

THE JEWISH STAR

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They'd Rabba not

Backlash to visit by Sara Hurwitz

By Michael Orbach

Scholars-in-residence come and go in the Five Towns — a nearly weekly visitation to one shul or another that usually passes without comment. But one invitation several weeks ago sparked an unusual, if short-lived, effort to rally the local rabbinate in condemnation, and a rabbi's blistering essay in a local publication.

The public announcement was low-key: "Young Israel of Hewlett will host Ms. Sara Hurwitz," read the notice from the shul that appeared in community newspapers, including this one. But it referred to Rabba Sara Hurwitz, whose controversial title is to remain unique to her under the terms of an agreement between the Rabbinical Council of America and her mentor, Rabbi Avi Weiss. In May, Rabbi Weiss backed away from his plan to ordain Orthodox women. He did so under threat of expulsion from the RCA, condemnation from virtually the entire Orthodox world, including Agudath Israel of America's Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah, and, reportedly, internal pressure from male students within his own yeshiva.

An attendee at Hurwitz's three lectures over the weekend of Parshat Korach said that Rabbi Heshy Blumstein introduced her with praise for her knowledge but pointedly omitted the title Rabba, citing the widespread objections sparked by its conferral. Citing a death in his shul, Rabbi Blumstein declined to speak to The Jewish Star.

A June 23 e-mail obtained by The Jewish Star, signed by Rabbi Zvi Flaum, chairman

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Photo by Claudio Papapietro

Renee Wiener, 86, in her apartment in Great Neck on Monday, June 21.

Renee Wiener was recently awarded the Legion of Honor, France's most prestigious award, for her service in the French Resistance during World War II

By Michael Orbach

Renee Wiener fought back. In the summer of 1944, Wiener was 19, a slim brunette with long legs and greenish-brown eyes. She, her parents and her sister had fled Vienna several years earlier and settled in the free zone of Nice in the south of France. Like other Jews, they feared raids and deportations but managed by word of mouth to avoid them. In the quiet early years of the war, Wiener belonged to the Eclaireuses et Eclaireurs israélites de France, the Jewish Scouts, a youth group that, along with several other Jewish groups, evolved into a resistance movement.

"The people who let their parents hold them back, I still remember their names," recalled Wiener, 86. "There was tremendous peer pressure. It was so much easier than trembling in the basement waiting for the Gestapo to knock on the door. It's a lot easier to try to do something."

On Sept. 11, 1943, German soldiers raided the Busby, the hotel where Wiener's family was staying. Wiener, her mother and her sister were running late, and arrived at the hotel in time to see the Germans seal it off to conduct the raid. Her father, not so fortunate, was arrested and deported along with 30,000 other refugees in Nice. That was the last

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Shabbat Candlelighting: 8:11 p.m. Shabbat ends 9:20 p.m. 72 minute zman 9:42 p.m. Torah Reading Parshat Pinchas Zman Kriat Shma 8:19 (Magen Avrohom) and 9:13 (GRA & Ba'al Tanya)

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Hunting the hunters

Continued from page 1

time she saw him. After her father's abduction, Wiener saw to it that her mother and sister were placed in a safe house — the top floor of a small hotel — while she went underground and dedicated herself fully to the Armee Juive, The Jewish Army, an amalgamation of several groups.

Her unit was 14 teenagers on the cusp of adulthood. They communicated clandestinely with each other and each night slept in a different safe house around the city. Their missions ranged from finding families to house Jewish children, to carrying weapons, sabotaging transport lines and forging food stamps. There was also one task that Wiener disliked more than any other: "Taking care of informers."

"They tracked down hidden people, families who were in cellars, and sold them to the Gestapo at a set price for a head," Wiener explained. "They were the lowest of the low."

When the Jewish Army would find an informer they would mail him a hand-made miniature casket. If the collaborator persisted, the women in the Jewish Army would go to a bar the collaborator frequented. There, the women would strike up a conversation with the collaborator and invite him back to an isolated motel. The combat division of the Jewish Army would be waiting.

"It was not very easy," Wiener says, "but not very difficult either, especially in France when you're 18" during the war. She continued: "You had no human compassion for them. We did warn them. They had to be eliminated. But I never participated. You have to have a strong stomach even if you believe in it."

Other girls in the unit were better at it than she, Wiener said.

In order to prevent leaks, when members of the Jewish Army transported weapons to the French Resistance, the carriers were told nothing about what they were carrying or to whom they were delivering. Once, while crossing from one train to another carrying a heavy suitcase she later learned was filled with explosives, a German soldier stopped her. Wiener held her breath, but the soldier didn't search the luggage. Instead he offered to help the pretty girl carry her bags to her

connecting train.

"I nearly died but he gave it back," Wiener remembered almost 70 years later. "He was very courteous."

While carrying weapons on another occasion Wiener saw a roadblock up ahead where German soldiers were searching all luggage. She turned around and began hitchhiking back. A German troop transport pulled up next to her and the troops offered her a ride back to town.

Wiener relied on her intuition to find safe houses for Jewish families. She fondly recalled days spent traveling in the mountains in the south of France, sleeping under the stars. She'd strike up conversations with people in restaurants or bars and gauge whether or not they'd be willing to keep children safe.

"Southern France was not that favorable [in] attitude towards us by and large," Wiener explained. "We found some, but not that many and you couldn't count on the general public. You had to be very careful."

Once a possible safe haven was located the group had to face the next challenge: convincing parents to let their children be hidden.

"[That] wasn't always easy," Wiener recalled. "A bunch of teenagers they didn't know to give up their children to? But they didn't make it and the children did."

Some children were placed in convents, the most memorable of which, Wiener recalls, was a convent for Carmelite nuns who took a vow of silence.

"That created problems for the kids," Wiener said. "Young children in an environment where no one talked?"

On one of her visits to the order Wiener brought a bouquet of flowers to the Mother Superior. The nun, the only one in the convent who had not taken a vow of silence, explained to Wiener that she couldn't accept the flowers since they would provide too much worldly pleasure.

Wiener's most frequent companion during those days was Bernard Fall, a brave 16-year-old orphan.

"During the first couple of years he saw me romantically but there was never anything that could happen during the service,



Photo by Claudio Papapietro

France's Legion of Honor was awarded to Renee Wiener earlier this year.

especially in the safe houses," Wiener said.

Fall eventually joined the French Resistance and later became a prominent American war correspondent.

"After the war he tried very hard not to be a Jew," Wiener said. "He joined the Combats De' France and became a Frenchman. Why he needed to do that I don't know. He didn't want to be a refugee Jew."

In 1967 Fall was killed when he stepped on a landmine while reporting on the Vietnam War.

Toward the summer of 1944, Wiener was sent to Annemasse, on the Swiss border. From there she and other members of The Jewish Army smuggled children over the mountains to Switzerland. German forces killed her friend Marianne Cohn during one such operation across the border. The children survived thanks to the intervention of the mayor of Annemasse, Jean Deffaugt, who has since been recognized by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem as one of the Righteous among the Nations.

The war ended for Wiener in June of 1944 when the French Resistance liberated Annemasse. She moved to Belgium with her mother and sister and worked there using a fake passport. Years later, she arrived on American shores and has been living in Great

Neck for the last 12 years. Reading about the war, Wiener says she was surprised to find out just how large the Jewish element was in the French Resistance; she knew only the members of her group.

In May of this year, Wiener was given the Legion of Honor, France's highest civil or military award.

"Madame, may you continue to be a model of courage to your grandchildren and our own, a force and inspiration to guide their path in the world of today and tomorrow," the French consul said. "Because our debt to you cannot be paid by remembrance alone. The example you set must also inspire us in the future. The best tribute we can pay you is to prove ourselves worthy of what you achieved for us."

An Austrian student wanted to write a book about Wiener but she is hesitant. One of her young grandsons was present at the ceremony at the French Consul.

"He thought I single-handedly threw down the atom bomb and saved all Europe," Wiener said. "I explained that it wasn't so, and that it was a very long time ago and we were all teenagers." But most amazing to the six-year-old was that his grandmother had ever been a teenager.



Photos courtesy Chabad of the Five Towns

Torah celebration at Chabad

On Sunday, a Torah was dedicated to Chabad of the Five Towns by Dr. and Mrs. Steven Sherman in memory of their parents, Abraham and Cecilia Bernstein and Samuel and Selma Sherman. The ceremony began at Temple Beth El and continued to the Chabad. Right: The Sherman family watches as Rabbi Moshe Klein finishes writing the Sefer Torah. Below: Dr. Steven Sherman (holding the Torah) and Rabbi Zalman Wolowik.



