

# THE JEWISH STAR

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## 'Miracle' Torah comes home to Port Washington

By Sergey Kadinsky

If the newest Torah scroll in the ark at Chabad of Port Washington isn't a legend yet, just wait: it will be.

The 175-year-old Torah unexpectedly found its way into the hands of a descendant of its scribe, born 200 years later to the day. Sands Point resident Yosef (Jason) Shurka read from the scroll at his bar mitzvah celebration on Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, Sunday, June 13.

"This was a father's bar mitzvah gift to his son," said Rabbi Shalom Paltiel, director of Chabad of Port Washington. "Only after it arrived did they realize that it was written by the boy's great-great-great-grandfather."

Befitting a Gold Coast homecoming, the Torah was brought to its new home in a 1976 Cadillac convertible, followed by a caravan of Lexuses with horns blaring down Shore Road.

The welcome continued inside, with hakafot worthy of Simchat Torah, and a lavish dinner, as Menashe (Manny) Shurka, an imposing figure in a white suit, gathered his thoughts before telling the Torah scroll's unique story. Shurka is president of the New York division of Signature Investment Group, an firm specializing in real estate development.

Rabbi Paltiel recalled Jason's bar mitzvah in June, an outdoor affair on a sprawling lawn overlooking Long Island Sound.

"Tefillin, candles and Shabbat," he said, and then quoted Shurka: "I want my children to have a good American life, but to also remember something special. It was a bar mitzvah with camels, but the centerpiece was the Torah. My wife said that anyone who buys his son a Torah is worthy of a miracle."

*Continued on page 3*



## A taste of responsibility

Photo by Claudio Papapietro

Camp counselor Mark Kimmel-Weingarten, 20, left, with Alex Penello, 14, at Hillel Day Camp on July 22.

## At Kulanu, former campers become counselors

By Michael Orbach

Over 6-feet-tall and rail-thin, Mark Kimmel-Weingarten towered over the rest of the campers and counselors in the Kulanu summer program. His bangs were dyed orange and he wore a light blue Camp Hillel staff T-shirt and denim shorts. At the Pump It Up center off Washington Avenue in Cedarhurst, he ushered campers to the indoor jungle gym while

slyly flirting with a female counselor.

Kimmel-Weingarten, 20, is a junior counselor at the Kulanu summer program. Now in its 10th year, the day camp is part of the regular Kulanu school program that caters to special needs students. It operates as a camp-within-a-camp at the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway's Hillel Day Camp.

You'd never guess it, but a little less

than eight years ago, Kimmel-Weingarten was a poorly behaved student at the Kulanu school. He and the three other junior counselors are all former special needs-students — now helping out with campers that could have been them.

"The lines are blurred here," said Jonathan Cooper, the silver-haired head of the Kulanu summer program, as he watched the roughly two-dozen campers

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Shabbat Candlelighting: 7:54 p.m. Shabbat ends 8:58 p.m. 72 minute zman 9:24 p.m. Torah Reading Parshat Ekev Zman Kriat Shma 8:36 (Magen Avrohom) and 9:25 (GRA & Ba'al Tanya)

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# A taste of responsibility

Continued from page 1

carousing on an inflatable playground. Cooper came up with the idea of the junior counselors last summer after fielding calls from parents of former Kulanu students whose children who were too old to go attend day camp.

"I wanted kids to learn the value of responsibility," Cooper explained. "A way to introduce them to work. I didn't know what these kids would do all summer and a regular camp wouldn't hold them. I feel responsible."

Cooper had been involved with Kimmel-Weingarten since he was eight. At 13, Kimmel-Weingarten left Kulanu after exhausting a series of other local special schools. Most school days, he remembered, he didn't bother showing up to class and when he did, he'd usually sleep through most of them or make it his business to make certain that nothing was taught.

"He's been searching for meaning," Cooper said about Kimmel-Weingarten. "He's had a lot of difficulties."

Kimmel-Weingarten enrolled as a boarding student in Summit High School in Nyack and officially graduated this past year. He hopes to be accepted to a kosher culinary school and become a professional chef, though since he's good with his hands he's also thinking about becoming a carpenter. Relaxed and confident, Kimmel-Weingarten showed no lingering sign of the child he claimed to be.

Kimmel-Weingarten's mother had approached Cooper for something for her son to do during the summer months. Cooper gave Kimmel-Weingarten an interview and hired him on the spot.

"He knows kids," Cooper said. "He's well on his way to becoming a productive member of society. He has energy and focus and I love that he's making friends. I can count on him."

Later in the day, when a young female camper, a tiny brunette with pink sunglasses, wandered away, Kimmel-Weingarten carried her back in his arms.

"It teaches you patience," Kimmel-Weingarten said about the job. "If you want to be a lawyer or doctor, you have to have patience. It'll help you out."

Its high-spirited de-facto head counselor, Aharon Weinstein, whose brother is also a ju-



Photo by Claudio Papapietro

Camp counselor Aharon Weinstein, 20, left, Eli Jamour, 17, center, and lifeguard Eliezer Seidenfeld, 21, joke around at Hillel Day Camp on July 22, 2010.

nior counselor, generates part of the bunk's energy.

"We give them what they can handle and then we push them," he explained about the junior counselors. "You can't be a camper your entire life."

The junior counselors usually work in the older division of the Kulanu program where they help out with special needs children above the age of 12; occasionally they also help with the younger division. The junior counselors also assist with the miscellanies of camp life: setting up meals, running activities and making sure campers don't lose their belongings.

The job gives the junior counselors a light

sense of the working world, Cooper feels. A good example occurred when he assigned two junior counselors to set up the lunch at the camp, and one declined. Cooper reminded the young man that he was "being paid to work" and didn't have a choice in the matter.

Most of the junior counselors don't find the job too challenging.

"It's not so hard," said Ilan Liechtung, 21. A Kulanu graduate, Ilan works as a dog groomer in a local veterinarian's office. He keeps pictures on his BlackBerry of some of the dogs he's groomed. His most recent patient was his own dog, Sam, a Golden Doodle, a cross between a golden retriever and

a poodle.

When asked about campers who give him trouble, he declined to discuss it.

"That would be lashon hora," he explained.

"Ilan Liechtung is a fantastic person," Cooper explained. "I'd trust him with any kid. He follows orders and picks up what counselors don't. He's a great asset to our program."

For Yigal Rosengarten, 19, who is taking classes at Nassau Community College and graduated HAFTR High School two years ago as part of the Kulanu program, working in the bunk is a chance to do something positive for the program that helped him through high school.

"I like to give back to the program," he said. This is his second year as a junior counselor, and he is having a better time than he did the year before, he said. "I know a lot more and I can offer more to the other counselors," he said, adding quickly, "I also make more money."

He wasn't too fond of high school.

"I didn't care much for it," he deadpanned. "I just didn't think that what's important in high school, doesn't apply to the real world: being cool, drinking, [being a] jock. I found people in Kulanu to be more interesting — learning about their disabilities. I am somewhat of a mentor."

For kids who have been pigeonholed with a disorder the camp is part work and part boys' club. During their break, two junior counselors played on a Nintendo Wii that was connected to a small television set in the classroom. On the whiteboard was a list of possible trip destinations: Hot Skates, Flushing Meadow Park, and Tanglewood Preserve. The counselors then had an impromptu drawing contest that no one won. Ilan drew two Aztek faces; another counselor drew a super hero ("Fat Man"). Kimmel-Weingarten declined to play, explaining that he was more of a "popsicle artist," as he tried to get the rest of the counselors and campers involved in an art project that happened to involve popsicle sticks. Midway through the art project, Gerry Hanson, the head of the program and a Kulanu teacher, brought in the sign-up sheet and informed the counselors that they needed to sign in if they wanted to get paid.



