	2
About the Cover	2
Jennie Cohen: (<i>Editorial</i>).....	3
Rabbi Benzion Cohen: (<i>Chassidic Rabbi</i>)	
Religious or Secular	4
Israeli Diplomat Aviv Ezra:	
The Ten Commandments	
of Pro-Israel Advocacy.....	5
Amy Lederman: (<i>Jewish Educator</i>)	
Sharing the Stories of Our Lives	5
Rabbi Benjamin Sendrow:	
We Cannot Put the Toothpaste	
Back in the Tube	6
Melinda Ribner: (<i>Kabbalah of the Month</i>)	
Drawing Down Blessings	
for the Coming Year.....	7
Rabbi Barry Silver: (<i>Cosmic Judaism</i>)	
Seeking Renewal of Our Souls and	
Planet on the High Holy Days	8
Rabbi Mira Wasserman:	
A Clean White Page.....	8
Jim Shipley: (<i>Shipley Speaks</i>)	
Anti-Israel Equals Anti-Semitism ...	9
Miriam Zimmerman: (<i>Conflict Manager</i>)	
Divorce Mediators Save a Marriage.....	10
A Bit of Wit	11
Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub:	
Meditation Before <i>Yom Kippur</i> for	
One Who Cannot Fast.....	12
Rabbi Irwin Wiener: (<i>Wiener's Wisdom</i>)	
A Glimpse Into the Future.....	12
Rabbi Israel Zoberman: (<i>Book Review</i>)	
<i>Timahon</i> (Astonishment).....	13
Sybil Kaplan:	
Traditional Foods for Break-the-Fast	
from Different Cultures.....	14
Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel: (<i>Media Watch</i>)	
<i>Superior Donuts</i>	15
Sidney Mishkin: (<i>Book Reviews</i>)	
<i>Unbinding Isaac</i> and	
<i>The Accusation Blood Libel in an</i>	
<i>American Town</i>	16
Sybil Kaplan: (<i>My Kosher Kitchen</i>)	
<i>jew-ish, Cookbook: Reinvented Recipes</i>	
<i>from a Modern Mensch</i>	18
Sybil Kaplan: (<i>Seen on the Israel Scene</i>)	
My Favorite Gift Shop.....	20

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readers a healthy and meaningful High Holiday season.

Jennie Cohen, August 11, 2021 ✨

Chassidic Rabbi

BY RABBI BENZION COHEN

B.H.

Religious or Secular

Which is the right way to live? I should know. I grew up rather secular. I suffered a lot as a teenager. My goals were to be popular, have a lot of friends, go to parties and get drunk, have girlfriends and have good times. I failed to achieve these goals and suffered a lot of frustration and jealousy. I was jealous of those who were rich, popular, had girlfriends, went to parties, owned a car or motorcycle and such. I was forced to go to classes and read and study a lot of subjects that didn't really interest me.

When I was 17 years old I tried out religion (yoga). Two months later I realized a lot of improvement in my life. I felt a strange feeling. What was it? Happiness! No more frustration and jealousy! Now I had different goals. Now it didn't bother me that I was not rich or that I didn't own a car or motorcycle. Now I didn't want to go to parties and get drunk. Now I wanted to be good, to do good deeds, to be helpful, to be careful not to harm any living creature. I wanted to believe in G-d and live by His rules. I became a vegetarian, so as not to kill the fish, poultry or cattle. I tried hard to be nice and helpful. When I helped someone they were happier, and that made me happy! I was nice to people so they were nice to me. Friendships blossomed and my life blossomed.

A year later I became *Chassidic*. How did this happen? I spent *Shabbos* (Sabbath) in a *Chassidic* community and was very impressed. I found there a lot of happy people and felt a lot of love. A month later I visited the *yeshiva* in Kfar Chabad. I learned *Talmud* for the first time, and I liked it very much. After a few days I decided to drop out of college and learn full time in the *Yeshiva*. Soon I felt new improvements in my life. Three hours a day I learned *Chassidus*, which explains the deep, inner meaning of the *Torah*, the commandments and every aspect of life. Now I felt the holiness of the Sabbath and the holidays. Now every Sabbath and holiday became a wonderful experience. I remember telling myself: "Wow! This one *Shabbos* is worth more than all of the 17 years that I lived in Indianapolis!"

I began to pray three times a day. What is prayer? To connect to G-d! To realize that He gives us our life and existence and everything that we have, and to thank Him for that! Wow! Three times every day I began to experience G-d in my life. This is a wonderful, priceless experience. Now I feel that G-d is with me and I am never alone. G-d is running the show, so I am sure

that everything that happens is really good, even things that appear to be negative.

When I was 22, I was introduced to the girl that I married 6 months later. Thank G-d we have a good marriage and we have been blessed with many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. It has been a great pleasure to help them to grow up and become HAPPY teenagers and adults. It is not always easy to be a teenager or adult in our world, but if you are a religious and *Chassidic* teenager you don't have to go through all the pain and suffering that I went through.

I hope that reading this will inspire you to give religion and *Chassidism* a try. It has been a great help for me and for many billions for thousands of years. Spend some time in a *Chassidic* community or *Chabad* house. Learn *Torah*. If there are no *Torah* classes near where you live, you can learn on the internet. Go to one of the *Chassidic* websites.

I understand that looking into the *Chassidic* way of life can be difficult for some people. I remember growing up with negative feelings toward religion. I had to attend services every Saturday morning even though I would have liked to do other things. I told myself that soon I would go off to college and then I would not have to go to services any more.

However, give it a try. We have nothing to lose and a whole lot to gain. Every good deed that we do makes our life and our world better. Amazing! When I do a good deed I am helping seven billion people live in a better world and have a better life! And this is really happening! In recent years many evil regimes have fallen. Millions of people now have much better governments and much better lives. For thousands of years we and our ancestors have been working hard to make our world completely good. Our *Rebbe* told us that we are now close to the finish line! We have to do a lot of good deeds because every good deed will help to bring *Moshiach* (the Messiah) Now!

We wish everyone to be inscribed and sealed to have a good year.

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



KAPLAN/IS

(continued from page 2)

chose for the temple. Today, Samaritans live in the village of Kiryat Luza on the mountain ridge, and there is also a Jewish community there, Har Brakha.

Next came a stop for the bus driver's favorite *kanafe* place (*kanafe* is a traditional Middle Eastern dessert of shredded filo dough soaked in a sugar-based syrup and layered with cheese. Nablus is best known for its own version.

We then stopped for buffet lunch at the Mount of Temptation restaurant, down the palm-tree-lined path opposite the **Jericho Tel**. The mountain towers over Jericho from its height of 1,201 feet; the restaurant is called the Mount of Temptation because it may be the location where Jesus was tempted by the devil.

Here one could shop in the large gift shop, have a camel ride or climb the Tel. The Tel is located above a fountain with the stone sign designating Jericho, the oldest inhabited city in the world.

Jericho was annexed and ruled by Jordan from 1949 to 1967; it was held under Israeli administration from 1967 until 1994 when administrative control was handed over to the Palestinian Authority. Israelis and Israeli passport holders may not enter Jericho since it is part of the Palestinian Territories.

Did we drive by the walls where "Joshua fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came a tumblin' down?" Not really. Did we see the building where Rahab assisted the Israelites in capturing the city by hiding the scouts prior to the attack? No, we did not.

Rahab has been described as a prostitute and as an inn keeper, but the spies promised to protect her after taking the city if she hung a red cord out the window. (Some have interpreted this as related to the concept "red light" district.) One source says she actually converted to Judaism afterward and married Joshua.

Samaria continues to be an exciting area to visit, especially on a Pastor Nucciarone trip with his wit, humor, and enthusiastic personality and comments.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, lecturer, book reviewer, food writer and author (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 late 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 photographed. ✨

The Ten Commandments of Pro-Israel Advocacy



BY ISRAELI DIPLOMAT AVIV EZRA, CONSUL GENERAL OF ISRAEL TO THE MIDWEST FROM 2016-2021

I have had the great honor of representing Israel in nine states in the Midwest. While traveling these states I have met so many great friends in the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Today I want to share some lessons I have learned and accumulated from my encounters specifically with our “tribe” members and especially from the conversations I have had with the young generation on college campuses.

Many conversations with Jewish students were about Israel’s policies having to do with foreign policy, security, or the peace process. Some Jewish students were supportive; some were very critical. Believe me, we had some harsh conversations with heated moments and we had some gratifying talks. But, at the end of the day, I appreciated both, debating the former and thanking the latter.

However, the biggest challenge I encountered was with the quiet ones, those who either did not care or really did not want to be involved. Let me tell you something, they were always the majority of the attendees. These were the indifferent Jewish students – those are the ones I really worry about and are astonished by. I know the critical students really care about the Jewish state even if they disagree with certain policies. The indifferent are those that just do not care. That is the ultimate danger. That is where we can lose the continuity and the core support of why it is so crucial and critical to have a Jewish state for the Jewish people.

So I have put together 10 major insights into pro-Israel advocacy that I believe can be used as 10 tools or basic commandments.

I truly believe that part of the problem is that we don’t repeat our narrative enough (certainly not as the other side) so it is becoming lost. As our famous Prime Minister Menachem Begin used to say: “sometimes it’s important to even state the obvious”.

I would like to share my insights or advocacy commandments to be cherished and inscribed in our hearts and minds:

1. Always remember that *the people of Israel are in the state of Israel that is located in the land of Israel not just by military might but because of historical right.*

2. *Never take Israel for granted* – there are still people among us who remember what can happen if the Jewish people lack a sovereign state of their own.

3. *“Never again” for us means: never again will Jews be stateless and defenseless.* The Jews are far too familiar with facing external threats. As a nation, Israel is equipped with military capabilities to independently defend and secure itself by itself.

4. *Israel will always extend its hand for peace with an olive branch* – Israel always prefers to use its pen versus its arms. We have recently signed peace agreements with nearby Arab nations including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan. Additionally, Israel holds peace deals with its two neighbors Egypt and Jordan.

5. *Keep telling the story* – If you have children or grandchildren. Never assume your kids know their history. The Jewish value of *L’Dor V’dor* – from generation to generation is paramount as we familiarize our younger generations about our collective narrative and history

6. *Educate yourself* – If you lack the information – no question is ever stupid – ever – so many organizations and friends will gladly assist. As Jews, it is in our nature to actively challenge norms, ideals, and critically think about ways to find effective solutions to societal problems.

7. *Bipartisanship support of the Bond between our nations is critical* – Israel could not and should not ever be a partisan issue or a political football.

8. *Israel never was, and never will be, perfect* – help us make it better from within and do it constructively. Raising questions and public scrutiny are instrumental components of civic engagement. However, criticism leveled against Israel that denies the Jewish people their right to self-determination or in which applies a double standard to Israel is a highly problematic issue.

9. *Never be silent when the Jewish right for sovereignty or self-defense is attacked.* Sometimes it’s easier just to stay quiet but unfortunately, we cannot afford it.

10. Last but not least, *come to Israel* and bring friends and family with you – the more the merrier. There is no viable substitute to understanding Israel other than to visit and experience the land of Israel.