Backlash to visit by Sarah Hurwitz

Continued from page 1

of the Vaad Harabanim of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway, urged local rabbis to attend a meeting that night “at Cong. Shaaray Tefila with the president of the Young Israel of Hewlett (Rabbi Blumstein’s shul). We will be discussing recent events that happened in that shul and I urge your participation so that he should see the broad based united voice in regard to the recent bizayon HaTorah,” literally ‘humiliation of the Torah.’

The meeting never took place and Rabbi Flaum, formerly of the White Shul, declined to comment.

But the most prominent criticism came in a newspaper article by Rabbi Aryeh Zev Ginzberg of the Chofetz Chaim Torah Center in Cedarhurst.

Writing in the Five Towns Jewish Times, he claimed to “have been asked by one of the senior gedolei ha’dor (great Torah leaders of the generation), as well as by several of my distinguished colleagues to bring to the attention of the general community the great bizayon HaTorah, the degradation of the Gedolei Torah (Torah greats), that took place in our community this past Shabbos.” He did not name the other rabbonim although he promised that they would be identified upon request. A request by the Jewish Star for the names was unsuccessful.

Hurwitz “may be proficient in the entire Shach and Taz (which I have no way of knowing, yet I am highly doubtful),” Ginzberg wrote, referring to the works of two primary halachic commentators on the Shulchan Aruch. Her and Rabbi Weiss’s actions, “sent a loud and clear message to all who heard them: the unified words of our Gedolei Torah and distinguished rabbonim mean absolutely nothing,” he said.

“The concept of Da’as Torah, emunas Chachamim (trust in scholars), and kavod (honor) for talmidei chachamim are all ancient ideas that are to be tossed to the side, along with our ancient mesorah (tradition), all for the sake of feminism and perceived equality,” the article continued.



Photo by Karsten Moran

Sara Hurwitz in Riverdale at the height of the “Rabba” controversy.

Because of the event, “this coming Tisha B’Av, we will have something else to cry about,” Rabbi Ginzberg concluded.

Rabbi Ginzberg did not respond to requests for comment.

A commenter on that newspaper’s website claimed to be a member of Rabbi Ginzberg’s shul and said that he and other members were unhappy about the article:

“[We] do not understand why you are making a Machlokis (sic) with another shul that is having an event in their own shul,” the post read. “We should be dealing with the problems that exist in our own shul. The disagreements between members, the talking that goes on in the back, and the real problems that some of our members are having with parnassah or marital problems. Instead of dealing with these important issues, you

are starting a fight with another shul for no reason. Focus on the problems at home before you fix other people’s problems.”

Rabbi Herschel Billet of the Young Israel of Woodmere “strongly objected to the ad hominem, embarrassing and dismissing comments about Sara Hurwitz’s knowledge,” he said in condemning the article.

“The author asserts that the programming of Young Israel of Hewlett is something else to mourn about on Tisha B’Av,” Rabbi Billet said.

“I would think that Jews beating other Jews in Israel and the world making a blood libel about Israel is something serious to mourn about on Tisha B’Av — not the programming of the Young Israel of Hewlett.”

The Young Israel of Hewlett “is an Orthodox synagogue with an Orthodox rabbi,”

Rabbi Billet added. “He is the mora d’asra and he has the right to determine halachic decisions about programming, and he should not be subject to my or other rabbis’ scrutiny for the decisions he makes for the shul.”

Rabbi Kenneth Hain of Congregation Beth Shalom in Lawrence explained that he felt it is “important to allow some diversity of opinion inside Orthodoxy, whether we agree or not with that opinion.”

“Diversity in Orthodoxy has a strong tradition and there have been long-held differences in opinion about issues in terms of women’s role and relations between Orthodoxy and other movements vis-à-vis Religious Zionism and the role of religion in the Jewish State,” Rabbi Hain explained. “Now as we enter into an era [when] women’s Torah education has increased exponentially on the highest level, the Jewish community is confronting how to respond.”

“I’m sure in this case that the rabbi deliberated and even consulted with his authority and his teachers and arrived at a decision and I have to respect that,” Rabbi Hain said. “I think a part of the legitimacy of a rabbinic position is to make decisions for his congregation together with his leadership. I think that’s fundamental.”

Hurwitz, who appeared this week at number 36 on Newsweek’s unscientific yearly ranking of the top 50 rabbis in America, was sanguine about the Ginzberg article.

“It’s not new to me. I don’t have much to say, I feel like people have to work it out for themselves,” Hurwitz told The Jewish Star by phone. “I’m committed to serving Klal Yisroel and the Jewish people and teaching Torah and that’s what I’m going to continue doing, with G-d’s help.”

Hurwitz has had speaking engagements cancelled in other communities, she said, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak in the Five Towns.

“I’m thrilled that the Young Israel of Hewlett invited me,” she said, “and really honored to have been welcomed to the community.”

Lawrence toddler and nanny in pool tragedy

By The Jewish Star Staff

The drowning deaths of a three-year-old girl and her nanny in a backyard pool in the Lawrence neighborhood of Sutton Park left the Five Towns community reeling in horror last week.

Police believe that Naama Markovits’ h was being held by Lorena Canales-Mejia, 32, when the nanny lost her footing near the deep end of the pool.

The toddler’s five-year-old brother discovered the tragedy, according to Nassau County Police Detective Lt. Kevin Smith, and ran to get help from a painter who was working on the property on Beechwood Drive.

“He rushed out to the pool, he got the child out first, then he got the sitter out, and then he tried to perform rescue breathing on both of them and at the same time make

the call to 911,” Lt. Smith said. “The man was in a very hard place, you have two people that needed his help, and he had to make a phone call to get additional help.”

The painter’s cell phone was destroyed by his plunge into the pool and he had to run to the house phone to make the call. Arriving police officers began CPR and both victims were rushed to St. John’s Episcopal Hospital in Far Rockaway at about 2:45 p.m. where both were later pronounced dead.

Naama was the daughter of Yehuda and Cindy Markovits. She attended nursery at Bnot Shulamith where her grandmother, Ellen Basch, is the longtime head of the drama program.

The funeral for Naama was held the following day at nearby Yeshiva Shor Yeshuv.



Photo by Elizabeth Kirshenbaum

Crash at Bagel Boss

Two people suffered light injuries when an elderly driver, attempting to park in a handicapped space, drove straight through the Bagel Boss store in Hewlett on Thursday, June, 24. The store has since re-opened. “It was purely G-d’s grace,” that no one was hurt, said David Sparrow, who was with his family in the store at the time.

No luck for Young Israel at delegates meeting

By Michael Orbach

A phone-in delegates meeting of the National Council of Young Israel ended with a slam when the leaders of the organization hung up on the delegates last Thursday, according to people who participated in the teleconference.

The ostensible cause was a delegate bringing up the sensitive issue of the Shaarei Torah Orthodox Congregation of Syracuse, a former Young Israel that recently went public with its disagreement with the National Council. The shul has a female president, in violation of the Young Israel charter, and resigned its Young Israel mem-

bership in 2008. The rabbi of the shul, Rabbi Evan Shor, said that he was verbally threatened by Rabbi Pesach Lerner, the National Council’s executive vice president.

Rabbi Lerner dismissed the matter as a financial dispute.

Both Rabbi Lerner and Shlomo Mostovsky, the president of National Council, were on the call. A representative of Young Israel denied the account, though he said he could not discuss what occurred during the call.

“Any talk of shutting down a shul is preposterous,” the representative added.

Shlomo Zuller, president of Young Israel of Woodmere, criti-

cized both the delegates who brought up the issue and the National Council’s leadership

“I just think it was unprofessional [and a] very disorderly call,” said Zuller. “Confrontations like this are unacceptable by all parties,” he explained. “There’s no sense in having a civil war with the National Council.”

Zuller said that Rabbi Herschel Billet of the Young Israel of Woodmere was working to mediate a compromise between the Syracuse shul and the National Council.

Concerning the alleged threats to “destroy” Rabbi Shor, Zuller said, if true, that they were “uncalled for.”

Klezmer's great comeback

Remembering the musical traditions of Europe's Jews

By Tova Ross

If you've ever waited impatiently at a wedding for the bride and groom to emerge for the first dance you might be interested to learn that just a century or two ago, Jewish weddings in Europe took place over several days, and music was a constant presence.

When the National Yiddish Book Center in Massachusetts featured the Alexander Fiterstein Trio in its season opener in April, it wasn't just an enjoyable evening of music from a talented group of klezmer musicians: it was also part of Hankus Netsky's mission to return Yiddish and European Jewish culture to a secular audience.