Photo courtesy Chabad of Port Washington

Purchased as a bar mitzvah gift, this Persian Torah scroll was part of a family's unknown past.

## 'Miracle' Torah comes home

Continued from page 1

Picking up the story, Shurka said that out of respect for his wife Marcy, he sought to purchase an antique Yemenite scroll. A Torah was located and found to be kosher, but then an expert determined that it was actually written in Persia, and by two different people. In the midst of Sefer Bamidbar, the handwriting changed.

Shurka solved that mystery when he sought to wind the Torah tightly to fit into the case he acquired. On the back of the Torah he found a scrawled inscription: "Rabbi David Kalazan, son of Yosef, born on the 21st day of Sivan in the year 5557 and Rabbi Yosef Kalazan, son of David, born on the 21st day of Sivan in the year 5580, wrote this."

The original scribe had died, leaving his son to pick up the task. And the scribe seemed to be family: the name Kalazan sounded much like Marcy's maiden name, Galazan.

Taking an interest worthy of a genealogist and historian rolled in one, Shurka tracked down distant relatives to ultimately plot a direct connection between the scribe and his son. "The first rabbi [scribe] died on Parshat Pinchas, and my son's bar mitzvah is on Parshat Pinchas," Shurka said.

In Jerusalem, he found the former home of his wife's grandfather Itzhak Kalazan, and his grave on Har Hame-nuchot. Kalazan had passed the Torah to ritual slaughterer

Zechariah Cohen, who made aliyah with the scroll in 1950. It passed through two more owners before its purchase by Shurka brought it back into the family.

The scroll needed a case, and Torah merchant Nir Garmi provided him with a 400-year-old wooden case. "We discovered a whole new family," said Shurka. "Most of them were our friends, but now we know them as our new cousins."

Garmi turned out to be a distant cousin of his wife, and her Yemenite family turned out to have had Persian roots under the name Kalazian, which gradually morphed into the Yemenite Kalazan, and the Israeli Galazan.

"My wife is of Persian descent, just like me," said Shurka. "That is the best of all."

Similar to a play, all the actors gathered at the end, including the Torah vendor, newly discovered cousins, and the bar mitzvah boy, all dancing around the Torah, as cameras recording the dancing.

Rabbi Paltiel called the celebration worthy, because the miracle behind the scroll's story is clear.

"It was hailed as the miracle of Port Washington," said Rabbi Paltiel. "The hand of G-d is so hidden, and this is a breath of fresh air."

## HAFTR students make a museum

# Generations to Generations showcases family history

By Sergey Kadinsky

Third graders at the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway (HAFTR) ended the term in a museum, quite literally. As part of the Generations to Generations project, each student picked a prized family object and created a mock museum display around it.

"We've had a megillah that's over 100 years old, a ticket to Ellis Island, an army uniform, and much more," said Tova Zucker, director of special programs at HAFTR. "They connect with their past and see that their household is a part of history."

The program takes its cue from the Museum of Jewish Heritage in downtown Manhattan and each display is accompanied by sketches, essays, and presentations about what the project means to the student.

"They take a specific moment in time and reflect on the past," said Lawrence resident Joseph Fein whose daughter, Halli, presented an aron kodesh that her family used in its travels. "It's a celebration of family."

Stacey Zrihen, herself an alumna of HAFTR, had her daughter, Emily, examine her family's Moroccan side. "We have a newborn clothing bag that's been in my husband's family for 100 years," said Zrihen.

Each object has a label written in the style

of a museum label. Rebecca Wenger's framed display of a gold-plated locket from pre-war Poland is accompanied by photographs of the locket's original owner, Rebecca's great-aunt and namesake.

**'They take a moment in time and reflect on the past,' said a parent.**

"She was special and played an important role in my husband's family," said Cindy Wenger, Rebecca's mother.

Incorporating a number of classes, the students practiced Hebrew on the labels, art by drawing copies of their old family photographs, and acting skills in a play that accompanied the exhibit.

At the June 9 viewing of the project, parents and grandparents expressed pride in the quality of the displays.

"It's very professionally done and the kids feel it is special," said Zrihen. "You feel like you're in the wing of a museum."

Rena Mosak, HAFTR's art teacher who worked on the Generations to Generations project, said that the impact of the project is still there long after the objects were taken home. A number of parents, she said, reinstalled the displays on the walls of their own houses. "This project connected emotionally and artistically," Mosak said.

One of the students displayed his grandfather's medals from the Second World War. "The grandfather was saluting the picture on display," Mosak said.



Photo courtesy of HAFTR

A display at the Generations to Generations exhibit at HAFTR. Students chose family mementos and created exhibits around them.



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ADL report:

# Anti-Semitic activity in NY still high

BY Sergey Kadinsky

The number of anti-Semitic incidents has remained high in New York over 2009, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

"Physical assaults against Jews, a thwarted synagogue bomb plot, and the arrest of a Brooklyn livery driver who distributed 'Kill Jews' fliers are reminders that Jews in New York continue to be targeted by anti-Semitic violence and harassment," said Ron Meier, the ADL's New York Regional Director. "Constant vigilance and education is a must."

New York had 209 incidents in 2009, the second highest number among states, after California. In 2008, 207 incidents were recorded. The data was compiled from official crime statistics, as well as information evaluated by the ADL. Incidents include not only crimes, but also non-criminal acts of harassment and intimidation, which include distribution of hate literature, threats and slurs.

In the report, the ADL documented acts such as a playground attack on an 11-year-old Jewish girl in a public playground by a gang of African-American teens, and a man wearing a yarmulke struck by a thrown brick.

Both attacks took place in Brooklyn, which counted 51 anti-Semitic incidents for 2009, the largest number in the metropolitan area. Nassau County had 47 incidents; Queens had 17, and Manhattan had 49.

"Overall, New York provides a very good environment for Jews," said Jeffrey M. Parker, ADL's New York Regional Chair. "Yet there are still instances of Jews being attacked simply because they are Jewish. Even one such incident is one too many and has a ripple effect on the community."

A special section of the report singles out the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC), a small family-run group based in Topeka, Kansas. Best known for its incendiary anti-gay protests, the group paid a visit to New York City in June 2009, standing outside local synagogues and yeshivas with signs that accused Jews of murdering Jesus.

The ADL reports that alongside protests, the church also sent numerous faxes and e-mails with anti-Semitic and anti-gay messages to local Jewish institutions and individuals.

While the ADL report did not devote a similar section to leftist and Muslim anti-Semitism, spokeswoman Myrna Shinbaum

## 2009 Anti-Semitic incidents by region

Brooklyn	51
Manhattan	49
Queens	17
Bronx	8
Staten Island	7
Westchester & Upstate	16
Nassau	47
Suffolk	14

**N.Y. had 209 incidents, second highest number behind California**

said that the organization is monitoring a number of local extremist groups, including the Queens-based Islamic Thinkers Society, and the Revolution Muslim website, the latter of which achieved national attention when it threatened the creators of the South Park television show.