Consul General of Israel to the Midwest Aviv Ezra is the highest ranking representative of the state of Israel in the nine state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Prior to his appointment as Consul General, Mr. Ezra quarterbacked the relationship of Israel with the United States Congress for a period of 8 years. Starting in 2017, he has served as the Director for Congressional Affairs at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem. This was preceded by a 5 year period of service as the Counselor for Congressional Affairs at the Embassy of Israel in Washington D.C. ✨

Jewish Educator



BY AMY HIRSHBERG LEDERMAN

Sharing the Stories of Our Lives

My father passed away almost three years ago – just a few months shy of his 100th birthday. As goal-oriented as he was, I am certain it bothered him that he never reached the “three-digit milestone.” But for the family who loved him, it was a blessing that he let go when he did.

As is typical after a parent dies, I found myself going through drawers and file cabinets that were often “off limits” during my life. And among the folders of old tax returns, outdated warranties and vacation brochures, were several items that I will always treasure.

There was a hand-written list, carefully penned on aged legal paper that was a summary of life lessons meant to guide us after he was gone. Who knew that Dad, a totally secular man, would leave us an Ethical Will leading with the words: “Do not treat time casually like life is just a practice run. Live like you have but six months to live.”

There was a crinkled manila envelope that I didn’t open until a year after he died that contained the journal Dad kept when he jumped a freight train at the age of 15 and headed out West to live on a ranch in Kremmling, Colo. I wonder now what my grandparents, who rarely left their small brick house in Paterson, N.J., felt when Dad sent them postcards with two cent stamps that said: “Please send money!”

The journal contained quotes from books he had read, maps of places he visited and thoughts about his life and future. As a young man, Dad was both serious and adventuresome. He used the journal as one might use a therapy session – to question and process the uncertainties, mysteries, accomplishments and disappointments of life.

Until I read Dad’s journal, I had no idea that he had been so intentional in keeping track of his life or the evolution of his relationships.

“Search out a forgotten friend.” “Keep a promise.” “Fight for a principle.” “Forget an old grudge.” And my favorite: “Examine your demands on others and vow to reduce them.”

Dad was a hard core realistic, not prone to waxing poetic or speaking in emotions. But the journal made me appreciate that

(see Lederman, page 6)

We Cannot Put the Toothpaste Back in the Tube



BY RABBI BENJAMIN SENDROW

I would be willing to bet that very few readers have heard of Dr. Washington Sheffield and his son, Lucious. Dr. Sheffield was a dentist who began his practice in 1850, when people usually used dental powder to brush their teeth. Twenty years later, he invented toothpaste. In 1879, Lucious was studying dentistry in Paris, and saw painters using paint in collapsible tubes. He paired this with his father's toothpaste, putting toothpaste in a tube for the first time.

I share that with you because I want to write about "toothpaste" that cannot be put back into the tube, but now that it is out, it can either be used or discarded. This "toothpaste" is technology, and because of the pandemic and the proliferation of Zoom services, technology has found its way into *Shabbat* in ways it never did before, and speaking for my Congregation Shaarey Tefilla, may never have at all. But the pandemic did hit, many synagogues stopped in-person services, and the Conservative movement began to allow things during what I call the active COVID period that would not have been allowed under normal circumstances.

We took advantage of that at Shaarey Tefilla, and began holding Zoom only services on *Shabbat*. I made sure to lead those Zoom services from our sanctuary, not my home, in an attempt to make things as normal and familiar as possible. We developed a real sub-community on Zoom, and those services sustained our synagogue for over a year. Now, things are beginning to move towards normalcy. Shaarey Tefilla is open for services, observing all appropriate COVID protocols. People are starting to return for services. I write this article on Monday after a milestone *Shabbat* – we had more people in person than we did online for the first time since reopening!

Of course, not everyone is ready to return in person yet, so our services are currently hybrid. Those who wish to come in person are welcome to do so. For those who do not, services are still available on Zoom. Our service, which was greatly abbreviated during the Zoom only period, is now in an intermediate state. It's shorter than usual, but longer than the Zoom only service. I think we are in a good place for now. I'm encouraged by the return of congregants to in-person attendance. But the Sword of Damocles hanging over our heads is if, when, and how we try to put

the toothpaste back in the tube? Do Zoom and/or other electronic platforms remain in place as is, does it get eliminated completely down the road, or is there a third alternative?

I believe there must be a third option. Eventually we will reach the point, please God, when the pandemic is at least reasonably well contained. At some point, the Conservative movement will back away from some of the leniencies permitted during the active COVID window. At that point, synagogues will have decisions to make.

I want to be clear that what I am about to write is my personal perspective, not the official position of my congregation. I believe there must be a third alternative because of the silver linings that Zoom has brought to services during the pandemic. First, it has enabled people to participate in services when it was not safe to do so in person. Second, it has enabled people to join our services from anywhere in the county, and they have! It has been such a pleasure to pray again with friends who have moved from our area but who reconnected with us on Zoom. Third, it has enabled people who are local but infirm and unable to attend services at all to attend online. We can stream our services to places like Hooverwood, a local Jewish nursing home, and we are. I could give more examples, but the best writing teachers always tell you to stop at three!

So if I could write the script, how would this drama end? Because I get to write it, I can try to include something for everyone. For those who hate Zoom and want it to go away forever, I foresee a time when whatever electronic platform is used will become invisible. It will be automatic. For those who are afraid of being cut off from services if Zoom goes away, I believe it is likely that we will livestream our services. It will probably be a one-way rather than a two-way feed, but you will be able to access them from anywhere. A one-way, automatic livestream has already been an option for Conservative congregations, and that may well be the future.

So maybe we cannot put the toothpaste back in the tube, but it's not all bad that some got squeezed out. It kept things alive during the peak of the pandemic. We'll probably use some and wash some down the drain. The most important thing, and I believe with all my heart that it is within reach, is that our congregations emerge from the pandemic at least as healthy, possibly even healthier, than we were when it began.

Rabbi Benjamin Sendrow has been the spiritual leader of Congregation Shaarey Tefilla in Carmel, Ind., since August 2010. Read more of his writings and listen to his sermons at www.shaareyefilla.org. Follow him on Twitter at twitter.com/CSTRabbi. ✨

LEDERMAN

(continued from page 5)

he felt that his experiences, questions and ideas were worthy of memorializing. And the fact that he kept this small black book for almost nine decades suggests he may have wanted us to learn more about him, even after he was gone.

As we age, we are often inclined to review our life – in search of its meaning as well as its relevancy and impact on others. We will never know for sure if, how and whom we affect. But there are ways we can impart what is important to us that can offer comfort, wisdom and meaning to those we love. Because everyone has stories to tell that are worthy of being shared and understood.

We are the sum of our stories: they help form our identity and provide a context to understand our place in the world. Stories can be transcendent – living beyond time, place and generations. But they can also be imminent – establishing intimate, immediate connections between family, friends and members of the community.

I was fortunate in that my Dad shared his stories with me over meals, chores, visits and phone calls during the course of his life. But not everyone is a storyteller by nature and it is often difficult to find an entry point.

It is never too late to share the stories of our lives. You can write them down, record or video them, even have a professional interview and record your family history. An easy first step is to share photos of people and events that affected your life. Favorite family traditions, jobs and career changes and vacations and trips are simple topics that can often lead to deeper, more meaningful conversations.

When I go back and read my father's journal, I feel less lonely because I learn about the person he used to be. But I can also see how much like him I am. And now that he is gone, that is both a comfort and a blessing.

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. ✨

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Kabbalah of the Month



BY MELINDA RIBNER

Drawing Down Blessings for the Coming Year

On September 6th, and 7th we welcome the month of *Tishrei* and the new year. On *Rosh Hashanah*, we commemorate the creation of the human being by the One Divine Being Who has many names but remains One and unique. All people are created by this Divine Being, in God's image and endowed with Divine love, wisdom and purpose. May we be open to the Divine Revelation of love, peace and unity that is at the heart of the holiday.

The prayers of *Rosh Hashanah* are designed for us to tap into the original Divine vision and purpose for creation. This world was created for love and to know God, not for suffering and divisiveness. When we align with the Divine will and purpose, we receive great blessing. On *Rosh Hashanah* we begin the process of drawing down the blessings for the coming year.

The focus of *Rosh Hashanah* is about expanding our consciousness to the awareness of God as *Melech* (King). By this, we do not mean a man on the throne, but rather *melech* refers to the unified Divine order and underlying True Reality. Life may seem random to us but that is not the truth according to Jewish teachings. We may not understand with our minds but on *Rosh Hashanah* we may receive glimpses of the deeper truth and know that only God has true existence, only God has real dominion and life is unfolding according to the Divine wisdom embedded in the Divine Plan. With this kind of spiritual awakening, we are able to understand, accept, trust and surrender to Divine Will on a deeper level. May we be blessed to have a taste of God's Oneness and experience ourselves as a part of God, not separate and isolated, but intrinsically joyful and peaceful!

The revelation of God as the Source of life, as the King, helps us to let go of worry and fear, be peaceful, and be more fully present in the holy eternal moment of the now. *Hashem Melech*. God is recreating life anew. May we tap into that revelation of newness wherever we are.

How will we celebrate *Rosh Hashanah* in the midst of everything that is taking place around us today? Nothing will be the

same for any one. I am asking myself this question. The prospect of being alone for the holidays in Florida was initially daunting. But I am reminding myself that God is in charge. If it is Divine Will that I be in Florida, there must be goodness and spiritual growth that I can experience from being here. I can be sad, even heartbroken about my predicament, I had planned to be in Israel for the holidays and/or I can view this holiday as a new spiritual opportunity. It does not really matter where we are physically for God is everywhere. God is within us and we are within God. What is important is the openness of our heart.

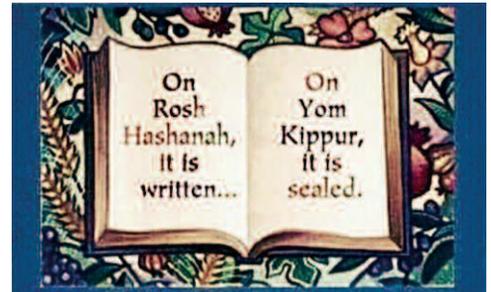
I am praying that I will be able to keep my heart open, maintain my focus and be blessed with the kind of special spiritual moments of Divine Revelation unique to the *Rosh Hashanah* holiday. I am beginning to look forward to my private special time with the True Reality, the Limitless Light, the Cosmic Consciousness, the Majestic One, the unique and One Divine Being with many names and holy attributes on the awesome holy days of *Rosh Hashanah*.

We are living in a world of great uncertainty, so strengthening our faith and connection to that which is eternal, everlasting is so important. In our world when there is so much divisiveness, so much false information, so much confusion, the holiday of *Rosh Hashanah* is just what we need to remind us of what is real and true and important. *Hashem Melech*. May we each be blessed with a joyful and meaningful holiday and a happy and healthy new year.

Affirmations for *Rosh Hashanah* (to be read both silently and out loud)

I so much want to experience God as King because God is the source of compassion, love, ecstasy, wisdom, beauty, and all that is good. When I experience God as King, the negative limiting thoughts of the yetzer hara, the voice of doubt, fear and judgment have no domain in my consciousness and the wonderful qualities of God are active and supreme in my life. Who I am is more than enough. I do not judge myself. I relinquish self criticism. God is my judge. God is kind, compassionate and loving and seeks my highest good.