Netsky, a musician and ethnomusicologist, is the founder and director of the Discovery Project at the National Yiddish Book Center. The Project works to recover artifacts from the immigrant and post-immigrant heritage of the Jewish people.

"The Book Center's Discovery Project is helping to plug the gap in Jewish education, a gap that's existed since after World War II," explained Netsky. "Hasidic and Orthodox communities educate their children very well about the rich culture of Europe's Jewish history, but in more traditional and less observant homes, that education has been sorely lacking."

Netsky attributes the lack of instruction to a loss of pride in Jewish identity after the Second World War and to assimilation in the larger secular culture, as well as to the creation of the State of Israel. "The creation of Israel was a huge accomplishment for the Jewish people," said Netsky, "but it invented a new culture and identity for the Jewish people that didn't really leave a lot of room for the continuation of Eastern European culture. There's a whole generation in Hebrew school right now that has no idea what went on in European Jewish communities for years and years."

The Book Center regularly holds film festivals, art exhibits, book readings and musical tributes to help commemorate and disseminate Yiddish culture to the public. The event that featured the music of the Alexander Fiterstein Trio was focused on the Eastern European Jewish wedding and incorporated klezmer musical elements into the arrangements.

The Trio has quite a collection of musical pedigrees: Alexander Fiterstein, born in Belarus, trained at the famed Juilliard School of Music, is now a world-renowned clarinet player. Cymbalist Walter Zev Feldman spearheaded a revival of klezmer music in the 1970's and remains one of the foremost experts in the field. Accordionist Christina Crowder, is a founding member of the ensemble "Di Naye Kapeyle," which researches and performs the traditional Jewish music of Eastern Europe.

Since the 17th century, traditional European weddings featured many musical forms, including meditative and penitential melodies preceding the wedding and the morning of the event; the "kale bevenyen" ceremony; and the wedding dances. A klezmer ensemble typically provided the music, led by a violin and accompanied by a cymbal, contra fiddle



Photo courtesy Alexander Fiterstein

Alexander Fiterstein

and contrabass. Clarinet and accordion later joined the ensemble.

Oftentimes, klezmer musicians composed their own tunes, and were commissioned by the wedding party to create unique new music for the occasion.

The morning of the wedding, a melody called the dobriden was played to wake the bride and groom outside their homes. Tunes like the mazltov and the terkishers heralded the start of the wedding and to honor important guests, as well as to provoke a contemplative and spiritual atmosphere prior to the chuppah. During the wedding, both ritual tunes and popular ones, like the freylekhs and the sher, were played.

These unique compositions were abandoned when immigrants began arriving in America and many almost immediately shed their traditions. Though he did not grow up with many religious traditions, Fiterstein grew up hearing his grandparents speak Yiddish and enjoys being part of a new revival of the Yiddish language. "While I don't feel I'm on a mission to save Yiddish culture, I do cherish it because it reminds me of the rich culture from which my grandparents come," said Fiterstein. "Eastern European Jewish and klezmer are such unique and specialized forms of music, and it's wonderful to be a part of and to participate in because there's a lot individuals can contribute."

Netsky added, "There's so many treasures to the Yiddish culture, with the traditional music of the Eastern European Jewish wedding being one of them. I want to make sure that's preserved as people begin to realize that our grandparents' heritage is something that not only should we not be ashamed of, but one that we should be proud of and pass on to future generations."

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ON THE Calendar

July 4 Kosher Comedy

KOSHER KOMEDY is back in the Catskills at Kutshers. Joins some of the funniest and cleanest comedians as seen on The Tonight Show, Conan and Letterman for an evening of great laughs, food and fun at the ONLY comedy club in the Catskills where the food and the comics are both Kosher. Last years show had a surprise guest appearance by Elon Gold – you never know which celebrity might show up. If you'll be in the mountains over July 4th weekend head on over to Kutshers and go see what everyone is "Laughing" about! Doors Open at 10:15 p.m. Showtime is 10:45 p.m. Tickets are \$22.00 in advance for guaranteed seating and \$25.00 at the door plus two item minimum (food or beverage) \$5.00 off at the door for Jewish Star readers if you present this the night of the show.

July 7 2nd Generation Holocaust Group

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS, located at 207 Grove Avenue in Cedarhurst, is hosting a Second Generation Holocaust Group from 7-9 p.m. for children of survivors to discuss the legacy left to us, and address issues affecting our lives today. For further information please call Judy Goldberg, L.C.S.W. at 516-569-6733, ext. 224.

July 8 Caregivers support group

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS, located at 207 Grove Avenue in Cedarhurst, will be holding a Caregivers Support group that will meet on the first Thursday of the month. The group is for people who are caring for an elderly loved one and who may find yourself trying to meet the demands of work, family and care-giving, all at the same time; meeting everyone else's needs but their own. Share your experiences with others. For further information, contact Linda Balch, MS at 516-569-6733x211.

July 12 Shloime Dachs Barbecue

SHLOIME & LIBBY DACHS cordially invite you to attend the Nine Days Siyum & BBQ on Monday,

Submit your shul or organization's events or shiurim to jscalendar@thejewishstar.com.
Deadline is Wednesday of the week prior to publication.



Photos courtesy of HANC

Dov Levine and Maka Sigel are the combined general and Judaic Studies Valedictorians in this year's Hebrew Academy of Nassau County's graduating class. Levine will be studying at Yeshivat Hakotel next year before entering Yeshiva University's Honors program. Sigel will be studying in MMY next year and entering the Macaulay Honors College in Brooklyn College.

July 12, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. at Agudas Yisroel Bais Binyomin, Avenue L & Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn. Proceeds to benefit Ohel Summer Programs.

Coffee and Cake will be served. The fee is \$8.00. For registration and further information please call 516-569-6733, ext. 209.

July 13 Savvy Singles

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS, in conjunction with Temple Hillel, will host "Savvy Singles," for adults 55+, the 2nd Tuesday of the month. The event begins at 7:30 p.m., at Temple Hillel, located at 1000 Rosedale Road in North Woodmere. Guest speaker will be humorist Irwin Pfeffer.

July 19 Long Island Friends Experience

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS invites you to accompany the LIFE program (Long Island Friends Experience) at the Long Island Ducks Game on July 19th. LIFE is a socialization program for adults with physical, neurological

and emotional needs. The group meets 3 times a month and enjoys a wide arrange of fun and diverse social activities. For more information on the LIFE program, please call Gayle Fremed at (516) 569-6733 x211.

July 27 Non-profit summit

THE FUTURE OF JEWISH NONPROFIT SUMMIT gathers handpicked professionals, volunteers and lay leaders to candidly interact in a laid back setting to unlock the full value of moving this vital industry forward. Some of the most respected nonprofit professionals, social media experts, marketers and online fundraisers are coming together to share their best practices, ideas and case studies. NYU Wasserman Center for Career Development, 133 E. 13th Street, 2nd Floor, New York. Visit <http://fojnp.com> for complete details. Use registration code jewishstar for 15% off.

August 1 Family fun and Long Beach sun

THE BACH'S 2ND ANNUAL SUMMER CARNIVAL will offer amusement park rides, entertainment, games, local artists & vendors, a shofar factory and glatt kosher food. Free admission. Special guests: Children from Ohel's orphan children's Home to help make their summer fun and special. Sponsorships available. 2 East Broadway, Long Beach NY 11561. For more information visit www.BachYouth.com or call 516-897-2473.

August 3 Night on the Beach with Kulanu

KULANU YOUNG LEADERSHIP DIVISION will be holding "A Night on the Beach" at the Allegría Hotel, located at 80 West Broadway in Long Beach at 7 p.m. There will be a live band, raffles, and gourmet restaurant samplings. Cost is \$100 per couple and \$50 per single. To RSVP email youngleadership@kulanukids.org or call 516-569-3083 ext. 102.

August 4 Speaking about Spielberg

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Photo courtesy Five Towns Hockey Championship

Hockey Champions

Team 6 won the 3-4th grade Five Towns 2010 Hockey Championship. L-R: Isaac Kotkes, Eli Deutsch, Ariel Berger, Yehuda Weiss, Ari Muehlgay, Yosef Somerstein, Zachary Perl, Scott Soifer and Coach Todd Soifer

ON THE Calendar

Parshat Pinchas

What was Tzafchad's sin?

Submit your shul or organization's events or shiurim to jscalendar@thejewishstar.com.
Deadline is Wednesday of the week prior to publication.

THE FRIEDBERG JCC, located at 15 Neil Court in Oceanside, will be hosting "Hollywood's Peter Pan: the Cinema of Steven Spielberg." Film Historian Philip Harwood will present an overview of the films of Spielberg will include Raiders of the Lost Arc, E.T., Schindler's List, and Jurassic Park. The event begins at 7:30. Cost is \$5 for members and \$6 for non-members. Light refreshments will be served.

sexual abuse and abduction prevention workshop.