The website's previous administrator was Yousef al-Khattab, a Jewish convert to Islam, who relocated to Morocco this past December. Though he no longer runs the website, on his personal blog, the former Queens resident expressed support in June for Hamas as "the best example of how to establish an Islamic State in our times."

"He lists ways Jews could be hurt, including by burning 'their flammable sukkos while

they sleep' and throwing 'liquid drain cleaner in their faces,'" said Shinbaum.

Shinbaum said that the ADL also monitors anti-Israel protests, recording signs that carry a message beyond mere criticism of Israeli policy. In a January 3, 2009 rally in Times Square, the ADL documented signs describing Israel as a "Fourth Reich," perpetrating its own Holocaust, and chants recalling Khaybar, a battle mentioned in the Koran where Muhammad ordered the slaughter of a defeated Arab Jewish community.

Shinbaum said that New York faces a growing threat of Muslim extremism, which is a combination of "radical interpretations of Islam," and a hatred for Jews.

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# July 29

## Candidates forum

TEMPLE HILLEL, located at 1000 Rosedale Road in North Woodmere in New York, will be hosting a candidates forum to discuss foreign policy options regarding the State of Israel. The opening speaker is journalist and blogger Pamela Geller. Senatorial candidates Gary Berntsen and Bruce Blakeman as well as Congressional candidates Dan Maloney, Dr. James Milano, Liz Berney, Frank Scaturro and Francis Baker will be present. The event begins at 8:00 p.m.

## Bypassing a bypass

THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF GREAT NECK, located at 236 Middle Neck Road in Great Neck will be holding the first of its series of local medical expert specialists. The doctor will present an entertaining and enlightening presentation on a particular topic and then you may ask questions about the topic, or whatever you wish! All for the (suggested) "copay" of \$10 that goes to the Young Israel. Dr. Meyer Abittan, an Interventional Cardiologist, St. Francis Hospital, will speak about "Bypassing the Bypass - how you can avoid seeing me!" at 8 p.m.

# August 1

## Torah Tour of the Bronx

JOIN RABBI NATAN SLIFKIN, the world-famous "Zoo Rabbi," author of The Challenge of Creation, Sacred Monsters, and Nature's Song, as he gives a tour of the Bronx zoo.

The Torah Tour of the Bronx Zoo is for adults and older children and begins at 10am - 1pm. Price: Adults \$20, Children \$15, Price does not include zoo admission. For registration (required) email: zoorabbi@zootorah.com Limited number of spaces available.

# 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.

# ON THE Calendar

Submit your shul or organization's events or shiurim to [jscalendar@thejewishstar.com](mailto:jscalendar@thejewishstar.com). Deadline is Wednesday of the week prior to publication.



Photo courtesy of HAFTR

Campers at Hillel Day Camp collected canned goods and supplies for the JCC of the Five Towns Kol Ditzrich Food Pantry. Bunk 2G1 (above) collected the most.

# August 4

## Bake Sale

CAMP NAGELA counselors will be holding a bake sale to raise tuition money for public school children who want to attend yeshiva. The sale will be held at the home of Moshe and Jeannette Lamm, 634 Oak Drive in Far Rockaway. On August 4, the sale will be from 5-9 p.m. and on August 5 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

# August 5

## Maintaining memory

THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF GREAT NECK, located at 236 Middle Neck Road in Great Neck will be holding the second of its series of local medical expert specialists. Dr. Alan A. Mazurek, assistant clinical professor of Neurology at Mount Sinai Hospital will speak on the topic of "Use it or lose it! Maintaining Memory and Preventing Alzheimer's Disease." The class begins at 8 p.m. A \$10 "copay"

is suggested.

# August 12

## Medical lecture

THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF GREAT NECK, located at 236 Middle Neck Road in Great Neck will be holding the final session of its series of local medical expert specialists. Dr. Charles Libby of North Shore University Hospital will speak on "Everything you wanted to know about Erectile Dysfunction and your prostate (but were afraid to ask)." The class begins at 8 p.m. A \$10 "copay" is suggested.

# August 17

## Concert on the lawn

THE HELLER RESOURCE CENTER OF THE YESHIVA OF SOUTH SHORE presents its Seventh Annual Tom and Judy Raskin Concert on the Lawn, The Event of the Season, on Tuesday, August 17, 2010 7:00 pm, at the home of Yehudah and Beth Honig,

61 Muriel Avenue, Lawrence. Entertainment will be provided by Dovid Gabay with the music of Even AI Orchestra. A grand BBQ buffet by Scott Fagan of Oasis Caterers will round out the evening. To make your reservation call 516-374-7363 or [www.concertonthelawn.com](http://www.concertonthelawn.com).

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For more information and to register for the retreat, you are welcome to visit [Jretreat.com](http://Jretreat.com) or call 1-877-jretreat (573-8732).

# August 18

## A taste of Israel

Generation Next, the young leadership division of American Friends of Beit Issie Shapiro will hold its third annual "Taste of Israel" wine tasting event at Eden Gallery, located at 437 Madison Avenue in New York City.

Founded in 1981, Beit Issie Shaprio is a center in Ra'anana, Israel that works with children and adults with special needs. Beit Issie Shapiro provides state of the art therapy for individuals with developmental disabilities, and training and support for their families. For more information call (212)586-2464 or email [eric@afobis.org](mailto:eric@afobis.org).

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# New approach to keep gays in Orthodox fold

By Michael Orbach

A 'hate the sin, love the sinner'-style code of conduct to guide the frum community's treatment of homosexuality has been authored by several dozen Modern Orthodox rabbis and professionals and released online. It attempts to strike a balance between a strict halachic reality that utterly forbids homosexual acts, and compassion for Jewish gays living otherwise halachic lives.

Written mainly by Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the guide was revised over a period of months with the "help of dozens of talmidei chachamim, educators, communal rabbis, mental health professionals and a number of individuals in our community who are homosexual in orientation," it says. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein of Manhattan's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, chief rabbi of Efrat, are the most prominent signatories. The majority of the signers appear to be from the center and left-of-center segments of Orthodoxy.

"Halakha sees heterosexual marriage as the ideal model and sole legitimate outlet for human sexual expression," the 12-part document states. "The sensitivity and understanding we properly express for human beings with other sexual orientations does not diminish our commitment to that principle."

Arguably the guide's most striking feature is encouragement to homosexuals to continue performing mitzvot.

"Jews with a homosexual orientation or same sex attraction, even if they engage in same sex interactions, should be encouraged to fulfill mitzvot to the best of their ability," the document asserts. "The attitude of 'all or nothing' was not the traditional approach adopted by the majority of halachic thinkers and poskim throughout the ages."

Other points include:

■ "It is critical to emphasize that halakha only prohibits homosexual acts; it does not prohibit orientation or feelings of same-sex attraction, and nothing in the Torah devalues the human beings who struggle with them"

■ Parents and family of homosexually partnered Jews [are encouraged] to make every effort to maintain harmonious family relations and connections

■ "Jews who have an exclusively homosexual orientation should, under most circumstances, not be encouraged to marry someone of the other gender."

■ "We are opposed on ethical and moral grounds to both the 'outing' of individuals who want to remain private and to coercing those who desire to be open about their orientation to keep it hidden."

■ [Encouraging] shuls "to include individuals who don't act on their homosexual

desires"

■ "Sensitivity, acceptance and full embrace of the adopted or biological children of homosexually active Jews in the synagogue and school setting"

A series of catalysts compelled Rabbi Helfgot to write the document, he said. "In the last 10-15 years a number of people involved in chinuch discussed the reality of having students and congregants who came out and told their family they were gay and the tremendous struggle of finding some place to live within the Orthodox community," Rabbi Helfgot explained. "Are these kids and adults simply people who we should say, 'We don't have a place for you?'"