I am surrendered to God. I do not experience myself as a victim, but rather I experience myself as a part of God. I know that on some level, whether it is conscious or not, my soul has chosen the challenges that I have experienced in my life because these were the ways for me to grow. I accept the lessons I have learned in life with love and gratitude even though I may not understand with my mind the reasons for the choices I have made in my



To those I have wronged,
I ask forgiveness.
To those I have helped,
I wish I did more.
To those I neglected,
I ask for understanding.
To those who have helped me,
I sincerely thank you.

life. I am committed to learning, growing, and living in the coming year.

I am committed to living authentically, to give voice to my dreams, my heart and my soul for I know that these all come from God. It is God's will that I be free, that I be loving, that I be holy, that I be joyful, that I be creative, that I be who I truly am.

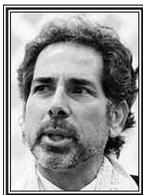
I trust that through divine grace all will be revealed. I will be all who I am and all of who God wants me to be. The Creator of the world is the God of Israel, *Yud- Hay- Vav* and *Hay*, the God of compassion. This God is my King and I am God's holy servant.

I do not fear and I do not hate, for God is my King. I know that my true and lasting happiness rests in doing God's will. Through serving God on the inside and the outside of my being, I serve the whole of myself and the good of the universe.

This *Rosh Hashanah* I am open to receive a new vision of my life and my service. I rejoice and trust that the power of God that flows through me will empower and guide me to do what I am to do, to meet the people who I need to meet to express more fully who I am. I have faith that God's kingdom will be established on this earth, there will be a true peace and this makes me very happy and peaceful.

Melinda Ribner, L.C.S.W. is the author of Everyday Kabbalah, Kabbalah Month by Month, New Age Judaism, and The Secret Legacy of Biblical Women: Revealing the Divine Feminine. Free Jewish meditation classes are offered on zoom twice a week. Sign up for a free newsletter on the Kabbalistic energies of the months, holidays, meditation, and zoom links by emailing her at: Beitmiriam@msn.com or sign up on her Facebook pro page Melinda Ribner Spiritual Guide. Website: MelindaRibner.com. (This column was received Sept. 2020). ✨

Cosmic Judaism



BY RABBI BARRY SILVER

Seeking Renewal of Our Souls and Planet on the High Holy Days

Although the pandemic has caused great hardship, the resilient Jewish people have endured far worse and emerged victorious. Love cannot be masked, hope cannot be quarantined and the Jewish indomitable spirit cannot be crushed. Thus, synagogues today use modern technology to resume (*reZoom*) our traditions, exhume (*ExZoom*) ancient wisdom, and rejuvenate (*reJEWoenate*) our souls during the Days of Awe. This challenge has provided new possibilities as we now reach people across the globe with amazing videos via the internet.

However, if technology is all that changes, then we will fail to achieve the goal of renewal at this sacred season. The words *Rosh Hashanah* are a sermon, *Rosh* means “head” and *shanah* means “year” from a root that means “change”. Thus, we strive to change for the better by using our *Yiddish Kopf* (the Jewish head, or mind). With our nation in turmoil, the wound of racism ripped open, a pandemic raging, economic collapse imminent and homelessness threatening millions, we need to put our heads together to find rational solutions to our plight, to replace today’s toxic discourse.

“In the beginning” when our species was new, we lived in a magnificent universe and our ancestors experienced “days of awe” every day as they were in touch with our planet. Jews developed sacred days to give thanks for the blessings of Earth. Today, we are so detached from our celestial home that many of us seek heaven only after we die when it is too late, not realizing the sanctity and daily miracles in the real world. So cut off from the planet are humans today, that we fail to realize that we are destroying our only home, as we drive fellow creatures into extinction, and pollute the air, land and water that is the source of life. Despite massive climate induced hurricanes, floods, forest fires and melting glaciers, we are so clueless that over 40% of us elect climate deniers, who ignore truth, spread lies, and take us ever closer to the abyss. Sadly, even many Jews blindly follow a climate vaccine and science denier, who led an insurrection against our democracy and brags about a

rise in the stock market rather than taking stock of our plight as he pollutes the market place of ideas.

Israel is a great victim of this environmental collapse as their scientists (prophets) and ours have warned for years that their unprecedented drought, rising Mediterranean, expanding Dead Sea and other environmental crises are harbingers of far worse to come if we don’t repent and change our ways. Mother Earth is warning us with the coronavirus that calling existential threats a hoax does not fool Mother Nature as the climate deniers in the scorched western states are equally devastated by climate change as everyone else. All they can do is watch as their farms, lands, trees and children’s future literally go up in smoke. Only in America has science been prostituted by corrupt politicians, supported by right wing Jews and Christians who worship an imaginary God who will send them off to an imaginary afterlife, while those in the real world suffer the consequences of more than half a million dead from the coronavirus which our former President and his mutinous followers call a hoax.

Jews have lived through Dark Ages in the past and have helped lead humanity towards the light of truth by boldly standing up to tyrants. At this inflection point in history, this sacred task is more important than ever. The great scientist Carl Sagan turned the Voyager II Spacecraft back towards Earth to take a “selfie” from the distance of Saturn, where Earth appeared merely as a pale blue dot. From there, he observed that all of our conflicts, wars, and destruction of our planet seem so petty.

As we take a spiritual journey back to the beginning of Earth on the *Rosh Hashanah*, let us see ourselves from a Cosmic Perspective (as our ancestors imagined God saw us) and realize that the greatest journey is not to see new landscapes, but to see with new eyes. From this perspective, we no longer view the Earth as a dumping ground to be exploited for short term gain, but as our precious and only home, a sacred blue dot in the midst of overwhelming darkness and the holy of holies in the cosmos. Let us also realize that to slaughter our fellow inhabitants of Earth is not only cruel, but a significant cause of climate change, cardiac illness, cancer and disease, such as the coronavirus.

The High Holy Days tell us it is never too late to repent and seek return (*t’shuvah*) to purity and goodness. May all Jews unite, working together to establish a world of *emeth* (science) and *tzedek* (righteousness), so that armed with 2020 vision from last year, and learning the lessons of bygone days, we can make 5781 a turning point in history as Judaism emerges from the tribal to the cosmic. *L’shanah Tovah*.

A Clean White Page



BY RABBI MIRA WASSERMAN

“What does a rabbi do?” a young student once asked me. Before I had a chance to answer, her classmate answered, “She tells us the pages.”

“Please turn to the *Barchu*, page 108.”

“We’re on page 116, in the middle.”

“Page 121; please rise.”

Are these the words by which I’ll be remembered? I hope not!

As the new Jewish year begins, we come together for the most complicated and demanding worship services of the whole year. It will be my job to try to keep everyone on the same page as we make our way through the prayerbook’s pageant of blessings, songs, readings and rituals, and I’ll be announcing an awful lot of pages. But let me be very clear: You don’t have to listen to me. In fact, sometimes, it might be better if you didn’t.

At this time of year, as we anticipate the start of a new year, we imagine our lives as an open book. We review the entries we have made over the past months, the actions we have inscribed in life’s ledger. We look forward to turning the page and starting a new chapter on a fresh leaf. The image of a clean white page waiting to be filled invites us to imagine untold possibilities, to open ourselves to new choices.

In contrast to this image of an open book, the physical books that we hold in our hands when we come to services on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are filled with words, words, and more words. Sometimes this poetry of traditional prayer opens up new worlds of depth and meaning. But sometimes, the words on the page can leave us cold.

Some of us find the density of the Hebrew text overwhelming and disorienting. Some of us regret that the printed pages of our High Holy Day *mahzor* (prayerbook) do not include mention of matriarchs alongside patriarchs. Others miss the poetry of the prayerbooks of our youth. Members of the Friday night minyan, just now becoming comfortable with the

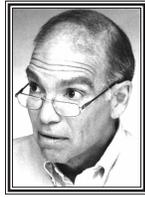
(see Wasserman, page 9)



Rabbi Barry Silver and Congregation L’Dor Va-Dor provide free High Holy Day services as we unite all Jews under one link, linked together by science, reason and Jewish ideals. For more information about Cosmic Judaism, Congregation L’Dor Va-Dor and their High Holy Day services, contact Rabbi Barry Silver at barryboca@aol.com. ✨

Shipley Speaks

BY JIM SHIPLEY



WASSERMAN

(continued from page 8)

innovations of *Mishkan T'fillah*, our new Reform prayerbook, might especially miss the accessibility of transliteration and white space on a page.



Israel. Arabs can worship freely in Israel. The cry of the call to prayer at Mosques can be heard throughout Israel.

The new cry from the far-left is that there is housing discrimination on Arabs. It stems from Arabs building and occupying homes that are not built or maintained to legal standards. No one can do that anymore than they would be allowed to in Shaker Heights, Ohio or Winter Park, Fla.

The far-right is not happy about the Jewish support of liberal candidates for office. For years Jews have been in the forefront of race equality. Jews were totally active in the voting rights drives of the 1960s. Jews serve on boards of many Black corporations.

So, from the far-left to the far-right there is a new target: Israel. The cry from both the far-left and far-right is: Israel is crushing the freedom of its Muslim inhabitants. How? Where? When?

The media jumps on an incident where a few Arabs were evicted from their homes. They had, according to the Israeli press, illegally added additions to their homes in violation of zoning laws that apply to everyone living in Israel, just as they do in the U.S.

But with Pro-Arab congresspersons like Representative Omar of the Minnesota, this new form of anti-Semitism has now reached into the U.S. Congress. While limited to a few members of the House of Representatives, they are vocal enough, strong enough so that there is a possibility it could change the overwhelming support for Israel in Congress. They may try to limit "aid" to Israel.

Well, you could look this up – but just about every dollar in "aid" to Israel is to be spent on armaments bought in the U.S. from American companies. So, millions of dollars in "aid" are sent to Israel, only to come back in purchases of aircraft, armaments and other "war" materials. This includes parts for Israeli aircraft designed in Israel.

On the far-right it remains mostly hatred of Jews as Jews. And therefore, the ideal target is Israel, the only Jewish nation. The far-right does not like Jews. Period. Never have. Therefore the Jewish nation is an ideal target. Israel is attacked in far-right newspapers and on radio.

Look, anti-Semitism is not going away. It pops up in unusual places. An ideal (see Shipley, page 11)

The experience in reviewing, critiquing and finally adopting a new prayerbook for the Reform movement and for our Friday night minyan brought home to me the challenges of finding (or creating) a prayerbook that could work for a diverse community like our own.

No other book in Jewish life is as careworn, or as contentious as our prayerbooks are. A prayerbook should be an intimate companion – like a personal diary, it is the keeper of our deepest hopes and highest dreams. But a prayerbook is also communal property, wrought from the accumulated debates and dialogues of more than 3,000 years. In a sense, every word of it is a compromise, a common script to bring a disparate people, and diverse communities together. We demand more of our prayerbooks than we do of any other book in the Jewish library.

The secret to making services meaningful – all through the year, but especially when we come together in all our glorious diversity during the High Holy Days – is learning to read between the lines.

The printed prayers tell the shared story of the Jewish People; it is up to us to find our own stories between the lines. The printed prayers express ancient hopes and dreams; it is up to us to discover our own deep yearnings. The printed prayers list reasons for giving thanks; it is up to us to let our own gratitude move us.