Shiurim

Monday

SHIUR IN HALACHA followed by a Parsha shiur given by Rabbi Yaakov Feitman beginning at 9:00 PM at Kehillas Bais Yehuda Tzvi, 395 Oakland Ave., Cedarhurst.

Tuesday

SHIUR IN MAHARAL ON THE CHUMASH by Rabbi Eytan Feiner from 8:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. at Congregation Kneseth Israel, 728 Empire Ave., Far Rockaway.

PARSHA SHIUR by Rabbi Mordechai Sitorisky at 9:00 p.m. at Kehillas Bais Yehuda Tzvi, 395 Oakland Ave., Cedarhurst.

Thursday

VIDEO SIMULCASTS OF WEEKLY SHIURIM by Rabbi Eli Mansour and Rabbi Yissocher Frand at Kehillas Bais Yehuda Tzvi, 395 Oakland Ave., Cedarhurst. Rabbi Mansour at 7:45 p.m., Rabbi Frand at 9:00 p.m. Weekly chaburot: 10:15 p.m., Ta'amei HaMitzvos: 11:00 p.m., Ma'ariv: 11:15. Chulent served.

Daily

MEN'S TORAH STUDY KOLLEL PROGRAM with Rabbi Don Well, from 10-12 every morning at Congregation Bais Medrash of Cedarhurst, 504 West Broadway, corner Bayview Ave in Cedarhurst.

"Our father died in the desert" (27:3) claim the daughters of Tzafchad as they build their case to earn his portion in Canaan. Why would they use this as their opening statement when, after all, an entire generation died in the desert?

Chizkuni's quick solution is that Tzafchad was under twenty at the time of the spies incident and was not supposed to die on account of that decree and thus died from some other sin.

In the same verse, his daughters continue, "He was not among the members of Korach's party who protested against G-d, but he died because of his own sin..." This claim could imply that the Korach rebellion either coincided with or preceded his death. Had he died before Korach, they would have said he "was not part of a previous group who had sinned" — such as the spies.



Rabbi Avi Billet

Furthermore, it would stand to reason that the deed for which he was punished was an objectively innocent one, as opposed to a deliberate and purposeful direct affront to G-d. Were he a real sinner, could his daughters use his sin as leverage to grant them their father's inheritance? Can you imagine Datan's and Aviram's children saying "Our fathers died — but we want their inheritance?"

So what was his sin?

Rashi quotes the Gemara Shabbat 96b-97a and Sifrei 113 which record the opinion of Rabbi Akiva that Tzafchad was the wood gatherer of Bamidbar 15:33 who was stoned for deliberately violating Shabbat in public. Since his daughters say "Our father died in the desert" and the Torah there says "When the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood" the two stories are equated.

Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira is troubled with Rabbi Akiva's attempt to identify the wood-gatherer when the Torah deliberately left him anonymous. How could this crime be pinned on Tzafchad? He suggests Tzafchad was one of the Ma'apilim, who tried to invade and conquer the land in the immediate aftermath of the spies, after the generation was told they'd die in the desert.

Many commentaries suggest he had a private sin, one in which he did not cause others to follow his lead.

The Zohar on Parshat Balak (Volume 3, page 205) uses a number of hints and nuances to create a different picture.

Tzafchad was a leader — a "rav" (not a rabbi) — but he was not eligible to be a prince of his tribe because he was an "am haaretz" — not knowledge-

able in Torah. When the Torah tells us "An 'am rav' died" on account of the snake bites in Parshat Chukat, it refers to an individual "am haaretz" who was a "rav" in his Israelite family.

When his daughters said, "Our father died 'bamidbar' — in the desert" the word "bamidbar" could be read to mean "b'dibbur" — on account of his speech, or complaints.

Taking nothing for granted, the Zohar offers a final proof, noting that the cantillation mark on the word "avinu" — our father — is a serpent-shaped zarka, which indicates that 'our father' was the lone person to die from a serpent bite in that incident.

The snakes were sent because those with gripes about manna spoke ill of G-d and Moshe. Objectively speaking, complaining is not necessarily sinning, because many complaints in the Torah do not result in punishment. It is compelling to suggest only one person died, as four verses earlier when the Canaanites took prisoners-of-war, commentaries say they only took one maidservant captive. Furthermore, unlike in other cases of plague where corpses are left behind for the counting (as opposed to when they're swallowed by the ground ala Korach and company), we are given a tally of the dead. With the snakes, we are not given a number — which points to it being a small number such as "one."

After telling Rabbi Akiva it is unfair to pin a sin on Tzafchad, Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira does so himself, effectively ignoring that part of his own argument. The Torah gives us a number of examples of anonymous individuals who sinned — they remain so because their sin is not worthy to gain them infamy.

But in the case of Tzafchad, the Torah retroactively pardons him and allows his daughters to inherit his property? Why?

There are times when people deliberately sin and give every indication of their inherent evil. And there are times when people make mistakes: something bugs them, and they take it to an extreme.

Rabbi Akiva takes a person who violates a fundamental tenet of the Torah and gives him a pardon through his daughters. Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira takes one individual out of a group of many, and focuses on him to say he alone deserves to live on in perpetuity, despite the fact that he was part of a group.

The Zohar argues that he acted alone, did not involve others, was not objectively rebelling against G-d, and he was punished on the spot for his mistake. But that does not mean that his name needs to be driven through the mud, forgotten and punished forever. Sometimes death is indeed a "kapparah" (a source of forgiveness for the soul), which allows the family to move on, while still being accepted and generally involved in the community.

August 13

Camp Chaverim

THE FRIEDBERG JCC, located at 15 Neil Court in Oceanside, will be holding Camp Chaverim, a summer camp experience focusing on socialization and life skills building for children between 10-13 with special needs. For more information call the JCC at 516-766-4341 or go online at www.friedbergjcc.org.

Sex offender registry

PARENTS FOR MEGAN'S LAW will actively email residents each time Suffolk and Nassau County Police departments release sex offender notifications for Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 sex offenders. The newly updated website allows users to register for alerts within specific zip codes throughout the entire state and maps the location of restraints. Call the helpline at 631-689-2672 for more information or register by logging on to www.parentsformeganslaw.org. Contact the helpline to schedule a

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Jewish 'flotilla' protests for Shalit's release

By Sergey Kadinsky

On the day before the fourth anniversary of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit's kidnapping by Hamas terrorists, Jewish leaders took their protest to sea, or at least to the East River, with a humanitarian flotilla of their own.

"We are the true Freedom Flotilla, addressing the real siege in Gaza," said Conference of Presidents Executive Vice Chairman Malcolm Hoenlein last Thursday. Standing at the bow of the Queen of Hearts excursion boat, Hoenlein joined some 200 participants who crowded onto two boats festooned with Israeli flags that sailed toward the United Nations' headquarters on the East Side. They were joined by smaller private vessels and supporters on shore.

"For four years he has suffered, not even the Red Cross can access him," said Hoenlein. Alongside Jewish leaders, the floating protest also received statements of support from Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, and French Deputy Consul Patrick Lechasseur. Shalit is also a French citizen.

"Gilad Shalit has been deprived of his basic human rights and should meet with the Red Cross," said Israel's ambassador to the UN, Gabriela Shalev. Echoing the packages that the self-described Gaza Freedom Flotilla carried, Hoenlein and Shalev handed a box to Rosemary Mackey, chief of external affairs for the American Red Cross. Inside were harmless items including food, fresh clothing, and glasses.

"We are deeply troubled when the International Red Cross is deprived of access to people like Gilad Shalit," said Mackey. "It is mandated under the Geneva Convention. We

will continue to raise this case."

While many passengers on board received short notice of the event they did not hesitate to participate.

"This is a real peaceful flotilla unlike the other one," said Fair Lawn, NJ resident Robin Stahl. "They won't even let the Red Cross visit him." Stahl found out about the flotilla by email.

Traveling with a group of Brandeis University students, junior Michelle Kuchinsky said that in contrast to the Gaza flotilla, the mood on this flotilla was all positive. "It's great that we used something used for hate and we use it for love," said Kuchinsky.

Following the speeches, performers Gershon Veroba, a Far Rockaway resident, and Ron Eliran led the crowd in song and chants of "Od Gilad Chai," to say that Gilad Shalit still lives. As the boats approached the United Nations headquarters, Coast Guard speedboats tailed the flotilla with machine gunners facing the protesters.