He also cited the exceptionally controversial panel discussion, "Being Gay in the Modern Orthodox World," held at Yeshiva University last year, and a discussion of the issue at a rabbinical conference at a Yeshivat Chovevei Torah alumni reunion.

"It strengthened our resolve to sit down and ... iron out a statement and have it revised hundreds of times," Rabbi Helfgot said. "Maybe we could create some sort of consensus even if it wasn't perfect."

Rabbi Avi Shafran, director of public policy for Agudath Israel of America, said he had not read the document but offered responses to descriptions provided by The Jewish Star. He agreed with some points. "A mitzvah is a mitzvah, and refraining from an aveira is refraining from an aveira, even when the proper choice is made by someone who may sin in another area," Rabbi Shafran said.

He disagreed that under most circumstances Jews of an "exclusively homosexual orientation" should not be encouraged to marry someone of the opposite sex. "I would not choose to make any broad statement about how people facing great challenges in this realm should approach marriage," Rabbi Shafran said. "I would sooner counsel that each case be discussed by the person facing the challenge and a sensitive, knowledgeable and wise rabbinic mentor." And he took issue with another point. "If the writers mean to say that it is categorically wrong to counsel someone to not publicly announce what he considers to be his confirmed homosexuality, I would strongly disagree," Rabbi Shafran said. "Not only is it common for young people to be confused at times about their sexualities, there are many cases of even 'confirmed' homosexuals who came to discover that they are not what they thought they were. It can be perfectly proper to counsel someone to not publicly declare something he might well come to later regret having declared."

Mordechai Levovitz, the founder of a group called Jewish Queer Youth, called the

statement "groundbreaking."

"It's a consensus of rabbis saying there's no place for homophobia in the Orthodox world," he told The Jewish Star. "For the first time they say that someone should not be pressured to stay in the closet. These are unprecedented moves — they talked to gay people and gay people's parents, this was a discussion among the rabbeim — this is really done in a very respectful way."

The statement also affirmed a religious right to reject so-called change therapies or reparative therapies for homosexuals. "Most of the mental health community, many rabbis, and most people with a homosexual orientation feel that some of these therapies are either ineffective or potentially damaging psychologically for many patients," it said.

That public rebuttal coincides with allegations of misconduct by JONAH, Jews Offering a New Alternative to Homosexuality, the most prominent organization offering reparative therapy in the Jewish community.

Truth Wins Out, a group that combats what its founders consider to be false information about homosexuality, produced a video about JONAH, of two Jewish teenagers describing the therapy they underwent with life coach Alan Downing, who considers himself a former homosexual.

In the widely viewed video on YouTube, Ben Unger speaks about how during a therapy session with Downing, he was asked to undress while repeating the statement, "I feel less masculine," and every message was a layer of clothing," Unger said. "Till I was standing there without clothes." Afterwards, Downing asked Unger to touch himself.

Downing called that account of the therapy, "false." "I deny the allegations of malicious intent that are made in this video." Downing wrote in an letter. "I also emphatically deny the falsehoods being promulgated by activists and commentators. I am deeply concerned about the use of these young men to advance a political agenda."

The value of reparative therapy itself is in doubt. "To date, there has been no scientifically adequate research to show that therapy aimed at changing sexual orientation (sometimes called reparative or conversion therapy) is safe or effective," said a statement from the American Psychologist Association, the world's largest organization of psychologists.

"There's no single definition and it leaves it open for people to put their spin on it," said Erez Harari. He is a fifth year doctoral student at Fordham University whose dissertation is on the mental health of gay individuals in the Orthodox Jewish community. He is also a co-founder of Jewish Queer Youth.

"It puts a lot of pressure on the individual," Harari said. "It says if you're motivated

enough you can change. The way they determine if there is enough motivation is in retrospect. You have people who try their hardest — I know people who have been in the program for 15 years and have not changed and they're told they're not motivated enough. It can lead to negative self-perceptions."

Harari was scheduled to appear at a convention of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists with Arthur Goldberg, co-director of JONAH. But after the YouTube video appeared online the lecture was called off. Goldberg appealed to Rabbi Moshe Tendler, the rabbinical authority of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, then showed up anyway. "It was a relatively mild presentation without any statistics and seemed to be without any political significance, yes or no," Rabbi Tendler said. "He claims it can be helped. It's a claim."

Rabbi Tendler continued: "An organization composed of academics would be sensitive to issues of freedom of speech and boycotting someone on a topic of great interest would most likely not be received well."

Goldberg described JONAH as a referral agency that provides education about homosexuality and defined reparative therapy as "conventional targeting" of homosexuality. Asked if it works, he said, "absolutely."

"I can't tell you how many weddings and brissim (circumcisions) there have been from men and women who came to JONAH for help or referrals," he asserted.

"Homosexuality is a byproduct of other issues," Goldberg said. "It's an emotional adaptation typically for childhood pain. We offer people a choice, if someone is unhappy being gay, we're here to advise them. What's wrong with that?"

Levovitz faults the rabbinical establishment for promoting reparative therapy.

"It's not about Goldberg," Levovitz said. "He runs this sham organization. My issue is with the Orthodox rabbis who are defending this practice of non-licensed people who have 19-year-olds touch themselves."

Rabbi Shafran said that he felt "anyone who faces challenges in the realm of sexuality would be foolish to not at least explore such therapies."

As for the statement itself, Rabbi Helfgot said that he has received mostly positive feedback, including from a number of prominent rabbis who did not sign it but expressed support. "It affirms a commitment to the halacha that explicitly and unequivocally forbids homosexual encounters, while at the same time affirms sensitivity to the individual that is struggling, and reaches out to them to be a part of our community," Rabbi Helfgot said. "We affirm the dignity and tzelem elokim, that man is created in G-d's image."

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# When work and friendship don't work

Dear Aviva,

I am in a real quandary. About 6 months ago I lost my job and was having a very difficult time finding a new one. My family was really feeling it and we were getting very nervous. My best friend stepped in and offered me a position in his firm. We've been friends for almost 20 years and my kids consider him their uncle. He is a vice president and he hired me as one of his assistants. The pay is good, and the hours are 9-5. I thought that this would be perfect — we are great friends so of course we would work well together. The problem is that after only a few months of working for him, I am absolutely miserable.

He is the worst boss that I have ever had. I think he comes down even harder on me because he's comfortable with me. When he gets upset with the other assistant, he tries to compose himself, excuses himself and then speaks pretty sternly about the issue. With me, he never pauses to catch himself and just rips into me. The few times I tried to speak up, he took it so personally and wouldn't even look at me. Now I don't even bother defending myself.

I walk on eggshells and am so scared to make a wrong move. I am bottling it all up and take it out on my wife and kids when I get home. And it goes without saying that I don't consider my boss my best friend anymore. I am so appalled by his behavior and had no idea that he could treat another human being so badly, especially someone who

is so close to him.

I would love to just quit, but then whatever is left of my friendship would be finished. I also need the medical coverage and the paycheck. I don't know what to do.