For me, this sometimes means feeling the joy of singing out loud with the whole congregation, and letting the power of song move me beyond words. Or sometimes, I choose to stay with a single word or phrase, thinking about it, meditating on it, discovering new possibilities in its meaning or shape, even when the service leaders have moved on.

As your rabbi, among my other jobs is announcing pages at services during the High Holy Days. It is up to you whether you want to listen. I know that some of the most important prayers are the ones you won't find in our prayerbook.

In the coming weeks, and during High Holy Day services themselves, the service leaders and I will do all we can to open up the possibilities that are hidden in our prayerbook.

May the promise of the new year open a new page for all of us. *Shana Tovah*...all my blessings for a sweet new year.

Rabbi Mira Wasserman is Rabbi Emerita of Congregation Beth Shalom in Bloomington, Ind., serving from 1998–2009. During that time, this column appeared in our High Holiday edition. She currently is director of the Center for Jewish Ethics and Assistant Professor of Rabbinic Literature at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Wyncote, Pa. She and her husband, Dr. Steven Weitzman, are the parents of four sons. ★

Conflict Manager



BY MIRIAM ZIMMERMAN, ED.D.

Divorce Mediators Save a Marriage

While walking down the aisle on her most sacred day, a bride might worry whether or not her train floats behind her, flattering her figure; whether she might stumble in her heels; or how drunk Uncle Joe will get at the reception, making a fool of himself and, thus, of the family; or whether the photographer will finish in time for the caterer. Heaven forbid that a marital meal should be served lukewarm. Probably, the last thing she thinks about is what will happen if/when the marriage fails.

Although about 40% of today's marriages end in dissolution (the technical term for divorce), only 5% of couples have a prenuptial agreement. As divorce mediators, we (my husband Richard and I) were witnesses to how having prenups could salvage a divorce, transforming it from a destructive and costly battle, into a constructive blueprint for the future. If couples had the foresight to forge a prenuptial agreement at the beginning of their marriage, they could avoid a great deal of unnecessary frustration at the end of their marriage.

In biblical times, a *ketubah* spelled out the groom's financial responsibilities to the bride if the marriage failed, or if he predeceased her. A contract between two parties, the *ketubah* served as a prenuptial agreement to determine how assets should be allocated in the event of divorce or death of the husband.

As a technical and legal document defining the groom's obligations, *ketubot* (plural) were written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. As the everyday language of the day, Aramaic ensured that the couple could understand the contract. Hebrew, the language of prayer and worship, was reserved for spiritual matters, not for something as mundane as a prenup.

Wisdom of the ancients: a *ketubah*, created while the couple was in love and eagerly anticipating their life together, sprang from kindness and generosity, instead of from the anger and regret that often characterize a failed marriage.

Most *ketubot* today decorate the couple's home with no legal strings attached. They can be as elaborate or as simple as couples choose. They can shop Amazon for an original work of art; commission a calligrapher to create elaborate lettering in



Ketubah of Jason and Rebecca Goodman, married June 3, 2007.

English, Hebrew, or Aramaic; hire a friend to sew an original; or invite the rabbi to fill in the blanks on a prefab form. Prices vary accordingly.

An example of a highly individualized *ketubah* (above) is that of my older daughter and her fiancé Jason Goodman. An artist, Jason's mother Marsha Goodman designed the painting. "It's the walls of the old city of Jerusalem made out of piano keys," Rebecca explained. Jason is a musician who plays guitar and keyboard. "Jason's childhood rabbi, Rabbi Freeman did the Hebrew calligraphy. We hired someone else to do the English calligraphy. Marsha also picked out a complementary frame."

At first, Richard and I did not include prenups in our roster of divorce mediation services. Couples with a prenup who came to us to help them resolve their divorce issues amicably, usually presented with variations on a theme: "Our prenup is out of date. Now that we have separated, we want to update it and use it as the basis for our divorce. There have been major changes because now, we have kids and a house."

When we finally decided to help couples create a prenup, the first one that we facilitated still resonates vividly in my mind. Without our mediation, this couple would not have married. In talking to the wife-to-be, Richard quickly realized that a prenup was like a divorce before the marriage; thus, we could help the couple. It was Sam's third marriage; it would be Lisa's second (not their real names). He wanted the prenup; she did not. When Richard did not hear back from Lisa, he called after a week to ask if she still wanted our help.

Lisa replied, "We went to separate attorneys about the prenup. It became so contentious that we called off the

wedding." Richard inquired if she were still interested in the marriage and in working with Divorce Mediation Group, the name of our practice. With two affirmatives, Richard asked for permission to call the no-longer prospective husband. "It can't hurt," Lisa replied.

Sam expressed willingness to try mediation. After only two marathon sessions totaling six hours, and a follow up one-hour session to confirm the agreements, the couple achieved resolution on all issues.

The key to helping this couple was to determine first, what their needs and concerns were, and then to find financial solutions to satisfy those needs. In private, confidential sessions, each participant explained his/her point of view to both of us, the mediators. In our practice, both Richard and I participated in the private sessions, called a "caucus" in mediation lingo.

We quickly determined those needs and concerns. "I don't want to lose my house like I did in my first divorce," sighed Sam. "I want my children and grandchildren to inherit the bulk of my estate."

During the caucuses, I invite couples to envision what they would like to see in their future. "I'm retired," Sam pointed out. "I want to travel two to three times a year with Lisa, until I turn 70. But she wants to work." Sam did not know why Lisa was so determined to cling to her low-paying job in retail.

In Lisa's caucus, we learned that she was afraid of becoming destitute. She wanted to be able to add money to her employer-matched IRA (Individual Retirement Account) during the marriage. If she and Sam divorced, she would at least have some retirement money, which she did not have after her first divorce.

Richard explained that if she used earnings to contribute to her IRA, it would become a commingled asset. Upon divorce, her husband would be entitled to half the community money that had been put into the IRA. Lisa looked stricken; her attorney had not explained this distinction.

But Lisa's face lit up as she spoke of her dreams: "I want to work with animals. My dream job is to work in a veterinarian's office part-time. That way, I could travel with Sam." She continued, "I also like to decorate, make the house my home. But he claims it's his house. There's no mortgage. Sometimes, I feel like an intruder."

In the subsequent joint session, Richard, the licensed attorney at the table, clearly explained to both parties the distinction between community and separate property under California Law. Anything brought into a marriage remains separate property, unless it becomes commingled. He coached the couple how to maintain the separate identity of the house and how

(see Zimmerman, page 11)

ZIMMERMAN

(continued from page 10)

not to commingle other assets. Evidently, their lawyers did not take the time to explain what the rules were and that Sam would not be in danger of losing the house or his savings if he maintained it as separate community property. The attorneys also did not explain to Lisa what her rights were in a divorce. I briefly wondered, how can couples make informed decisions about their prenups if they are not aware of existing law?

Mediators are trained to help parties arrive at their own solutions, a cardinal rule of mediation. However, when solutions required legal and financial expertise, both Richard and I felt comfortable ignoring this rule. Richard broached his ideas to the couple in a second joint session. "What if Sam agrees in the prenup to contribute the maximum amount permitted yearly to an IRA in Lisa's name? Richard explained, "You can both agree that the IRA is Lisa's separate property. If you divorce, Lisa will still have a nest egg.

"As to the house," Richard continued, "you could both agree that for every year of marriage, Lisa will acquire a small equity percentage of the value of the house. Thus, Lisa's equity ownership would grow the longer the marriage continued, providing an increased sense of ownership." Lisa's expressive face beamed. I wondered if she had already thought about the fabrics or furniture that she would select to furnish the house.

Sam volunteered that if there were no divorce, upon his death, Lisa would get the house. "My children and grandchildren will share the financial accounts, but Lisa gets the house," he asserted firmly. The wisdom of the ancients manifested itself in contemporary times. Although Lisa would be entitled only to her agreed to equity interest, per the terms of the prenup; now, Sam declared he would give her the entire house. A bridegroom is much more generous than a jaded husband, as our Jewish sages noticed.

We gave the couple the weekend to reflect on these solutions.

Our last session took only an hour as we answered their questions and ensured they understood their agreement. We also explained the necessary next steps they must take to ensure that the prenup was enforceable. They should have the agreement drafted in a neutral manner, consult with separate attorneys, and wait a legally proscribed amount of time between signing the prenup and the wedding.

About two months later, we received a thank you note from Lisa. They had a lovely wedding and were now off on their honeymoon. When they returned, she

SHIPLEY

(continued from page 9)

example? The Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) officially declared solidarity with the Pro-"Palestinian" movement. Jews as we said have always been in the forefront of Black political causes including the "Right to Vote" movement.

This does not matter to BLM. They are looking for targets. Rather than concentrating on the real danger to Black People like the voting laws being passed in Southern States, BLM chooses to attack the State of Israel. Not Smart. Not justified. Just anti-Semitism directed against the Jewish State. As Molly Goldberg would say: "If it's not one thing, it's another..."

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. ✨



would volunteer at an animal shelter. She was free to travel with her new husband, whenever they chose.

This case illustrates that all problems can have the potential for great solutions, if parties share a willingness to work together, listen to each other, and be open to a variety of options. The goal of our divorce mediation practice was to find solutions that worked best for both parties, whether divorcing or marrying.

I did not know what a *ketubah* was until my older daughter Rebecca and her now-husband Jason chose one for their wedding. A graduate of Hebrew Union College and now a Jewish educator, my daughter explained the significance of a *ketubah* to me, another of the many examples of learning about Judaism from my oldest.

"I wish I had one," I sighed, admiring how the beautiful frame of Rebecca's *ketubah* set off the colors of the document. It enjoyed a space of honor on the wall above their living room fireplace.

"Of course, you and Dad have one," Rebecca admonished me. We looked through my old wedding files. Rebecca crowed, "Here it is." I was somewhat disappointed. It was a fold-over document, with each image measuring only 8-1/2 x 6-1/2 inches. Someone's handwriting, not calligraphy, filled in the blanks. Seeing the signature of Rabbi Bernard Cohen from so long ago made me smile. He and I recently reconnected on Facebook, becoming friends again after over 50 years.

Rebecca said that the right frame would make all the difference; she helped me order a custom double mat frame. She was right – that frame transformed our *ketubah* (right). I enjoy that it is the first

A Bit of Wit**Moishe**

Moishe Goldberg was heading out of the Synagogue one day and, as always, Rabbi Mendel was standing at the door shaking hands as the Congregation departed. The rabbi grabbed Moishe by the hand, pulled him aside, and whispered these words at him: "You need to join the Army of God!"

Moishe replied: "I'm already in the Army of God, Rabbi."

The rabbi questioned: "Then how come I don't see you except for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*?"

Moishe whispered back: "I'm in the secret service." ✨

Who is a Jew?

During basic training, our drill sergeant asked all Jewish personnel to make themselves known. Six of us tentatively raised our hands. Much to our relief, we were given the day off for *Rosh Hashanah*.

A few days later, in anticipation of *Yom Kippur* the sergeant again asked for all Jewish personnel to identify themselves. This time, every soldier raised his hand. "Only those who were Jewish last week can be Jewish this week," declared the sergeant.