Among the non-Jewish participants on the boats, Rev. Michel Faulkner of the New Horizons Church in Harlem spoke of his religious commitment to Israel. "It is important that you know that the Christian community stands with Israel," said Faulkner. "We will pray, march, give, and go, and we will not be silent."

Among black clergy, the support is not universal. A week earlier, Rev. Herbert Daughtry of the House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn hosted the Gaza flotilla participants. Faulkner politely disagreed with Daughtry's stance. "We stood together on many issues, but we disagree here. This is a civil rights issue."

While the "peaceful flotilla" attracted a



Photos by Claudio Papapietro

Supporters of Gilad Shalit took part in an event to raise awareness of his continued captivity on Thursday, June 24, 2010. They rode a pair of boats from the West Side up the East River to the United Nations. Right, Malcolm Hoenlein, center, of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations speaks, on the Queen of Hearts excursion boat.



small crowd of news reporters, some participants felt that in a city with as many Jews as New York, more people should have attended.

"American Jewry should be more aggres-

sive and involved," said Upper East Side resident Yuliy Tartakovsky. "They should work for Gilad Shalit as hard they did for Soviet Jews."



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Looking for a place to study in Far Rockaway?

By Malka Eisenberg

A new seminary will be opening this fall in Far Rockaway.

"People are very, very excited," explained Rebbetzin Aviva Feiner, who will lead the seminary and whose husband, Rabbi Eytan Feiner, is the rav of the White Shul. "We are filling a big need."

The idea for the seminary, Machon Basya Rochel, came about when local parents spoke to Feiner about creating a place where girls could continue their Judaic studies after high school.

"Not every girl can go to Eretz Yisrael, or afford to," said Feiner. Furthermore, Feiner added, girls who spent a year in Israel and wanted to continue learning were "shipping themselves to Brooklyn" to find learning opportunities. "We have enough of a kehilla here," said Feiner.

The seminary will be run by Feiner who will be the menahelet and Debra Green, a Far Rockaway resident and the former Director of Israel Guidance for girls at HAFTR, will be the mechaneches. Feiner herself has taught at a number of seminaries in Israel and co-founded and taught at Chochmas Nashim, a post-seminary learning program in Jerusalem.

The classes will be held in the White Shul. Classes will cover a range of topics including halacha, Tanach and hashkafa and will be taught by Feiner, her husband, Mrs. Elisheva Liss, Rabbi Dovid Weinberger and other lecturers.

"The classes will be at a challenging level to stimulate the [girls] intellectually and inspire them," said Feiner.

Feiner expects a wide range of students from the New York and New Jersey area to attend the seminary's first year. More than 10 girls have interviewed so far and 40 girls attended a gathering for the seminary last week. Feiner is planning on spending the summer interviewing potential students.

"We are not looking for a specific type of girl," explained Feiner, but student should be "committed to Torah, and shmirat hamitzvot (observant of the commandments) looking to be inspired and grow bderech haTorah (path of the Torah) and avodat Hashem."

Exams and papers are only required if the girls want credit for college. In the seminary's first year it will not offer any degrees, though Feiner said, the seminary plans to eventually be able to offer a secular degree.

Feiner said that many adults approached her asking to attend.

"We hope to create programming for any age group, but at this point we can't," Feiner explained. The seminary does have plans to have occasional classes for the community at large.

Machon Basya Rochel will run four mornings a week, Monday through Thursday, from 9:30-12:30 p.m.. Girls who have a year of seminary behind them have the option to do a two-day a week program. For more information email MBRseminary@gmail.com or call 718-355-8900.



Touro at Madison Square Garden

Touro College students from all seven Touro graduate schools received master's degrees or advanced bilingual certificates at commencement ceremonies on Thursday, June 10th, in The Theatre at Madison Square Garden. Pictured from left to right are: Dean of the Graduate School of Technology Dr. Isaac Herskowitz; Senior Vice President for College Affairs Rabbi Moshe Krupka; Dean of the Graduate School of Psychology and School of Health Sciences Dr. Louis Primavera; Dean of the Graduate School of Education Dr. Lamar Miller; Dean of the Graduate School of Business Dr. Michael Williams; Dean of the Graduate School of Jewish Studies Dr. Michael Shmidman; President and CEO of Touro College and Touro University Dr. Alan Kadish; Vice President of the Division of Graduate Studies Dr. Anthony J. Polemeni; Dean of the Graduate School of Social Work Dr. Steven Huberman; Vice President for Planning and Assessment and Dean of Students of Lander College of Arts & Sciences Robert Goldschmidt; and Vice President of Undergraduate Education and Dean of Faculties Dr. Stanley Boylan.

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Ask Aviva

By Aviva Rizel

My family and I deeply mourn the tragic passing of Naama Markovits, a"h. May her strong, giving, beautiful family be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem. May they never see loss again.

- Aviva

Dear Aviva,

I am stuck in the middle of my divorced parents. No, I'm not 16-years-old— more like double that. I have my own life and my own kids, but I am somehow caught in between my parents.

They got divorced soon after I had my second baby. I thought that we could all be adults about everything, since we are adults. Instead, I feel like a child being pulled from both directions.

My mother is happily remarried and my father is single and bitter as anything. I have a relationship with both of them, but I have to hide my relationship with my mother from my father. He badmouths her all the time (even in front of my kids!). He makes me feel so guilty for getting together with her. I don't tell him when I get together with her, but sometimes I have to, like if he wants to come over when she is visiting me. Lately, I am anxious when I am with her because I am scared that he will call me and hear her voice in the background.

Sometimes he even has me relay messages from him to my mother's relatives. They really don't want to hear from him and I hate

being stuck in this position. Doesn't he get it?

Why am I more adult than my father? What am I supposed to do?

-Pawn

Dear Pawn,

Ah, there's nothing like unhealthy parents seeping into your emotional well being...

Actually, I put that wrong. Your mother doesn't sound unhealthy. Your father is quite a case, though.

I don't think it would help if you said something to your father like, "Mom is my parent, just as you are my parent. I get together with her, I get together with you. Respect her as she respects you."

Logic doesn't really do it for illogical people, especially the emotionally childish kind. But it can't hurt to try to calmly be logical with him. If that doesn't work, try something that is more effective.

Like what, you ask? I say obedience school is the way to go. You be your dad's trainer.

You don't have to start your own training academy, just work with him as things come up. You can choose to either go in with guns blazing or build on things.

If you want to stop things immediately, you will need to harden yourself. Every, I re-

Logic doesn't really do it for the illogical people, especially the emotionally childish kind. But it can't hurt.

peat, every time that your father makes you his pawn or even makes you feel slightly uncomfortable, you have to put your foot down. "I'm not giving that message for you. You can call mom's cousin yourself." Or, "Don't call mom that name in front of me."

If that doesn't stop things, you have to raise the flame. "I told you not to call mom that name in front of me. If you do that again, then I will have to end this conversation." And if he violates your rule, you be sure to end that conversation by leaving or hanging up the phone.

You must be very careful with this method because if you are not consistent, you will actually make it harder for him to change. If you are a bit of a softy, don't use this method because it doesn't pay to take the chance of inconsistency here.

Instead, you should pick one area where he is inappropriate and squelch it. Again, you must be consistent, but it will be easier because you are focusing on only one part of the problem. Another benefit of this method is that your father will not feel like he is under attack all the time, as he may feel with the first method.

So here it is: Let's say the first thing you are trying to stop is inappropriate comments

in front of your kids. He says something and you say, "Please don't talk like that in front of my kids." You say that every time. If he continues the behavior, give him one warning that you have to leave if he says that again in front of the kids. Then leave if necessary. During this training period, it would be wise not to get together in your house. This will avoid having to kick him out of your house. It's a lot easier to just get up and leave than to actually send your father out of your home.

Once your father has mastered keeping his big mouth shut around his grandkids, it's time to step up the training. You will have him generalize his new skill to keeping his mouth shut around you. You can either just throw yourself into the training, or you can tell him that just like it's harmful for your kids to hear the negativity, it is harmful for you to hear the negativity. Then continue consistently helping him master the skill and generalize it further.

It would be helpful to practice your lines on your husband or in front of the mirror. Gain confidence because if you are unsteady, your father will pick up on that. We want him to take the training seriously.

Hold a tight leash, open your mouth when you need to, and enjoy your parents again.

-Aviva

Aviva Rizel has received her Master's in marriage and family therapy from Hofstra University and sees couples, families and individuals. She can be reached at avivarizel.mft@gmail.com.

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The Trials of the Jews

With the recent verdict in the Rubashkin case, trials are yet again big news among Jews. However, trials are nothing new nor unique in the annals of our history and the miscarriages of justice is a repeating motif for us. Rubashkin's case serves as an opportunity for us to look back in time and to learn from the not-too-distant past what an unjust act by state power can mean to a community.