*Frustrated Former Friend*

Dear Frustrated Former Friend,

You are correct. This is quite a quandary. They say not to mix friends with business. There are exceptions to every rule and I guess you thought this would be one of them. Truth is, I would also think so, based on how close your friendship was and based on how desperate your financial situation was. And now you feel like you are stuck because you want to get out of this deal, but that will shred the few strands that are left of your friendship.

Now tell me, what would be so bad about that? What exactly would you be losing here? You've already lost respect for the guy. Imagine that you left on good terms (which you say wouldn't happen), would you still consider him one of your close friends? I have a feeling that you

would be very guarded with him. You are probably conditioned to tense up at the mere mention of him. This would take a long time to fix. Fear is not a sign of a good friendship.

If you are willing to let this mangled relationship go, you need to step into gear. First, start looking for another job. I know you've been down this road before and you know that it's not a smooth one. It will be even

harder now because you will have to maintain your current hours while trying to nab interviews. You will also have to keep this on the down low if you don't want to lose your job. This will be difficult if you and your boss are still traveling in the same social circles. If you want to fully take advantage of your connections, you would probably want to say that your search is for a friend of yours.

In the meantime, you are going to have to figure out a good coping mechanism because it sounds like you are just passing the bitter baton from your

boss to your family. Make sure that your wife knows how upset you are with your boss and your situation. Own up to the fact that you were unfairly taking it out on her and the

kids. Ask for her help. The two of you should sit down and figure out what you need to calm down when you get home. She should try to accommodate you and not bombard you with things as soon as you walk in the door. She probably should also avoid calling you at work unless absolutely necessary. Figure out what you need and let her know.

Hopefully an ideal (or even not-so-ideal-but-I-can-make-it-work) prospect will come up. At that point, you will have to decide how you want to leave. You can easily say that the hours are more flexible, or that the benefits are better. If he takes that personally, that is his problem because you weren't laying anything personal on the line.

I don't mind if you actually want to get personal, though. Once you have nothing else to lose, it might be very good for this guy to realize that he can't treat underlings so badly. There is no excuse to talk to someone who is lower on the social ladder in such stark contrast to how one speaks to someone who is a few rungs above them. So not cool.

And imagine! You are the privileged one who can teach him this valuable lesson. Priceless.

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](mailto:avivarizel.mft@gmail.com).*

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## Kosher Critic

# What's new, Cupcake?

By Zechariah Mehler

Much like in the fashion industry, the food industry goes through fads. An excellent example of this is Jamba Juice. Seemingly overnight, these stores popped up in cities all over the country. Then suddenly one night, poof, they were gone. Now we wake up to see dozens of Cold Stone Creameries where all the Jamba Juices used to be.

It's not hard to tell what the latest fad is. With specialty bakeries popping up all over and with a new show on the Food Network dedicated to it, cupcakes have finally taken the spotlight. Cupcake decorating books have also experienced a surge in popularity and I was asked to review, "What's New, Cupcake," the follow-up to the New York Times best-seller "Hello Cupcake," both written by Karen Tack and Alan Richardson. When the book arrived at my house, I excitedly tore open the packaging only to discover 230 pages of way-over-my-head. "What's New, Cupcake" is a decorating book that is imaginative and whimsical. The decorations are adorable, like a cupcake that looks like Chinese food and another that looks like a flower but, that being said, once I had read through the entire book I found that, "What's New, Cupcake" was not so much a book about cupcakes as it is an arts and crafts book that just happens to use cupcakes. Nothing demonstrates this more than the lack of an actual cupcake recipe in the book.

In order to appropriately review this, I gathered several friends of various levels of baking and artistic skill and we set out to make a few of the different designs. My task was to replicate the Rubber Ducky cupcakes that are found on the cover of "What's New, Cupcake." I will be honest: it was much less time consuming and difficult than I thought it would be. After only nine tries even an artistic novice like myself was able to recreate a very adorable rubber ducky. The real problem with "What's New, Cupcake" is not the learning curve or the creativity, it's what they need to use in order to get the designs. Jelly beans, cookies, donut holes and even full donuts are used in order for the cupcakes to acquire the necessary shape. For my ducks I needed marshmallows for the tails, donut holes for the head, M & M's for the eyes and taffy for the bills. After piling all that onto a cupcake and coating it with colored frost-

ing the result is less than pleasing. Biting into one you find your taste buds assaulted by too many conflicting flavors and textures. I began giving out my ducks to friends who all had the same reaction: "Aww, that's so cute. Uch, what is in this?"

If you are someone who loves arts and crafts and decorating then "What's New, Cupcake" is the book for you. Its designs are fun to make and are sure to impress your friends.

Just don't count on them to eat the cupcakes afterward.



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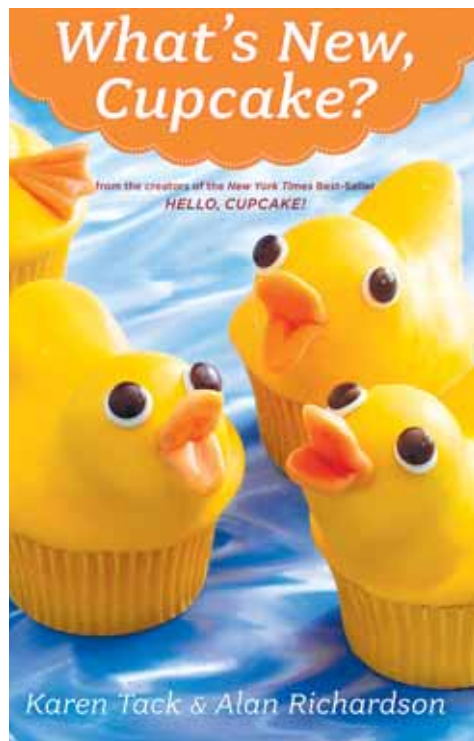
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# Parshat Ekev

# Everybody, shlit'a

Other than current events, nothing dates a Jewish book more than discussing or quoting a deceased great rabbi with the title "shlit'a."

The term "shlit'a" is an acronym for "She'yichyeh L'Yamim Tovim Arukhim" — that he should live for good, lengthened days. Essentially it is a wish upon the person that he have a long and blessed life, a term which is out of place when one is speaking or reading of the deceased.

While it is a lovely sentiment to write about someone, due to the likelihood that the written word will outlive the person, it seems silly to put it in print for posterity. Besides, it is really meant to be a blessing one says about someone naturally, when quoting the living person or speaking nicely of the person.



Rabbi Avi Billet

And, of course, we should not limit it to rabbis, but should thus bless everyone we know with good, lengthened days. Including my two grandmothers, who should, please G-d, continue to live and be well.

How does one achieve long life? My grandfather, zichrono livracha (may his memory be a blessing) used to say "If you eat

horseradish for a hundred years, you'll live a long life." Can't argue with that.

But many, fond of Torah trivia, will tell you there are two mitzvot in the Torah for which people merit long life — honoring one's parents (Shmot 20), and sending away the mother bird (Devarim 22). Is that all it takes?

Not really. Because the Torah, in fact, has many other examples of activities and manners of behavior that raise the possibility of extended and multiplied days on this earth.

Devarim 4:40 suggests that keeping the commandments is good for you and lengthens your days "Al ha'adamah" — on the land, just as does honoring your parents, as depicted in Devarim 5:15.

Devarim 5:29 says that following G-d's path brings "life, is good for you, and causes lengthened days in the land of your inheritance." This verse leads into chapter 6:1-2, in which observance of the commandments leads to fear of G-d, which causes you and your descendants to have lengthened days.