Allen Israel (the Sept. 2008 Reader's Digest). ✨

Spoken from the bimah at High Holiday services

"I don't know if you realize that these High Holiday tickets are season tickets." ✨



Richard and Miriam's ketubah, married Dec. 22, 1968.

thing I see whenever I enter our bedroom. I love that it is an artifact from ancient Jewish tradition, and that it begins with, "I

(see Zimmerman, page 13)

Meditation Before Yom Kippur for One Who Cannot Fast



BY RABBI SIMKHA Y. WEINTRAUB

Ribbono shel Olam/Master of the Universe; Creator of All, Source of All Life, Who Knows What is Deep in Human Hearts, Who Nurtures Every Living Being:

As You know, dear God, Yom Kippur is fast approaching, and because of my condition,

I am not able to keep the traditional fast I cannot abstain totally from eating.

On this Day of Atonement, this Sabbath of Sabbaths, this year and every year,

it is so central to join the people of Israel in denying ourselves food and drink for one day so that we focus on correcting our misdeeds, on knowing our mortality; on reaching for a life of *Torah, mitzvot*, and lovingkindness; on You.

You know, dear God, that it is not my intent to be apart from our people and our tradition. My current state of health makes it unsuitable for me to fast

So, dear God, I turn to You now in sincerity and openness:

Help me in the coming year to do my best in guarding my health. Help us, Your children, learn how to protect our bodies from harm. Help us support others in caring for their *tzelem Elokim*, their Image of God. Teach us to help one another grow and thrive in Body, Mind, and Spirit.

Guide caring family and health care professionals in their partnering with you

to bring healing if not cure, support and strength if not an end to symptoms. And if there is an opportunity for me to help others who suffer

by doing something they need or by being attentive company – Grant me the ability to do this *mitzvah* with love and devotion.

Rofeh khol basar/Healer of all living creatures: I thank You for the breath that is in me for the community of Israel that lives for the possibilities of today and tomorrow.

Wiener's Wisdom



BY RABBI IRWIN WIENER, D.D.

A Glimpse Into the Future

Recently I watched a movie in which a man took 4000 photographs of the same street scene over a period of 4000 days. At first I thought about how strange this is. But after reviewing in my mind that particular scene I began to realize that even though the picture was of the same street scene the characters changed because different people walked in front of the camera.

What does this have to do with *Rosh Hashanah* – a lot! Year after year we offer the same prayers, request the same kindness from a caring and loving God, hope that our lives will be less complicated – we pray for peace and justice – and it seems that the picture remains the same – different characters appear in each snapshot of life, but basically we are the same as our ancestors before us and if we could fast forward we probably would see the same ahead.

Each year we read either the *Akedah* – the binding of Isaac or Genesis – the beginning of everything. They are really connected – one deals with obedience and sacrifice and the other with how we got to the point of understanding the need for duty and honor and destiny.

Abraham is asked to submit to the will of God and present his son Isaac as the ultimate offering of fealty. Can anyone here imagine answering such a call? If we know anything about who we are as a people, we surely accept the fact that we bend over backwards to offer our children the best that we can and attempt to shield them from harm and danger. We invented the “yiddisher momma.” We are the first to show pictures of our children and grandchildren, ad nauseam. Can anyone really believe that we would take our child and kill him or her in the name of God?

Well, neither could Abraham, and for



May my eating be as a fast; May it be dedicated to You, to *T'shuva* – to the Renewal and Restoration of my Relationship to You, to Others, and to Myself.

Copyright 2005/5765. Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW, Rabbinic Director at Jewish Board of Family and Children's services, New York, N.Y. ☆

that matter, Sarah – she dies soon after this encounter – not clear in her mind as to what was happening or why or how God, who so lovingly granted her wish for a child, would want to retake that which was given. So much has been written about this chapter and the opinions vary. But the one clear message, to me, is that while God may not really require such obedience, it is evident that our mind can suggest ways for us to exonerate ourselves from our misgivings and in so doing cast the burden on our progeny. We do it all the time – we scapegoat instead of taking responsibility – we blame others for our shortcomings.

And then there is the belief that we learn from this episode that we have a responsibility to a higher calling. And as we learn from the Ramban, we must understand that our conscience should be the deciding factor in our dealings with one another. We all have the potential to do good which rates higher than the actual deed.

The second reading suggested is *Beresheit* (as interpreted in the *Etz Chaim*) – Genesis – the creation of existence as we know it. It emphasizes God's role in history. It sets forth our views and values on civilization and how we deem it part and parcel of the religion of Israel. It describes God as wholly sufficient, independent of nature – the unchallenged sovereign of the world who is involved in human affairs – He is the God of history and He is the God of creation – the creation of the human spirit, and the two – God and the spirit of humanity are woven together to complete the event of creation.

The lesson we learn from the “Beginning” is that we are born with free will, moral responsibility and accountability. There is no free ride. If we wanted a free ride, God would have left us in the Garden. If, however, we want to be a partner with God in perfecting that which He put before us, then we need to accept the duty that is incumbent upon us.

On the one hand we are asked to make sacrifices and on the other we are asked to take responsibility – they are in fact connected – sometimes being responsible requires sacrifice.

Rosh Hashanah and *Yom Kippur* deal with acknowledgement and willingness – admitting that we are who we are and therefore must answer for our actions and eager to submit to the task of saying we are sorry.

And, God doesn't really want us to complete the deed – just make the attempt. Maybe then we won't be so hard on ourselves and our supplications and contrition will have meaning for us.

Yes, it is the same picture year after year, (see Wiener, page 13)

Book Review

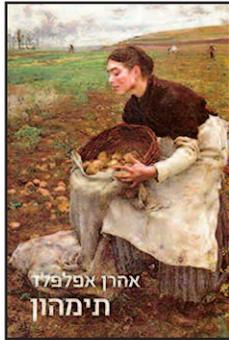


REVIEWED BY
RABBI ISRAEL ZOBERMAN

Conflicted Human Condition and Its Jewish Component

Timahon (Astonishment) by Aharon Appelfeld. Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir-Publishing House. 2017. Pp. 222. In Hebrew.

Timahon (Astonishment) is the late Aharon Appelfeld's last book (What a loss!) during his tumultuous lifetime, and as such it holds special significance. This prolific Israeli author's lasting legacy as the *Shoah's* foremost literary representative is well captured in this concluding tome though with added sharpness of revolting events. The matter-of-fact unfolding chain of events as tragically irreversible as an unstoppable train is expressed in Appelfeld's measured cadence of brief sentences pulling the reader sentence by sentence, step by step, deeper and deeper into a tragic saga that the author powerfully but gently binds us to.



Twenty-seven year old Ina, the book's protagonist, is seemingly an ordinary, hard-working peasant girl whose eight-year childless marriage to Anton turns into an abusive relationship. Anton does not treat his wife much better than he treats his animals, expecting her to merely fulfill his base drives while she yearns for more. Widespread and deep-seated anti-Semitism is an indelible mark in their village life as an inseparable dark cloud. When Ina's mother was buried, Ina's drunk father yelled at the grave, "The Jews murdered the Messiah, we have not forgotten and never will." (p.69). Further, "The father has always hated Jews. He considered them to be corrupt creatures. A Christian, even if he does not attend church, is a believer. But a Jew is a creature whose nature is to be faithless." (p.70). And, "The Jews bring confusion into the world. Who needs them?" the father used to say (p.71). Even Ina was infected by this kind of hatred which was the norm in her anti-Semitic environment.

The Katz's who were Ina's next door

neighbors were one of only two Jewish families in the village, with the other one on the village's edge in isolation from other people. The Katzs owned the village's only general store. Their older daughter Edla was attending nursing school in the city of Chernowitz (Appelfeld's hometown), while the younger one Blanka was mentally challenged. The village's routine is interrupted when the Germans order the Jews' murder, allowing for property looting which the neighbors relished with only the Katzs' books being thrown away, having no use for them. In stark realism, the author's hallmark, he describes the four Katzs' family members forced on their knees for hours by tormenting Ilich, the village's police officer. When Mrs. Katz reminds him of their past kindness toward him, he retorts, "I am only a police officer. The Germans have always been cultured people. They will not do something that does not make sense." (p.44)

She presses on, hoping to change his mind, "Four Jews endanger the village, the region, the world? We thank God for our human image. We have already lived here for over 200 years, perhaps more. Our ancestors are buried not far from here and when the day comes, we too will be buried in the same place." (p.44) Ilich blames the Katzs for exploiting the villagers to enrich themselves. Ina who witnesses this terrifying scene serves the suffering Katzs' hot soup. She even urges them to escape in the dark of night. Mrs. Katz claims they are too sick to run while telling her daughters to escape, but Edla refuses to leave her parents behind.

Ilich who used to shoot the village's incurable sick cows, executes the Katzs with Ina observing. Her attitude toward the Katzs is a complex and ambivalent one. "Ina knew that a portion of her life was grounded in the flesh of these pitiful people, and in their deaths would also die in her something of value. Truthfully, even now she did not love them. Their passivity revolted her. People who do not escape from the pit that they themselves dug are blemished people." (p.80)

She, however, tells Anton following the murders, "Our neighbors were killed... Our Jews were killed." (p.80) Both endearing and patronizing. His response, much simpler and coarse, "But I could not tolerate them." (p.80) Ina decides to escape – which the Katzs failed to attempt – from Anton's cruel treatment as well as haunted by the Katzs' murder which she strangely calls "mysterious death" (p.81), struggling with a measure of guilt perhaps because she had not done enough to save them.

Aunt Yanka would later tell her that God does not forgive those who do not help

ZIMMERMAN

(continued from page 11)

am my beloved and my beloved is mine," in English and Hebrew (not Aramaic). Whenever I stop to admire its colors or content, I feel protected, connected, and proud of my Jewish home and family. It reminds me of the love that brought Richard and me together, a love that continued to thrive for over 52 years.

Dr. Miriam Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) in Belmont, Calif., where she taught the Holocaust course for 25 years. She is changing hats for now and writing instead about her 20 years of mediation experience. She can be reached at mimzim@aol.com. ✨



WIENER

(continued from page 12)

but while the scenery doesn't change, the people in the foreground do – each new generation seeking to find the answer – each generation seeking the understanding of God.

A rabbi, wishing to instruct a small boy on God's ability to be everywhere, said to the boy:

"Show me every place that God is, and I will give you a penny."

"Rabbi," answered the boy, with the insight of youth, "show me any place that God isn't, and I will give you two pennies."

Is there a better answer?

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



others when needed. Three encounters would affect Ina's future course. The first is visiting her recluse Aunt Yanka in the mountains, when Yanka discloses that contrary to her father's wishes she lived with Jewish Hoogo, a medical student she spent six years with, her best years, prior to his untimely death following graduation. "He taught me the meaning of heartfelt friendship along with love." (p.109) It is Yanka who teaches Ina of discovering Jesus's Jewishness which got her into trouble, as it would Ina, when sharing it. The second encounter was with "The old man" known as a healer while opposed for his unorthodox ways by priests and husbands who begrudged

(see Zoberman, page 14)

Traditional Foods for Break-the-Fast from Different Cultures

BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Breaking the fast has its own set of traditions. Ashkenazim usually break the fast with something sweet then with something salty like herring because they believe fish restore salt lost by the body while fasting. Herring was also the cheapest fish in Eastern Europe where the custom originated. Other foods eaten by *Ashkenazi* Jews include egg dishes, cheese dishes and generally dairy products.

Some Eastern European Jews break the fast with a German sweet roll called *shnekem* from the German word for snails because of its coiled shape. The yeast dough containing milk and sour cream is rolled out, brushed with melted butter and sprinkled with a cinnamon sugar, raisin and nut filling then, rolled up, and cut into slices and baked.