Alan Jay Gerber

Recently, a new biography appeared by Ruth Harris, entitled, "Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion, and the Scandal of the Century" (Metropolitan Books 2010). The work deals with one of the most egregious examples of state-sponsored criminal behavior cloaked in the righteous garb of the judicial system.

In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus was the only Jew on the general staff of the French military. Due to the anti-Semitic tenor of that era, he was subject to a false charge of treason. The resulting trial unleashed a torrent of bigotry that haunted French society and French history for the next century.

Harris' extensively researched volume goes a long way to demonstrate the depth of hatred that enveloped the French military establishment to its core. The accomplices to the false accusation leveled at Dreyfus included many distinguished members of the press, the intellectuals, and major sectors of the political establishment.

Previous biographies have played down Dreyfus's Jewish identity and for the past century this impression was given almost divine sanction. While no great religiously devout Jew,

The Dreyfus Affair occurred on the cusp of the 20th century. In retrospect, the event served as a harbinger.

Harris brings out that both Dreyfus and family were indeed proud of their faith and never denied their adherence to it.

Consider the following: "On 30 December 1894 — only days after Alfred's conviction — she [his wife] went with the Dreyfus clan to the synagogue on the first anniversary, or Yahrzeit, of Alfred's father's death and recited the Kaddish, the prayer of mourning for their lost father. Their sense of loss was expressed in Jewish terms. Dreyfus himself admitted in a letter to Lucie that he wept without restraint in thinking about it. The family's private culture was still marked by Jewish practice, no matter how attenuated."

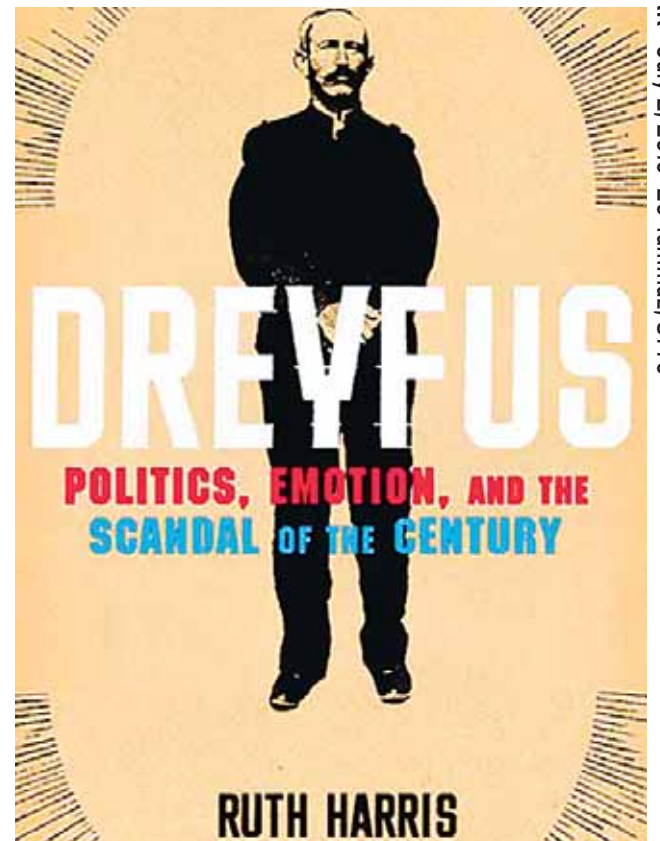
This Jewish religious factor runs throughout this well-written book and gives the whole tragedy of the Dreyfus Affair a legitimate page in the annals of Jewish history. The horrid events of the Dreyfus Affair were

also witnessed by an assimilated Austrian Jewish journalist, Theodore Herzl, and became the inspiration for his founding the World Zionist Organization, an act that led directly to the founding of the State of Israel.

Thus we see that the lessons of our history serve to teach us that events do not occur by accident. While not understood nor appreciated in the immediacy of time, events do have consequences.

The Dreyfus Affair occurred on the cusp of the 20th century. In retrospect, the event served as a harbinger for what was to play out 40 years later: the near total destruction of the Jewish population on the European continent.

What the Rubashkin verdict will mean to us has yet to play out in the days ahead. Is there a thematic link between Dreyfus and Rubashkin? I do not know for certain. There are qualitative differences in the crimes alleged and in the socio-



logical dynamics at work that we must remember. However, my dear readers, consider this: the very day the verdict in the Rubashkin case was handed down was the very day of Alfred Dreyfus's 75th Yahrzeit.

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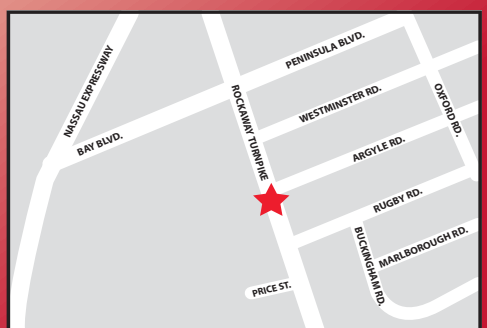
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Book interview

Q & A with Jonathan Tropper

By Michael Orbach

Jonathan Tropper is the best-selling author of "This is Where I Leave You" (Dutton), which might be the funniest depiction of a shiva in the history of American literature. He is currently adapting the book for Warner Brothers. Tropper is the author of four other novels and lives with his family in Westchester.

Michael Orbach: What was the inspiration behind the book?

Jonathan Tropper: When I set out to write, I actually wasn't writing about shiva. I wanted to write about a man who was stripped of all the things that make him a man — his wife, his job, his home — and how he has to figure out what it is that defines him as a man. I wrote a chapter about hundred or so pages in where he goes home for his father's 70th birthday party and we meet his mother and all his siblings. For whatever reason, that's when the book finally came alive for me. So I decided to change the book and make it about the family. Then, I had to come up with a way to keep this character at his parents' home for an extended stay, because what would keep this whole group of angry adult siblings together for more than a few hours? So I came up with the idea of a shiva, almost as a plot device.

MO: Do you see yourself as a Jewish writer?

JT: No, not at all. It's funny, this is my fifth novel; the first four have nothing Jewish in them. Starting out, I was somewhat naively worried about being pigeonholed as a Jewish writer. But at some point you have to write about what you know and what works and you can't think about that anymore... You have to write about your range of experience, and as a New York Jew there's just too much rich material to ignore.

MO: What do you think shiva accomplishes?

JT: Well, I've never sat shiva, so this is just an observation, but to me, shiva seems to serve as a kind of buffer, a ritualized way of absorbing the shock of loss before you have to go and start living again. In some ways, the real grieving and mourning begins after the shiva. During the shiva, you're in this bubble. Once the crowd is gone and you go back to life then the hole will really be evident.

MO: How does having been raised in a Modern Orthodox home affect your fiction?

JT: I always say that being a part of any insular community is like living in a small town. It gives us a much greater insight in how people perceive others — that kind of

claustrophobic feeling of any Jewish community — the interconnectedness of everyone. I wrote my first novel, "The Book of Joe," about a small town. I didn't grow up in a small town, but I felt I had the experience by growing up in a Modern-Orthodox community.



Jonathan Tropper

MO: How does being Jewish affect your fiction?

JT: Having grown up going to Jewish day schools, those of us who emerge

intact emerge with a better work ethic. I can put in a longer day. I know so many writers who start at 10:00 and are done at 2:00. I think those of us who went to Jewish day schools think that's [silly]. Our day started in the morning and went till the evening. That probably helped the work ethic. Beyond that, I don't really know.

MO: In general, what's your day like?
 JT: I try to treat it like an office job. I'm at my desk by 8:30. I'll work on a novel till 1:00 or 2:00, take a break then spend the afternoon writing a screenplay. I like to have dinner with my kids. The greatest perk of doing this for a living is being able to be around for your family. If I was going to do this and work till 11:00 every night, I might as well be an investment banker. I feel very fortunate being able to be the dad at school plays and Little League games.

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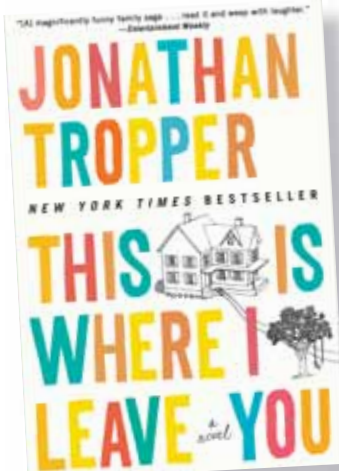
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Who turned out the lights in Gaza?