In the story about Datan and Aviram, who were swallowed by the ground, the Israelites are reminded that their eyes have shown them the benefits of allegiance to G-d. "Keep the commandments, so you will be strengthened, and you will come and inherit the land — so your days may be lengthened on the earth that G-d promised to your fathers." (Devarim 11:6-9)

Perhaps most famously, the second paragraph of Shema, which appears in our parsha, concludes with the phrase "In order that yours and your children's days be multiplied on this earth" (11:21), suggesting that the wearing of tefillin and the placing of mezuzahs, as well as general allegiance to G-d's instructions ("Im shamo'a tish'm'u"), will give one extended life.

Oddly enough, Devarim 25:14-15 says that carrying honest weights and being honest in business is a good ingredient for lengthened days.

The ends of Devarim 30 and Devarim 32 also speak about how general commandment fulfillment leads to extended life while

turning away from G-d leads to eternal destruction.

It could be that there is a focus on honoring parents and the sending of the mother bird because they are two specific positive commandments on opposite ends of extremes — honoring parents is most difficult, while sending away the mother bird is a relatively simple act.

Do any of these guarantee long life? Not really. They all guarantee lengthened days. And since lengthened days is relative in every person's life experience, we have no idea who has merited and who has not. A person who dies at 40 may have been meant to live 20 years, while a person who dies at 80 may have been meant to live until a 100. We don't really know how G-d takes account.

Our task is to do our best, to choose a life of Torah and to be as committed to G-d as possible. Upright observance, sanctifying G-d's name, and living as a model Jew from whom all walk away thinking "That is a G-dly person," are the common denominator of all the ticket items mentioned above. You certainly don't need to be a rabbi to do all of them, and it is highly inappropriate to expect one's rabbi to "be Jewish for me."

May you, shlit'a, and you, shlit'a, (rabbi or not) merit to follow as many of these precepts as possible. In their merit and in the merit of the other fine deeds you will accomplish in your limited time on earth, may you enjoy the blessings of health and happiness as you live out your good, lengthened days.

**There is a focus on honoring parents and the sending away of the mother bird because they are two specific positive commandments at the opposite ends of extremes.**

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## Anti-Semitism and Introspection

Once again, Tisha B'Av, the annual Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem, reminded us of the dangers of "gratuitous hatred" without rhyme or reason for one's fellow Jews; the kind of hatred for its own sake, which seems more recently to have become part of our everyday Israeli reality. Divisions between Ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews or the bitter antagonism towards the settlers in the West Bank are of course not new, but they have lost nothing of their malevolent edge. No less distressing are the actions of those Israeli lecturers who defend the international anti-Israel boycott in the name of academic freedom and the much larger numbers of those who denounce any criticism or sanctions against these boycotters as "McCarthyism."

### IN MY VIEW



Robert Wistrich

Such harsh polemics are happening at a time of unprecedented hatred towards Israel as a nation within the international community. The hysteria surrounding the Gaza flotilla brought this trend

to new heights of hypocrisy. It reflects the ongoing campaign of branding Israel as the "Jew" of nations — libeling it as a racist, bloodthirsty, pariah-state. At the same time, American Jewish support for Israel's policies, especially among liberals, has also been increasingly eroded. This has potentially dangerous consequences for our relations with the Diaspora, already tense over the issue of non-Orthodox conversions.

True, the majority of Americans still show remarkable empathy with Israel's dilemmas and President Obama has more recently chosen to adopt a somewhat friendlier tone to Israel's prime minister. Many European leaders, while less supportive than the United States, are by no means blind to Israel's security needs, to the Iranian threat or to the disastrous implications of Hamas's violent rule in Gaza. Nevertheless, the international weakening of Israel's legitimacy as a state remains deeply troubling. An unprecedented explosion of global anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism during the past few years have accompanied it.

The assault from without is not unconnected with a growing sense of spiritual disorientation and deeply conflicted Jewish identity within Israeli society. This trend is, if anything, the most dangerous of all since social, economic and cultural alienation are centrifugal forces — accelerating the divisive schisms that already exist in Israeli

society. Against such a background, the disaffection of the Israeli academic elite from the Zionist ethos is bound to have particularly demoralizing consequences.

For some anti-Zionist or "post-Zionist" intellectuals the foundation of the Jewish state in 1948 is evidently the "original sin" that has caused all subsequent Middle Eastern wars. They have, in effect, uncritically adopted the Palestinian narrative, which is not only supported by almost all Muslim holy warriors and many radical leftists, but has also infiltrated an influential sector of mainstream Western opinion. If we are to move forward we will have to find more creative means to circumvent this destructive discourse and show the world that another path is possible — one which rejects Jihadi barbarism and terror but also excessive reliance on Israeli force alone. This will not be easy. We do need to be more sensitive to the suffering of our Arab and Palestinian neighbors. But they too must take responsibility for their own terrorist nihilism, self-deception, and historic guilt (such as the ethnic cleansing of Jews from Arab lands). They must once and for all end their tolerance of

**In order to come with clean hands to the table, we Israelis might begin by putting our own house in order.**

genocidal incitement to holy war against Israel.

This will necessitate a major effort of intellectual honesty, introspection and self-criticism on all sides. It also requires considerable political will, broad international support and an unequivocal recognition of the identity of "the other" and his legitimate rights. In order to come with clean hands to the table, we Israelis might begin by

putting our own house in order. A good start would be to display greater empathy, tolerance and solidarity with the problems of the underprivileged — whether Jewish or Arab — in our own society. We also need to more positively internalize the tragic lessons of divisions and fragmentation in our own history, so that we can achieve a minimal consensus on what kind of Israel it is that we really want for ourselves, our neighbors, and the wider world.

*Prof. Robert S. Wistrich is director of The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (<http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/>) and author of A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad (Random House, January 2010).*



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# Opinion

## Knesset conversion bill a moot point

Before the Knesset closed its doors for the summer, the Israeli parliament's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee approved the first draft of a Conversion Bill. "Achrei HaChagim," after the High Holidays, when Israel and Israelis resume their regular routines, the bill will return to the Knesset floor.

This bill, which would give the Chief Rabbinate any and all say on converts and the process of conversion, has become a very heated, but I believe moot, issue, in Israel. In the end, the Knesset vote will not matter; the people have already decided. Halachic Jews will support and stand by the dictates of Halacha — Jewish law — and non-Halachic Jews will not. It's that plain and that simple.

### I'M THINKING



Micah D. Halpern

The issue, then, is not legal. The issue is not political. The issue is societal.

Israeli lawmakers are not divided, Israeli society is divided — the lawmakers are simply symbols of that divide.

Let's get some perspective. There has been a steady separation taking place in the Jewish world for a long time. I refer not to the division between Israel and the Diaspora, but

the division between Jews who follow Jewish law and those who do not.

You are or you aren't; you do or you don't — with one major exception. The exception to this rule is the IDF, Israel's army. Those soldiers who die in defense of their country are, in the eyes of the State of Israel, Jewish in death even if they were not Halachically Jewish in life. You fight as an Israeli Jew; you die as an Israeli Jew. That is not a Halachic determination, it is a legal decision. The State of Israel deems all dead soldiers to be Jewish unless otherwise specified.

In all other areas, the Halachic/non-Halachic divide has become so significant that it has permeated everyday life. With the rise of Russian and Ethiopian immigration comes the rise of questionable conversions. Now, when a child is about to pick a mate, in Halachic circles the background check on the parents includes not only questions about financial and marital status questions, but also conversion status. The Knesset can pass the Conversion Bill or reject it but in Halachic circles that will not change. In secular, non-Halachic circles, bill or no bill, the issue never mattered and never will.