Gil Marks writes in *The World of Jewish Desserts*, that cheese *kuchen*, a Central European coffee cake, was eaten for the meal following *Yom Kippur*. German Jews also ate *erstesternen*, a cinnamon star cookie, so called because stars were the sign of the end of the fast day.

Jews of Zimbabwe break the fast with juice, traditional rolls with oil, rusks, oil biscuits and cheese. Sweets include almond and honey turnovers and sponge cake. Later, they eat cold chicken, fried fish, chicken soup and other sweets.

Jews of South Africa whose origins were in Europe break the fast with *babke*, a sweet milk bread with almonds and raisins, originating in Poland. They drink soda water, milk or lemon tea. Later, they have a meal starting with pickled herring and lemon fish.

Among *Sephardim* and Middle Eastern Jews, a light snack is followed by a heavier meal. For example, Syrian, Iraqi and Egyptian Jews break the fast with cardamom coffee cake. Some Iraqis drink milk then eat the cake or a cardamom-almond cookie called *hagadi badah*, according to Gil Marks in *The World of Jewish Desserts*. Afterward, they have a big meal including *teebeet*, a stuffed whole chicken with rice which has been left to cook over a low flame all *Yom Kippur* day.

Some Yemenites break the fast with ginger cake or eat watermelon, then they drink coffee and eat cookies. After this, they eat more of the broth which they ate before the fast or they eat another Yemenite soup.

Edda Servi Machlin writes that her Italian family drinks vermouth and then

ZOBERMAN

(continued from page 13)

their wives reliance on him.

Irna confides to him of her pains caused by abusive Anton and the Katzs' horrendous murder. The healer, recalling Irna's mom Gloria, instructs her, "Irna, you have to



eats a special, oval shaped bread to break the fast. Then they eat a meal with soup and pasta, chicken, fish, stewed fennel, cold noodles with sauce, sweet cakes and fruit. According to Gil Marks in *The World of Jewish Desserts*, *il bolio*, an Italian sweet yeast bread, is served by Italians to break the fast.

Nicholas Stavroulakis relates that Greek Jews prepare interesting drinks to break the fast. One is made with grenadine; another with almonds; another with lemons; and one with melon seeds, water, sugar and almond extract or rose water.

Rachel Dalvin who has researched about the Jews of Ioannina [Yahnina] writes that the fast was broken with *avgolemono*, chicken-lemon soup, and a variety of stuffed vegetables which were common in Turkish cookery and were acquired because Turkey occupied that part of Greece for centuries.

Some Moroccan Jews break the fast with *fijuelas*, a deep-fried pastry soaked in sweet syrup. They may also drink Arak, the anise-flavored liqueur. Later they have coffee with milk, cake and cookies. Still later, they eat *harera*, a special thick soup with chicken and ground vegetables.

Typical among South African Jews whose ancestors came from the Island of Rhodes is breaking fast with melon pip milk; bread with olive oil; sponge cake; honey and almond turnovers; and rusks, which is a yeast bread baked until it is dry, crisp and golden brown. Other break the fast foods are cold chicken, chicken soup and sesame biscuits. This can then be followed by almond sponge cake with syrup or marzipan. Marzipan is a sweet mixture of almond paste, sugar and egg whites, often tinted with food coloring and molded into forms such as fruits and animals. Layered phyllo pastry with almonds and honey may also be served.

Pan dulce, a sweet yeast bread in loaf form or rolls, is served by *Sephardim* before and after the fast, according to Gil Marks in his book, *The World of Jewish Desserts*. He also mentions that Jews of India make a semolina-filled turnover called *singara* or *kushli* which are served at the meal following *Yom Kippur* and *sutlach*, a Middle Eastern rice flour pudding served in *Sephardic* households at the meal following *Yom Kippur*.

(See Sybil Kaplan's bio on p. 4.) ✨

regain the sense of love and the joy of living that you used to have." (p.125) The third encounter is with a hiding Jewish teenager who lost to the murderers his parents and sister, believing that he was the world's sole surviving Jew. Irna surprises him with a loving embrace, "Guard yourself. A Jew in the forest is God's candle." (p.161) His appreciative response, "God's candle has not been extinguished in the world." (p.161) Irna believes that the murdered Jews' spirits roam everywhere, "Their death is no death... and at night they stand at the windows offering their merchandise. They refused to die." (p.164) It is connected to Aunt Yanka teaching her, "they have the power to ignore death." (p.106) Whether the Jews are beloved or hated they are perceived as different, possessing superhuman abilities and/or being Christ-killers!

Irna commences an awesome journey of self-transformation as a Christian cult leader, even seeing herself as suffering Jesus on the cross. The Carpathian Mountains become the Galilee ones and just like Jesus she heads to Jerusalem on a crusade of healing the afflicted. Her followers are abused women like herself including prostitutes, a reminder of Appelfeld's own journey of survival when protected by kind prostitutes. However, Irna continued to be abused by peasant men and women, who vehemently ridiculed her fervent teaching that Jesus was after all a Jew who grew up in a Jewish family, and whose Jewish grandpa praised him for his knowledge of the weekly *Torah* Portion.

To those who blame her for blasphemy, she says, "As long as I live, I will not stop yelling that Jesus was a Jew. On the Sabbaths he went to the synagogue and was called to the *Torah*. All knew in the synagogue that he was a special fellow." (p.165) She contracts the rampant typhus epidemic from those whom she embraced physically and spiritually, and dies like many of them, and unlike Jesus, her Jewish hero, not making it to earthly Jerusalem.

Appelfeld's last book, along with his many preceding ones is indeed filled with *Timahon* (*Astonishment*) as the book's title reflects, at the conflicted human condition and its Jewish component, with its terrifying shadows and graceful lights.

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, Va. He is the son of Holocaust survivors from Sarny, Ukraine, Sarnik, Belarus and Zamosc, Poland. He and his family were in the Wetzlar, Germany Displaced Persons Camp from 1947-1949. He grew up in Haifa, Israel. ✨

Media Watch



BY RABBI ELLIOT B. GERTEL

Superior Donuts

During the national discussions about race and policing, CBS's two-season *Superior Donuts* series (2017–2018) returned to my mind. It addressed race relations and the dangers faced by African American youth in American cities. Also, it dabbled in Black-Jewish relations and, a bit, in the conservative-liberal political divide. And it remains the only TV sitcom in recent years to have featured a Jewish man as the lead character.

I have already discussed how the series dealt with political and interracial issues: www.americanthinker.com/articles/2020/07/sitcom_politics.html.

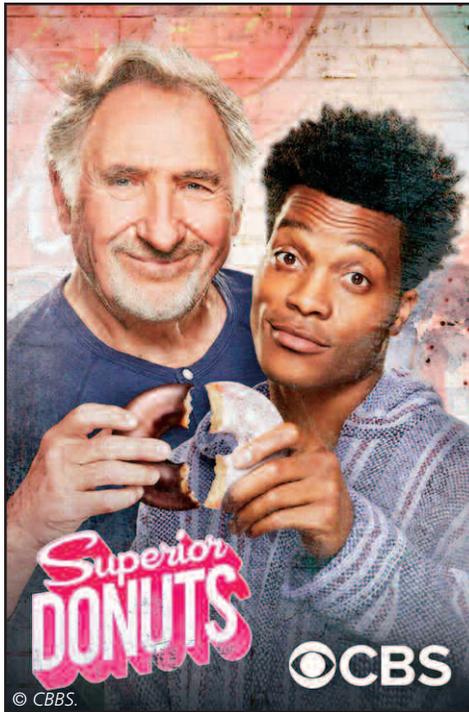
The promising pilot episode was written by the show's creators, Bob Daily, Neil Goldman and Garrett Donovan. Seventy-five-year-old Jewish curmudgeon doughnut shop owner Arthurd Przybyszewski (Judd Hirsch) is a recent widower. He tells us twice in the debut episode that he escaped from Communist Poland with his parents as a child. His Chicago neighborhood has suffered from factory shut-downs and increasing crime but is now becoming gentrified and self-consciously multicultural.

Arthur is proud of the donuts and coffee he's been making for over 40 years, but is seeking a young helper. Enter Franco Wicks (Jermaine Fowler), a young African American graffiti artist (or "social commentary" artist as he prefers to be called), who has a lot of fresh ideas to bring the shop into the 20th century, let alone the 21st. Upon seeing the place, he quips, "This is a donut museum."

Franco gets right to work, immediately adding some engaging wall art. Arthur tells him that he ought to think about attending art college.

Among the doughnut shop regulars are Fawz (Maz Jobrani), the patently conservative and politically incorrect Iraqi-American real estate hustler who is buying up property in the neighborhood and is not a believer in business ethics; Tush (David Koechner), a laid-off factory worker, affable but somewhat creepy; and Officer Randy DeLuca (Katey Sagal), a woman cop who put her daughter through medical school. As the daughter of a cop who was Arthur's deceased best friend, she has been coming into the shop since she was a young girl.

In the pilot, the topic of racism is, of course, raised, but is linked to anti-



Semitism. Arthur tells Fawz not to keep referring to Franco as "the black guy," that this is like calling Arthur "The Jew." But then Arthur suddenly realizes, "O my God. You call me that, don't you?" Fawz gently explains, "I'm not so good with names." I'll leave it to Muslim critics to evaluate the depiction of Fawz. Suffice it to say that this portrayal gets uncomfortable rather quickly. Fawz gloats that he plans to purchase Arthur's shop some day at 30% of its market value.

The series was well-equipped, both in writing and in acting, to deal with some serious issues with effective, thought-provoking humor. A naturally expressive and affecting actor, Jermaine Fowler was charming in his role as Franco. Hirsch seemed to be on automatic pilot in his depiction of Arthur; he has long played the old Jewish curmudgeon role. But he was still good at it. It was clear from the start that this was supposed to be a program in the tradition of *Seinfeld* and *Friends*, in that its humor was embedded in the foibles and even off-putting traits of the principals, with Franco designated as the idealistic and good-natured one here. But still, the program tried to keep all the banter and even tensions positive and pleasant.

For me, the pleasantness ended in the show's first weeks in an episode about conversations about race, written by Robb Chavis. When Franco rhetorically asks Arthur if he ever had the "talk" with his dad (meaning the talk at eight years of age about how to behave around cops who regard blacks as bad guys), Arthur responds from his gut: "Which talk? Birds and the bees, or shiksas [a derogatory term for non-Jewish women] are for practice?" The episode that was supposed to

open dialogue about racism resolved to have its Jewish main character demean non-Jewish women. It also had an Asian police officer take a stolen baseball from a black kid, thus stereotyping blacks as petty thieves and Asians as more devious (more clever?) thieves!

In the first season's *Chanukah* episode (12-4-2017) the same writer provided more jokes on Jews and Judaism, perhaps as "reward" for Arthur's clinching Franco's college acceptance. After taking a popular ethnic DNA test, Arthur quips: "I wasted two hundred bucks to find out I'm Jewish." Tush chimes in: "I'm 4% Jewish and 4% Palestinian, which explains my inner turmoil." Arthur gifts Tush with a *menorah*, promising to teach him a couple of "*Baruch atta*" prayers. Pathetically, this was the best "Jewish humor" that the series could provide.