Israel has become the scapegoat for nearly all problems in the Muslim world. Certainly, Israel is the scapegoat for all problems Palestinian.

It's always: Why did Israel do that, or why didn't Israel do this. If Israel were not there, the regions would be so serene... The lives of Palestinians would be so much better... If Israel would only change policy, terrorism would be down... There would be peace in the Middle East.

I'M THINKING



Micah D. Halpern

What sounds like platitudes and wishful thinking is nothing more than veiled anti-Semitism. Blaming Israel is the excuse for Palestinian failures and ineptitudes. Holding Israel responsible is the way in which leaders of the greater Arab/Muslim world absolve themselves of all guilt, responsibility and shame.

A simple example of just how guileful the international cabal is in their hatred of Israel can be determined by examining the current electricity crisis in Gaza for which Israel is being blamed.

Here's the story: The original electricity agreement for Gaza was for the European Commission to pay Israel and for Israel to deliver electricity to Gaza. Israel is to provide 70% of Gaza's electricity, Egypt 5% and Gaza's own power plant the remaining 25%. After an initial trial period the European Commission chose to transfer all money and all responsibility to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority refuses to pay Israel for Gaza's electricity. Hamas is livid.

It is the PA that has turned off the lights - and air conditioning and ice makers and refrigeration in the 100 plus degree heat of the Gaza summer, not Israel. In response, anger and frustration, Hamas has begun publicly attacking Palestinian leadership. But the PA is not budging, they are keeping Gaza hot, bothered and in the dark. Adding figurative fuel to the flames is the fact that the actual fuel that runs the Gaza power plant is also imported from Israel and the PA is refusing to pay that cost, as well.

So why is there an electricity shortage in Gaza? Because of the staunch rivalry between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority ruling and running matters from Ramallah in the West Bank. A little power in the hands of Fatah-run Palestinian leadership is turning into a very dangerous tool.

Electricity in Gaza worked perfectly well all the while it was under the administration of the Europeans, but turned to a trickle as

soon as it came under the control of the Palestinians. So much for Europe's grasp of the Fatah/Hamas dynamic.

In general, it is almost unheard of for foreign aid organizations to blame the Palestinians for anything — for anything at all. But now, one lone and important voice has spoken out. The voice speaks out of frustration.

The following comes from the transcript of a press conference with John Ging, head of UNWRA, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency:

"It is such a tragedy that, on top of all the other crises that we have in the Gaza Strip, we now have a crisis of electricity," Ging said. "It's an unbearable situation here at the moment, and it needs to be solved very quickly. It's a Palestinian problem, made by Palestinians, and causing Palestinian suffering. So let's have a Palestinian solution."

John Ging realized that the entire electricity crisis in Gaza is Palestinian produced. It was not easy for Ging to concede that fact. It was not easy for the head of UNWRA to acknowledge that Gazans continue to suffer only because the PA hates Hamas.

UNWRA has been one of the outspoken leaders in anti-Israel attitude and behavior over the past decade. For UNWRA to go public against Palestinian infighting was a calculated decision, undoubtedly intended to embarrass the PA into changing policy

It is almost unheard of for foreign aid organizations to blame the Palestinians for anything – anything at all. But now one lone and important voice has spoken out. The voice speaks out of frustration.

and turning on electricity.

It is time for Palestinians to take responsibility for their mistakes, time for the world to hold them accountable. It is far too easy to cast blame and say simply that Israel and "the occupation" are the cause of all ills that befall the Palestinian people.

Micah D. Halpern is a columnist and a social and political commentator. Read his latest book THUGS. He maintains The Micah Report at www.micahhalpern.com.

The Five Towns Welcome



Richard Grazi, MD

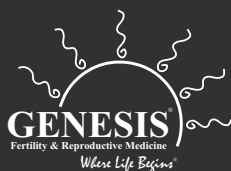


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Opinion

Editorial

Righteous indignation, rinse and repeat

It's sad that we keep falling into the same types of traps over and over and over again. Jewish history is replete with our innate inability to get along. Thousands of years ago, after Yehoshua bin Nun led us into Eretz Yisroel it wasn't long at all in the scheme of things before the nation became divided into two separate kingdoms, Yisrael and Yehuda. Unfortunately, that did not turn out well at all.

Yes, there are some things worth fighting over. There was a clear consensus in the frum world, or as close to consensus as you'd ever hope to get, that the seeming ordination of a female Orthodox rabbi was a bad thing. It was fought out, someone backed down, and that should have been it. Last Pesach is ancient history.

Therefore, an invitation to Rabba Sara Hurwitz, the first and likely the last person to hold that title, to speak in a local shul did not need to become World War III. If the rav of a shul decides that something is acceptable for his congregation within its four walls, and it's not illegal, immoral, or fattening, then others really ought to leave it alone. In fact, one local rav who habitually criticizes others from his pulpit hides behind that very doctrine each time he lobs a hand grenade into the public discourse: he only speaks for his kehilah, he explains; why should anyone be upset?

The problem is, however, that since some people both seem convinced they are G-d's Earthly Representatives, and lack any discernable sense of irony, we wind up with an episode of extreme intolerance toward others, plus vitriolic personal attacks, even as the Chofetz Chaim's anti-loshon horah banner flaps in the breeze. Or maybe it's twisting in the wind.

Cold war, old war: Obsolete spies

The FBI stunned the country this week when agents rolled up a ring of nearly a dozen deep cover Russian spies who had been living seemingly middle class,

suburban lives, mostly on the East Coast.

The investigation was underway for years, but the arrests were made quickly after one operative, known as Richard Murphy, seemed to be about to leave the country for good. Another, a 28-year-old woman known as Anne Chapman, who was described in the Daily News on Wednesday as "the spy who loved us," was grabbed as she realized that her cover was blown. Federal agents snapped the cuffs on right after she purchased a new, untapped cell phone to warn her bosses in Moscow.

Comparisons to Cold War-era spycraft and spy novels are obvious. The criminal complaint makes reference to coded recognition phrases, transmissions of short bursts of information, meetings at crowded rail stations, agents and handlers exchanging nearly identical bags — one packed with cash — as they brushed past one another, stacks of money buried upstate for other agents to dig up years later. One operative, a Yonkers woman, was actually a public figure — a newspaper columnist who wrote for the Spanish-language daily *El Diario*.

It's a truly fascinating story. But some of the luster fades when you realize that the whole thing was pointless. So much so that there have been no espionage charges filed so far — just accusations of money laundering and failing to register as agents of a foreign government, almost as if they were lobbyists. No deep, dark secrets were passed.

Why? Well, one reason might be that in 1998, several years after the ring was reportedly up and running, two college students formed a company called Google.

That's right. While James Bond might be timeless, the search for pedestrian, everyday information about the US of the sort these agents allegedly sought, no longer requires couples to assume new identities and even have children together as they pose as husband and wife. Because in 2010, it's all online.

Letters to the editor

Distorting McCarthy

To the Editor:

Representative Carolyn McCarthy has clarified her position on the flotilla. Howard Kopel is still playing politics and distorting McCarthy's record ("Letters to the editor"; June 25, 2010). Carolyn McCarthy was never "for the Gaza flotilla." That's an inexcusable and irresponsible smear of a leader who has always supported Israel since her election to the US House. Her record is spotless. She has supported every pro-Israel House resolution and she is a member of the Democratic Israel Working Group.

Those who continue to lambast McCarthy on this issue should think twice. They are attacking a seven-term incumbent who has won her last two elections with two-thirds majorities. This incumbent is from a party that is less inclined to support Israel as it has done in the past because of a growing anti-Israel constituency on its left flank. Carolyn McCarthy is a person with whom our community needs to work on a regular basis, and she deserves better than to be treated like this.

Your other letter writer insists that McCarthy support Peter King's America Stand with Israel Act. There is a reason why no Democrats and relatively few Republicans outside of the far-right-wing of the party support this bill. It is because it calls for full US withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, an act which sounds good in theory, but would cause the US a myriad of diplomatic problems. Perhaps you didn't notice, but AIPAC was politically savvy enough not to support this baldly partisan bill.

Bipartisan Congressional support is crucial to Israel's security. It continues to enjoy that support despite Republican attempts like Peter King's and Howard Kopel's irresponsible and short-sighted attempts to suggest otherwise. Let's make sure it stays that way.

Michael Brenner
Brooklyn

Mission irresponsible

To the Editor:

The recent story by JTA concerning a woman who claimed she was accosted by a chareidi Jew was irre-

sponsible and defaming ("Alleged attack sets off debate"; June 11, 2010). The woman had no credibility, no corroboration, and was a representative of Woman of the Wall whose entire raison d'être is to undermine Judaism as we know it these past few thousand years. This group comes to the Kotel every year and each time tries to provoke an incident. That the JTA editor can give this story credence and a headline is inimical to responsible journalism.