The only grey area in this issue comes from the Conservative movement. The Reform movement has significantly lower standards on the issue of conversion than do the Orthodox or Conservative movements. And yet, motivated purely by political and not religious considerations, in the Knesset Conversion Bill, the organized Conservative movement has chosen to side with the Reform movement. I think that's a mistake, but it is not my issue, right now.

Conversion has always been a part of the Halachic process. Conversions have always been under the domain of the rabbis or the Rabbinate. Israel does not need a Conversion Bill to mandate conversions to Halachic authorities. Israel needs only com-

mon sense. Israel needs only a Jewish soul. The Chief Rabbinate has always come under criticism from certain corners of the Halachic world.

That, too, will continue. It will continue with conversions, just like it continues with dietary laws, with kashrut. But it should remain a Halachic debate, not a political debate.

The Israeli government should get out

of the business of conversion. The Knesset would do a better job if it let the rabbis do their job for those who respect Halacha.

*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.*

Israeli lawmakers are not divided, Israeli society is divided — the lawmakers are symbols of that divide.

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## Hillary, Steinbrenner and the longest date in history

**W**hat do the upcoming Clinton nuptials and the passing of George Steinbrenner have in common? Nothing, except for reminding me of one of the worst dates I ever had.

I picked her up on the Upper West side at about 11 o'clock in the morning for a one o'clock game. I was dressed for the Yankees, she was dressed for the Met. No, that is not a misprint. I do not mean the New York Mets, I mean the Metropolitan Opera. I was wearing khakis, an Izod shirt, and boat shoes. She was wearing pearls. I realized immediately that she would make a wonderful wife — for someone else.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH



David Seidemann

Other than the fact that I looked like her little son, the walk to my car was uneventful. We exchanged pleasantries and engaged in the usual pre-game banter of "I hope it doesn't rain." As I was adjusting my seatbelt this young woman took the rearview mirror in her hand, twisted it to the right, fixed her

makeup and leaned back in her seat. Now, I'm not against women fixing their makeup in the vehicle, and I'm not against them using the mirror that is on the visor in front of them, but I do have a problem with anyone using the rearview mirror, especially if I need the rearview mirror to help me drive.

That was just a prelude of things to come. As soon as we entered the West Side Highway, she opened her pocketbook, which was the size of a catcher's mitt. She tilted it towards me, practically shoving it in my face, and asked me "Would you like a piece?" I glanced down and witnessed, by a conservative estimate, over 100 pieces of bubblegum in her pocketbook.

I politely declined but watched this young woman, for the next six hours, chew, blow bubbles, and insert a new piece of gum into her mouth every two minutes. 15 minutes into the car ride I was praying for a rain-out.

During the game, I miscalculated the extent of her allegiance to the Yankees. In the fifth inning, with the Yankees leading 8 to 1, I suggested we beat the traffic home. She responded like I had attempted to burn holy books.

We stayed through the sixth inning and the seventh inning and the eighth, all the while the incessant bubble popping continued. When the visiting team came to bat in the ninth inning, I recall thinking: three

more outs and I'm home free. But G-d had different plans for me that day: the visiting team scored seven runs in the top of the ninth to tie the game.

Somewhere around the 14th inning, with her reservoir of bubblegum dwindling, I once again, ever so mildly suggested that perhaps we call it a night. She would hear nothing of it. Thankfully, in the bottom of the 15th inning, the Yankees scored the winning run and my date with bubble woman was almost over.

A funny thing happened on the way home. My date ran out of gum. Suddenly, for the first time in hours, real conversation took place.

She surprised me by apologizing for the incessant gum chewing and explained that it was her coping mechanism for when she was nervous. I assured her that she had no reason to be nervous, that she was a lovely girl who was bright and articulate and had a lot to offer. I should have kept my mouth shut. That string of compliments led her to ask: "So, you'll be calling me again?"

We went out one more time and it was the quickest game in bowling history. And by the way, she left her gum at home.

**I realized that she would make a wonderful wife... for someone else.**

Relationships are tricky and complicated. Most of the problems arise, whether in a relationship between a husband and wife, or a parent and child, when one party attempts to change the behavior of the other. That rarely works and leads to intense frustration.

What does work, either with a spouse or a child, is for you to act consistently. Let the other party know where your center of gravity is and how you are going to conduct your own behavior. In most instances that will change the other person's behavior more effectively than your attempts to directly change their behavior.

I'm assuming bubble woman is married now to a man who tolerates her habit or whose own behavior ensures that she doesn't need to blow bubbles anymore.

I learned a lesson that day: never take a first date to a sporting event that might go to extra innings.

*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*

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# Opinion

## Editorial

### Two out of three, not so good

Some remarkable journalism has been published in the United States in the last few weeks. Two particular stories come to mind. A third was generally poorly covered. More on that shortly.

The first was the release by the website WikiLeaks of 91,000 documents related to the war in Afghanistan. The documents mostly comprise military and intelligence action reports that paint a much more detailed and vivid picture of the conflict that was previously available. Most intriguing and disturbing is the story the documents tell about Pakistan's continuing assistance to the Taliban, even as the government of Pakistan purports to be working in concert with the United States against terrorism. Pakistan denies it is double-dealing, and this week after the documents were released, US officials said Pakistan's support for the US mission has strengthened in recent months, perhaps as Pakistani officials have come to the realization that the Taliban poses a threat to their country too.

One aspect we found disturbing was that WikiLeaks only withheld 15,000 documents that could have endangered lives and operations "as part of a harm minimization process demanded by our source." In other words, by their own admission, they wouldn't have necessarily done so of their own volition to avoid causing harm to American troops and the war effort in general. That suggests a philosophy in which the journalism may have dangerously morphed from a valuable and effective means to an end, into an end unto itself. Journalism is not an end unto itself.

The reporters at the Los Angeles Times did exactly what they were supposed to last week when they revealed that the small town of Bell, CA, on the outskirts of Los Angeles, was paying its town supervisor nearly \$800,000 a year, and its police chief nearly half a million dollars. That's more than the President of the United States and the chief of the Los Angeles Police Depart-

ment, respectively, earn. When officials in a small town with a median income of under \$25,000 are pulling in that kind of money for a dozen years, and cutting budgets and laying people off, something is very wrong. Most of the responsible parties have resigned; now lets see if any end up in jail.

The third story, the one that was not covered as well, is both closer to home and not of overly great concern to most American Jews at all (and that's the problem). We refer to the story of the Israeli Knesset's proposed bill on conversions to Judaism.

Much of the Jewish media (present company excepted) jumped on an erroneous band-wagon, putting forth twin incorrect notions that a) changes in the conversion process in Israel would somehow change how non-Orthodox converts from the United States are treated; and b) that Israel's Law of Return would tighten up its specifications and exclude people whom it currently considers Jewish. Notwithstanding a great deal of hot air, indignation and threats that American Jews' support for Israel was on the line, neither was true.

Don't believe us? Ask Mark Golub, a journalist, the president of Shalom TV, and, oh yes, a Reform rabbi, who wrote, "The bill never mentions the Law of Return and would have no impact on the way it would apply to any Diaspora Jew. If the bill were to become law, it would do nothing to change the current process by which Conservative and Reform conversions in America are accepted as valid for Jews seeking Israeli citizenship."