But writer Chavis persisted with the "Jewish humor." In an episode about Arthur teaching Franco to drive, Franco calls dibs on picking the radio station, prompting Arthur to confess that there are only two working radio stations – either the Spanish one or "the lady who wants us to accept Jesus Christ as our lord and savior. She's pretty convincing, though. I'm thinking of doing that," Arthur says while making awkward, almost mocking signs of the cross. Why the gratuitous "ecumenical" confusion of Catholicism and Evangelical Protestantism? The writers persisted in such stuff, having Arthur say that he lit a candle in the local Catholic Church, along with changing beans and filters, in order to save his coffee from becoming inexplicably bitter.

In the driving instruction episode Tush says of Arthur's contemplated road trip: "I'll bet you could be in and out of Alabama before they realize you're Jewish." Never mind that Alabama has some of the oldest Jewish congregations in the country.

The tasteless "Jewish humor" should be understood, I believe, as symptomatic of exulting in a less-than-admirable, less-than-likable Jewish lead character.

Even while giving Franco driving lessons, Arthur was not depicted as reliable. He had allowed his own license to expire, and drove into a store window. (Why have his cop friend get him a pass here?) The show often suggests that his moral and ethical standards could be higher. He has always bribed city inspectors with whiskey (to look the other way when there are safety or health violations?) and when an older female inspector takes over he considers playing the "ho" to romance her (in a "noble" episode about sexual harassment in the police force!). "That's just the way it works," writer Betsy Thomas has him say,

(see Gertel, page 17)

Book Reviews

REVIEWED BY SIDNEY MISHKIN

Attempting to Understand and Explain the Akedah

Unbinding Isaac: The Significance of the Akedah for Modern Jewish Thought.

By Aaron Koller. Jewish Publication Society and University of Nebraska Press 2020. 223 pages including notes.

Aaron Koller is a professor of Near Eastern and Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University. This book is his attempt to understand and explain the *Akedah*, the nineteen verses of Genesis which have fascinated Jews and non-Jews since the story was first told thousands of years ago. This book is not for everyone.

In the story of the *Akedah*, (binding) we are told that God decided out of a clear blue sky, as it were, to test Abraham's faith. He tells Abraham

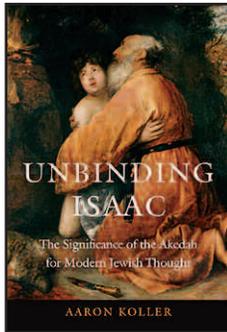
to offer Isaac as a burnt offering at a place God will show him. Abraham wastes no time. He sets out the next day with Isaac, a couple of servants and a donkey.

Traditionally, Abraham is lauded for his unquestioning willingness to obey God's order that he murder his only son, which is usually cast in terms of Abraham's unwavering faith in God. Koller chooses a revisionist understanding of the *Akedah* which will not be satisfying to all.

Koller says that God actually wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to please God's ego, and that Abraham recognized God's ego needs and was happy to do so, but God changed God's mind after Isaac was on the altar. That will seem to be anthropomorphic (the attribution of human characteristics to God) to many, and it is.

Koller doesn't tell us what caused God to come out as *Moloch*. He does tell us, however, that killing of a person as an act of one's devotion to God cannot be tolerated. Nothing radical there. Koller summarized his conclusions as follows (p.147).

"This, then, is the religious and philosophical dynamic of the *Akedah*. God commands Abraham to offer Isaac on the altar, reflecting God's sincere desire for human sacrifice. It is tempting to God and tempting to God's servant, that the most precious possession be offered as a burnt offering, completely sacrificed to God.



Abraham correctly understands this desire of God's and dutifully obeys. Abraham later – just in time – understands that although this is all correct, it is superseded by a more powerful lesson God has to teach: children like all other human beings, cannot be mere adjuncts in someone else's religious experience. And so this is the ethical teaching of the *Akedah*: as much as it is enticing to do so, one person's religious fulfillment cannot come through harm to another. The trial of Abraham cannot involve the murder of Isaac."

It is not clear whether Professor Koller is lecturing God about attempting to control what the Professor perceives as God "sincere desire" for human sacrifice. It is also not clear how the Professor believes God managed to control that sincere desire and instead decided to teach Abraham (whom Koller says was God's willing executioner) what was wrong about sacrificing Isaac. It wasn't Abraham's idea. As far as we know, Abraham never practiced human sacrifice and the only references to the practice in the *Torah* forbid it. See, e.g. Lev.20:2–5.

Koller could have taken a different path if he wanted to take modern non-traditional view of the *Akedah* that was wholly consistent with the *Torah* text: Abraham was not an automaton. He was a caring, sentient human being. Abraham never had any intention of sacrificing Isaac. He realized he was being tested and decided instead to test God. After all, God had promised Abraham that the Covenant would continue through Isaac (by name and not generically) and his heirs (Gen. 17: 19). God could not keep that promise if God mandated the death of Isaac.

Moreover, Abraham was prospering in Canaan but he had also prospered in Haran. He was still a resident alien in Canaan, and none of the promises God made to him in Haran had been fulfilled Gen. 12:1–9. For example, Abraham was not a great nation. His name was not great. The families of the earth did not bless themselves by his name. God had not yet given Canaan to him. In fact, later, he had to buy a burial site for Sarah.

Abraham had to ask himself, "God hasn't yet kept God's promises to me. Why is God testing me?" Abraham had done everything God had asked him to do. Abraham spoke to God to save the innocents of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:22–33) but he didn't speak one word to save the innocent Isaac before, during or after the three-day journey to Mount Moriah. Why? Abraham knew he controlled Isaac's fate. He held the knife. The angel did not stop him from killing Isaac. Abraham never had any intention of doing so.

As Abraham had hoped would be the case, God ordered Abraham to stay his hand. There are many reasonable, non-

traditional understandings of the meaning of the *Akedah*. Abraham tested God and God passed Abraham's test is certainly one of them.

Gen. 22:14 states "...*bihar YHVH yireh*". The meaning is not crystal clear. Some translate the phrase as "On the mount of the Lord there is vision. Another translation is "*Hashem* will be seen on the mountain". The strong sense is that Abraham saw on the mountain God's action to save Isaac, and Abraham's faith and trust in God were restored and vindicated.

Facing an Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory

The Accusation Blood Libel in an American Town. By Edward Berenson. Copyright 2019. W.W. Norton and Company. 258 pages including notes.

On September 22, 1928 a four-year old girl got lost in the woods near her home in Massena, N.Y., across the St. Laurence River from Quebec, Canada.

This was not unusual. Little kids get lost all the time. Almost all of them are found unharmed. But the Massena case was unusual.

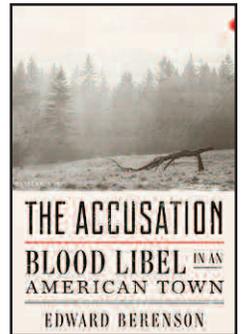
The region had a large population of French Canadians and immigrants from central and eastern Europe who worked in Massena's aluminum mills. There was also a small community of 20 Jewish families in Massena in 1928. Anti-Semitism was rife in Massena as it was in much of America in the 1920s.

As the search continued, their European background and anti-Semitic attitudes informed some of Massena's residents what must have happened: The Jews surely had kidnapped and killed the little girl for her blood. Ritual murder. The infamous Blood Libel reared its disgusting head in America for the first time.

Unfortunately, Massena's mayor and a New York State trooper by word and deed gave credence to the rumors of ritual murder by the Jews. The Jews of Massena were put in a difficult position that was unfortunately all too familiar in the history of the Jews of Europe.

How did Edward Berenson, a professor of history at New York University, come to write this book?

Edward Berenson is a historian worthy of the name who has written a number of well received histories. He is also a stu-



(see Mishkin, page 17)

GERTEL*(continued from page 15)*

with his police officer friend acquiescing. "You can't change the system."

Occasionally Arthur provides good wisdom and guidance, as when he advises Randy to take off some time from the police force to get her head straight. He also convinces Franco's "from the hood" buddy Sweatpants to finally take a job. "I just needed a job," Arthur says. "But I found some things I loved about it, like running my own business, and making people happy." But his advice can be perverse, even if offered jokingly (?). After Franco's rich girlfriend offers Arthur luxury box Cubs tickets while her dad is out of town, Arthur tells Franco: "If you get her pregnant, we can go to the all-star game." (3-26-18, writer Chuck Tatham).

How did the writers regard Arthur, if not as a reliable mentor?

When Murray, a flour salesman, mouths stereotypes about African Americans that offend Franco, Arthur tells his employee that he is too sensitive. Franco retorts, "How would you like it if they called you the Jew and said you were cheap?" "They did and I am," Arthur responds. "I'm driving 30 miles to save five bucks on sprinkles. That's less the sales tax. *L'chaim*." Here, writer Betsy Thomas suggests that Arthur represents a flawed mentor who often exults in being a stereotype – and who, on occasion, himself indulges in stereotyping.

The bottom line is that Arthur cannot always be counted upon to do the right thing. He is complicated and compromised by his own (or by the writers') desire to live up to certain Jewish curmudgeon stereotypes. It seems to be a choice to him, albeit a bad one. He does some good, but also holds back, on purpose, from doing more good.

Indeed, the best episodes about mentoring circumvent Arthur altogether, and, whether or not intended by the producers and writers, deal with black on black mentoring. In one episode, Franco invites an elderly veteran of the Negro Baseball Leagues to speak to a black children's Little League group of mostly black kids about discrimination in sports and about Jackie Robinson's role in fighting it. But this man, more of a curmudgeon than Arthur, ruins Black History Month for Franco with blunt and cynical observations about society and about Robinson's success (of necessity) resulting in losses of jobs for many black players when Negro leagues lost their star players. Writer/actor/producer Jermaine Fowler (who plays Franco) movingly has Franco learn to appreciate the complexities of the black experience and present

MISHKIN*(continued from page 16)*

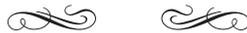
dent of anti-Semitism. If one likes remarkable coincidences, he was also born in Massena, N.Y.

How did the Blood Libel take root in upstate New York? Berenson tells the story in a very readable and informative way. He begins with the history of the Blood Libel in Europe. The bigots initially claimed that we killed Christian children at Passover to put their blood in our *matzah*. When a disappearance didn't coincide with Passover, the bigots said we used children's blood for our *hamantaschen*. Haters are flexible. The Massena child disappeared near the High Holidays. That must be why the Jews killed her, they concluded.

It was pointless to explain to our accusers over the centuries that the *Torah* forbids us from drinking blood of any kind. They said the *Talmud* commands us to kill Christian children and use their blood in our rituals, thereby showing the full flower of their ignorance.

The 1920s were a particularly fertile period for anti-Semitism in America and elsewhere where Christianity was predominant. Relatively speaking, there had been a lot of Jewish immigration from Europe. There had been much more Christian immigration from eastern and central Europe. The immigrants brought their anti-Semitism with them. The Ku Klux Klan was then in its heyday.

In addition, home grown bigots such as automobile magnate Henry Ford fanned the flames of anti-Semitism with a passion. Ford began publishing, *The Dearborn Independent* a weekly newspaper in 1919. In 1920 Ford began devoting the paper to



this man with a thoughtful peace offering. But Arthur, as depicted in this series, does not have the same integrity and family nurturing qualities as this man.