Of course there are irresponsible people in every group including the Orthodox, and in those cases the rabbis condemned any and all uncivil behavior. These individuals however do not listen to their rabbis or to anyone else.

Attempting to stereotype any group or religion because of the behavior of some of its members however smacks of bigotry and is unacceptable. This is true as well of Conservative Rabbi Skolnik who writes in the Jewish Week that Chareidi Jews spit and throw garbage at non-Orthodox Jews. Rabbi Skolnik has his own bigoted agenda.

Please be aware however that most of the largest charitable and self-help organizations throughout Israel were founded and are directed by chareidi Jews and they all service the entire Jewish population regardless of observance. For example, the chareidi founder and director of Ezer Mizion just received an honorary doctorate from Bar Ilan University, together with two Nobel Prize in Chemistry winners, for their achievements.

The organization services hundreds of thousands of ill, elderly and handicapped Israelis throughout the country with its 11,000 volunteers.

The Chareidi hospitals in Israel likewise service the entire population including Arabs and even have Arab doctors on their staff while the chareidi political parties are responsible members of the Knesset and governing coalition.

That the JTA can give the earlier story credence and a headline was unfortunate and whether it was due to bias or to sloppy journalism I should think they would know better.

Abraham Frank
Brooklyn

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The power of speech

Last week I referenced the ancient Canaanites and the Amalakitites and how they battled the children of Israel after their departure from Egypt. The editorial staff of The Jewish Star was immediately bombarded with e-mails from the ancient Moabites and Midianites demanding equal time. And because I never want to be accused of discrimination, this week I shall utilize this space to accommodate the two ancient nations.

It's no secret that the Moabites and Midianites hated one another. The only thing they could agree on was their mutual hatred of the Jew. What a unifying force we are.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH



David Seidemann

At any rate, Balak, the king of Moab, was intimidated by the Hebrew nation, especially after witnessing their victory over Sichon and the Amorites. Balak was no fool. He knew he couldn't wage conventional war against Israel alone. So he reached out to his enemy, in true "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" fashion. Sort of reminds me of the Middle East today.

Barak, excuse me, Balak reached out to Bilaam because he knew, as Rashi points out, that Moses, the leader of the Hebrews, grew up in Midian and that perhaps something about Moses' past in Midian would unlock the secret of the Jewish nation's downfall.

Balak realized that conventional warfare was not the secret to the Jewish nation's success either. He realized that the Jews were not the greatest tacticians or combat fighters. The Jewish nation's success was partially based on the way they used their power of speech for prayer and Torah study. So, Bilaam figured, any way to emerge victorious against the Jews must include an element of speech.

Balak hires a professional speaker, a real orator, a community organizer. We know what happened. No one curses the Jews unless G-d wants the Jews to be cursed. As long as the Jews excel in their speech, no spoken curse can spell doom.

As long as the Jews develop the best weaponry, the best soldiers, and the best use of their speech, no other nation can defeat them. Balak could not defeat us with his sword. Bilaam, try though he did, could not destroy the nation of Israel with his power of speech. And in a lesson to great orators

worldwide who wish to curse us or make it easier for others to curse us, the entire episode, culminating with the talking donkey, makes it clear that one great speech doesn't mean you're no longer a donkey.

If G-d could make a donkey that was born without the power of speech talk, surely he can silence those who can speak.

And so we must protect ourselves from the Balaks, Baraks and Bilaams of today and speak more vociferously than they do. We must be cautious of those politicians that come to our defense only after being called out.

But there is another dimension to all of this. I've noticed over the years that the summer months bring with them the relaxing of certain behavior. It's almost as if the looser the clothes the looser the lips. More free time gives us more access to our neighbors and the heightened ability to speak negatively about others. Truths become half-truths and half-truths become outright lies.

The donkey spoke the truth, yet remained a donkey. The donkey meant no evil, yet he remained a donkey. What we do to our status as humans when we speak falsehoods or hurtful things about our neighbors? If a donkey could speak, I would venture to say a donkey could laugh at us as well.

The temptation to speak evil and lash out is so great sometimes, yet when one is quiet the reward is manifold.

After 20 years of marriage a husband approached his rabbi and asked that the rabbi arrange a Get, a divorce, for him and his wife. The rabbi was astonished as he had known the couple for 20 years and never heard the man say anything negative about his wife.

"I'm shocked," said the rabbi. "Why haven't you said anything to me over the last 20 years?"

The congregant answered: "I couldn't speak evil about her, she is my wife."

The rabbi arranged the Get. After the proceedings had concluded, the rabbi turned to the man and said, "She is no longer your wife. Now, tell me what happened."

"I can't," replied the man. "She might no longer be my wife, but she is still a human being."

In the merit of watching what we say and how we say it, may we all enjoy a safe summer for us and each of our loved ones.

David Seidemann is a partner with the law firm of Seidemann & Mermelstein. He can be reached at (718) 692-1013 and at ds@lawofficesm.com

In a lesson to orators worldwide who wish to curse us, the entire episode makes it clear that one great speech doesn't mean you're not a donkey.

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That's life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

Brother, can you spare a quarter?

Dear That's Life,

My four-year-old son goes to get a haircut willingly because he knows there's a gumball or two in it for him at the other end.

On the Sunday before the three weeks when observant Jews refrain from cutting hair as a sign of mourning for the destroyed Temples in Jerusalem, the barbershop was crowded. As we waited, a man seated next to the gumball machine asked if I had a quarter for a gumball. For his child, presumably, and in exchange for two dimes and a nickel. I checked that I had enough quarters for my boys and said sure, but both assumptions turned out to be wrong. I laughed to myself when he popped the gumball into his own mouth, and laughed a little harder when he failed to offer change in return. I said nothing. A good laugh is worth 25 cents.

Later, while getting my hair cut, I saw him walk out of the shop and asked the barber about him. Why did I want to know? I told my story, then burst out laughing when he replied: "That guy and his brother own who knows how many businesses in Boro Park."

That would have been the end of the story had the man not walked back in, and had the barber, to my discomfort, not begun speaking to him, in Russian, apparently asking why he was schnorring change off other customers.

The man became upset, wanted to know why I said anything, and advised me to not be so cheap. He approached my chair and pulled out a fat roll of \$100 bills that he waved in my face, informing me that he had plenty of money but no change.

At that point, annoyed, and realizing that the man with no loose change clearly had a loose screw, I told him to get lost, but perhaps I should have said, "Do you have \$100 for a gumball?"

Mayer Fertig

Dear That's Life,

There have been times where I have wondered what it would be like to be someone else. It's not that I do not love or enjoy my life, because I do. But maybe live someone else's life for a little bit? Step into someone else's shoes? It actually sounds like fun. I cannot imagine someone feeling that way about stepping into my life, but being someone else for a little bit seems like an adventure, and I

like a challenge.

Maybe that is what the gentleman who I found sitting in the front seat of my car was thinking. I was in the dry cleaners picking up my clothing when I noticed someone in the driver's seat of my car that was not I, my husband or anyone else I knew. A complete stranger had put his dry cleaning in my car and then sat himself down in my seat. (And please do not ask me why my car was unlocked. That is not the point of the story and you know you don't lock your doors either when you are picking up your dry cleaning.)

It is possible he was not thinking about stepping into my life at all when he stepped into my car. He could have just been in a daze. We've all been out to lunch at some point — I've even tossed my wallet in the garbage. And he was pretty stunned when I mentioned to him that he was in my car, not his. In fact, at first he did not understand what I was saying.

"You're in my car," I said loudly, pointing to the license plate, only to receive a perplexed and blank stare in return. I said it again, now a little unsure that I was right because he was not moving, but reassured by the telltale Hatzalah placard in the front window, along with the numerous car seats. Yet, still, he did not move and I got closer to my car. "You are in my car!" I said one last time, at which point the gentleman jumped as if awaking from a dream and got out of the vehicle.

Totally embarrassed and profusely apologetic, my unexpected guest quickly opened a back door to remove his dry cleaning. His car was parked next to mine and while the two vehicles did not resemble each other, he simply had not been paying attention. He said he had noticed that the interior of the car was different and continued to babble nervously. Having to adjust the seat when he got into the car could have been a dead giveaway, but I guess that it just didn't register. I assured him, however, that no harm was done: his key would not have worked.

Whether he wanted to or not, this gentleman stepped right into my shoes that morning almost perfectly. In anyone else's life, this kind of thing would be out of the ordinary. In my world, however, it is just another day. Crazy follows me everywhere.

MLW

only simchas!

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