Superior Donuts was based on a play by actor/writer Tracey Letts. I read the play, which struck me as foul-mouthed and unpleasant, and presented Arthur as a Polish-American with no Jewish background. Despite its many flaws, the CBS series was better suited to the small screen and more engaging and palpable. But for the reasons outlined here, among others, it did not catch on.

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

anti-Semitic diatribes. By 1925 the newspaper had a circulation of 800,000 copies, second in America only to the *New York Daily News*.

The Dearborn Independent contained innumerable calumnies against the Jewish people and blamed the Jewish people for acts of mass violence committed against them. Henry Ford also printed and distributed during the period hundreds of thousands of copies of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an anti-Semitic fabrication first published by the Russian secret police in the early 20th century that purported to detail the secret Jewish plan to take over the world.

Defamation litigation brought by a courageous Jewish lawyer and a national boycott of Ford automobiles by Jewish and liberal Christian groups finally forced Henry Ford to apologize and close the *Dearborn Independent* in 1927.

Were the *Dearborn Independent* and other anti-Semitic publications of the day by themselves solely responsible for the Massena Blood Libel? No, but they helped make more believable something that should have been unworthy of belief.

The Jews of Massena didn't wait for the little girl to be found alive or for a pogrom to sweep through the town. The president of the synagogue contacted Louis Marshall the then president of The American Jewish Committee. The president also contacted Rabbi Stephen Wise, head of the rival American Jewish Congress.

Thanks to their efforts, the Massena Blood Libel became a national affair. Not because a pogrom resulted, but because there was no pogrom. There was no ritual murder in Massena. There was no dead little girl in Massena. There was no ritual murder. There were just ugly, baseless claims.

A little over 24 hours after she got lost in the woods, the four-year old little girl "suddenly stumbled out of the woods, bewildered and disoriented but unharmed". One hates to think what could have happened if the townspeople of Massena had acted on their prejudices before she was found unharmed, just another lost child.

Ironically, as a part of his thorough research for the book, Professor Berenson interviewed the little lost girl when she was in her 90s. She was still going strong, but she had no memory of getting lost in the woods and sparking a case of national import. The Jews of Massena have not forgotten. They have passed the story down to later generations. There is a lesson here for all of us, Jews and Christians.

Sidney Mishkin is a retired lawyer in Indianapolis, Ind. He is the author of *The Unvarnished Torah: Observations, Questions and Answers of a Jewish Lawyer and Memories of Donora: Growing Up Jewish in a Western Pennsylvania Steel Town*. ✨

My Kosher Kitchen

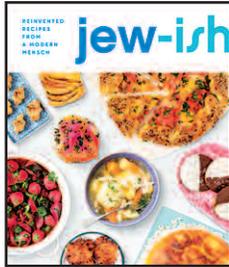


REVIEWED BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Lots of Delicious Persian Dishes

Jew-ish, Cookbook: Reinvented Recipes from a Modern Mensch. By Jake Cohen.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. \$30 hard cover. 272 pp. March 9, 2021



This is not a kosher cookbook per se. Five recipes are definitely not adaptable, but others are. Jake is called a “new star” in the food world and is now editorial and test kitchen director of a social media publication.

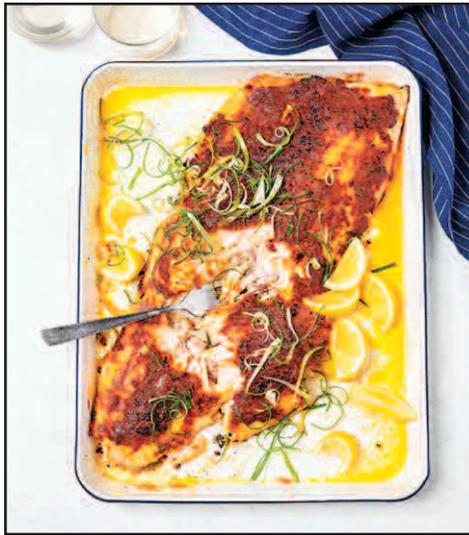
In the introduction, Jake talks about his being Jewish while growing up, meeting his husband and deciding to write this cookbook by reinventing his Ashkenazic background and being inspired by his husband’s Persian-Iraq background.

If you keep kosher, why would this cookbook interest you? Mainly because the 89 recipes are innovative creations as he reconciles traditional recipes with modern times.

Chapters include: breakfast, apps and snacks, salads, vegetables, carbs, soups and stews, mains, desserts and drinks with additional recipes for *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* break-the-fast, *Chanukah*, and *Passover*.



Jake Cohen, author of *Jew-ish, Cookbook*.



Some of his reinventions are: *sabich* bagel sandwich, potato-leek *bourekas*, salted honey chopped liver, *challah* panzanella, saffron chicken noodle soup, French onion brisket, *matza* tiramisu, and salt and pepper *sufganiyot*.

Comments on recipes and numbered instructions are a definite plus for this cookbook, as well as the 120 color photographs. For anyone looking for lots of Persian dishes plus some new, creative Jewish foods, this would be a good choice.

Iraqi Roasted Salmon with Tomato and Lemon (above) (8 to 10 servings)

- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 medium yellow onions, minced
- 2 scallions, white and green parts separated and thinly sliced
- 2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- One 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 2 tsp. finely grated lemon zest
- Kosher salt
- One 3-lb. whole side of salmon, skin-on
- Lemon wedges, for serving

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Line a half sheet pan with aluminum foil. In a medium skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and scallion whites and cook, stirring often, until softened and lightly caramelized, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in the coriander, cumin, turmeric and cayenne and cook, stirring continuously, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the tomato paste and cook, stirring often, until well incorporated and caramelized to the color of rust, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the lemon zest. Season with salt and let cool slightly. Place the side of salmon on the prepared sheet pan, skin-side down (and arranged diagonally to fit, if neces-

sary), and season with a heavy pinch of salt. Spread the tomato mixture over the top of the salmon in an even layer. Roast for 15 to 20 minutes, until the salmon is golden and reaches an internal temperature of 145°F. (If desired, broil the salmon for about 2 to 3 minutes to get more color.) Garnish the salmon with the scallion greens, then serve with lemon wedges.

Kugel and Cheese (below) (10 to 12 servings)

- Kosher salt
- 1 lb. sharp cheddar cheese, coarsely grated
- 8 oz. Gruyère cheese, coarsely grated
- 8 oz. fresh mozzarella, coarsely grated
- 2 cups full-fat cottage cheese
- 1 cup full-fat sour cream
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- 1/4 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 4 large eggs
- 12 oz. dried wide egg noodles
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil



Preheat the oven to 375°F. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. In a medium bowl, toss the cheddar, Gruyère and mozzarella to combine. In a blender, combine the cottage cheese, sour cream, rosemary, thyme, nutmeg, 2 teaspoons salt and eggs. Blend until smooth. Add the egg noodles to the boiling water and cook until al dente, 4 to 5 minutes, then drain and transfer to a large bowl. Add the egg mixture and two-thirds of the grated cheeses to the bowl with the noodles and toss to combine. Pour the mixture into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and spread it in an even layer. Add the panko to the bowl with the remaining grated cheeses and toss to combine. Sprinkle the panko mixture over the noodles and drizzle with the olive oil. Bake until the *kugel* is golden brown and set, 30 to 35 minutes. Serve immediately.

(See Sybil Kaplan’s bio on p. 4.) ✨

“To save one life is to save the world entire.” – *The Talmud*



This High Holiday season, as we seek spiritual and physical renewal for ourselves and our loved ones, let us also remember those in Israel who nurture and renew life every day. Whether it's treating civilians wounded in terror and rocket attacks or vaccinating them against Covid-19, no organization in Israel saves more lives than Magen David Adom.

Magen David Adom is not government-funded. Its 27,000 volunteer EMTs and paramedics and 4,000 full-time professionals rely on support from people like you for the vehicles, supplies, and equipment they need to perform their lifesaving work.

No gift will help Israel more this coming year. Support Magen David Adom by donating today at afmda.org/rosh or call 888.674.4871. *Shanah tovah.*



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Seen on the Israel Scene



The Jewish Post & Opinion

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BY SYBIL KAPLAN

Charlott – My Favorite Gift Shop

I cannot remember when I first discovered Charlott, but I am quite sure it became my favorite gift shop the first time I walked through the door. Charlott opened it in 1936, making it the oldest gift shop in Jerusalem with unique, one-of-a-kind, untypical, non-touristy items. When she opened it, she thought it would be accessible to anyone walking down Jaffa Road, however, when the Main Post Office was built, her shop ended up on the street behind the post office, hidden from the main traffic.

Noga Eshed began working there in 1976 and when Charlott was unable to continue coming to the shop, Noga bought it in 1980.

Come through the door and on your right is a wall of replicas of old, brass wall *Chanukiyot*, and modern ones as well, and *hamsas* of all kinds. The shelf below holds Armenian tiles and Hebron glass pieces. Scattered along this wall are brass mirrors, mostly from Morocco.

Moving a little further back into the shop, one spies a glass showcase with modern brass candlesticks, glass pieces, and at least 100-year-old Turkish Ottoman pieces in silver, covered with gold leaf and stones. In front of this showcase is a wood table with old, embroidered scatter-pillow cases, coin purses and eyeglass cases. I have a large collection of the embroidered pieces, framed and each with its own history. A few steps away, in front of the picture window is a table with more cushion covers and table runners, embroidered with Indian, Albanian and Arab embroidery.

The back wall has Hebron glass in shades of blue, green and amber. I have amber vases and drinking glasses which I bought maybe 40 years ago. There are also copper pieces from Persia. What strikes you the most is the piece of damask material holding 1,000 year old glass and ceramic necklaces. They remind me of a camel bone necklace I bought from a vendor down near the Dead Sea. Nearby on shelves are Uzbekistan pottery and china.

In the center of the room is a glassed case where Noga sits – a rich looking, dark black-haired lady. Garnet, seed pearl, and lapis rings, necklaces, earring and pins are there as well as pill boxes and



Charlott gift shop.

some Persian tile, perhaps 50 years old. I remind her of the Roman glass (2,000 year old) broaches I bought there, uniquely designed with gold frame – one with lapis and other blue stones hanging down and one with wine-color stones.

Follow your eyes to the left wall where there are ceramic painted Persian vases; copper and brass trays; Armenian pottery; and modern Moroccan pottery. Below is a glass case with more jewelry and wood drawers in which to scavenge for more earrings. That's my favorite thing – looking in these drawers for what I can find that is unique.

Collectors of animals will find a wide variety of frogs, elephants, tortoises and owls scattered around the shop. The front picture window is a delightful array of old and new brass, copper, and ceramics items

and lots of jewelry of all kinds.

For those who love bazaars, thrift shops, markets, flea markets and second-hand stores, Charlott is a shopper's paradise. It is also a place to buy gifts for those for whom you don't want to buy ordinary, touristy Israeli souvenirs. A gift from Charlott is a gift to have forever.

Charlott is located at 4 Coresh in Jerusalem, behind the main post office and parallel to Shlomzion Hamalka Street. Charlott is open Sun., Tues., Wed. and Thurs. 10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 4 p.m.–6 p.m.; Mon., 10 a.m.–1 p.m. only; and Fri. 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Phone 02 625-1632.

(See Sybil Kaplan's bio on p. 4.) ✨



Noga Eshed, current owner of Charlott.