It's unfortunate that leaders of the non-Orthodox streams of Judaism resorted to such threats. They did so to generate American Jewish pressure against essentially an internal Israeli matter that would strengthen the status quo Orthodox hold on Jewish religious matters in Israel.

Worse is that the news media, particularly the Jewish news media, largely let them get away with it.

## Letters to the editor

### Aliyah to avoid missionaries

To the Editor:  
Regarding missionaries (Missionaries targeting religious Jews; July 23, 2010), I don't want to stick my nose into an issue that is basically foreign to me and my children and my grandchildren but we live in Israel (we used to live in Far Rockaway) and proselytizing is illegal here. See, it's so simple to avoid the problem.

Of course — there are other problems... like finding enough time during the winter to do your child's laundry when s/he comes home for the weekend, and understanding Army 'newspeak' but, hey, you can't have everything.

Jay A. Friedman  
Ra'anana, Israel

### Miles of Smiles

To the Editor:  
Miles of Smiles is now accepting donations for its annual summer toy drive. Miles of Smiles distributes stuffed animals to hospitalized children in Israel. Donations also help to restock the playroom at Bikur Cholim Hospital in Yerushalayim with toys and arts & craft supplies purchased in Israel. Over the past 5-plus years over 1,000 stuffed animals have been collected and distributed at hospitals including Bikur Cholim, Hadassah Ein Kerem, and Shaare Tzedek. Readers can help by either donating any amount of money or by donating a new stuffed animal (hospital policies do not allow distribution of used stuffed animals). Donations can be mailed to, Miles of Smiles, 379 Arbuckle Ave., Cedar-

hurst, NY 11516. A drop off bin for donated stuffed animals is located on the back porch. Feel free to contact me at basyisrol3@aol.com with any questions, comments or other ways you can get involved. Collections will be accepted until August 18th. Tizkyn l'mitzvos!

Devorah Gerber  
Cedarhurst

### Favors expanded wine sales

To the Editor:  
Re: allowing grocery stores to sell wine in NY, as proposed by Governor Paterson:

Almost every Jewish ceremony requires a blessing over a cup of wine. The ceremony known as Kiddush is done with a cup of wine twice every Sabbath. Buying wine at the local grocery, supermarket or convenience store would be much easier than buying it at wine & liquor boutiques or at synagogues, as some are accustomed to doing.

Selling wine at grocery stores would also weaken the monopoly of kosher wine manufacturing. It is very easy to use monopolizing tactics on a single purpose wine store, but not on multi-purpose stores.

Today almost all Jewish ceremonies are done with grape juice, the second-best alternative to wine, in terms of Jewish law. Taxes on wine and the kosher wine monopoly, coupled with the fact that you can buy wine only at special stores, takes a toll on Jewish ritual. Relief would be greatly appreciated.

Aron Cohen  
Brooklyn

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Photo courtesy of Sarah Dienstag

### Bake sale to benefit Camp Nageela

Rivka Dienstag, above, teaches a group of campers at Camp Nageela. The camp is a low-cost Jewish camp experience for kids in public school. They will be holding a bake sale on Aug. 4 to help send some of their campers to yeshiva. Details on page 6.

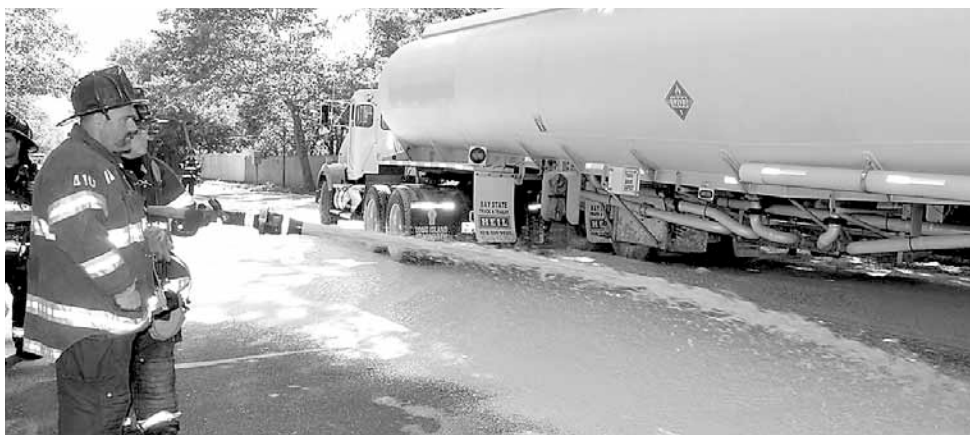


Photo by Joe Sperber

Firefighters spray foam on fuel spill on Peninsula Boulevard on July 22, 2010.

# Fuel spill that wasn't BP's fault

By The Jewish Star Staff

Woodmere residents got a taste of life on the Gulf Coast when a 10,000 gallon gasoline tanker struck a tree on Peninsula Boulevard at 5:30 a.m. on July 22. The Department of Environmental Conservation estimated that close to 2,000 gallons of gas spilled onto the street, which forced the fire department to close Peninsula Boulevard south of Old Mill Road and forced 45 families to evacuate their homes. The driver of the truck was unhurt. The spill caused a virtual traffic stand-still on West Broadway where cars were diverted.

Fire fighters from multiple departments, including Woodmere and Lawrence-Cedar-

hurst, spread foam and created sandblocks to keep the gasoline from entering storm drains and possibly impacting on Doxey Creek.

"What sometimes happens in these cases are storm drains are flushed and then contaminated soil is removed," explained Aphrodite Montalvo, a Department of Environmental Conservation official. "Gasoline cannot be contained, like oil can be, because of its explosive potential. That is why we are working with the fire departments (and) fire marshalls on this."

Residents were allowed back into their homes by noon the day of the spill. A day later, Peninsula Boulevard still reeked of gasoline.

# The Five Towns Welcome



Richard Grazi, MD

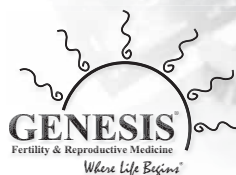


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# The Kosher Bookworm

## A lesson in the ultimate redemption

Beginning with Shabbos Chazon and until the Shabbos before Rosh Hashana every single haftorah comes from Sefer Yeshayahu, the Book of Isaiah. The haftorahs recited on Beraishis, Noach, Lech Lecha, Shemot, Yisro, Vayikrah, Yom Kippur morning, Shabbat Rosh Chodesh, the last day of Pesach, and every Ta'anit Tzibbur are drawn from the Book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah is among the most cited and quoted of all the later prophets.

Given the timing, the recent publication of the teachings of Rabbi Shimon Schwab, zt"l, on the Book of Isaiah is quite germane and the subject of review for this week.

Titled, "Rav Schwab on Yeshayahu" [Artsroll, 2009] and edited by his son Moshe, this volume is an edited transcription of the famed shiurim given by the rabbi at his beloved shul, Kahal Adas Yeshurun, the premier location in America for the Hirschian ideology of Torah Im Derech Eretz.



Alan Jay Gerber

The publication marks the first time that a very detailed, tradition-bound commentary on Isaiah has appeared in English.

Not only is this a commentary on the basic text, it elaborates further by lacing the commentary with appropriate citations from the midrash, as well as from the Talmud and from other books from the Bible. All this is fused into one organic narrative to give the text an expanded and almost contemporary interpretation. Rav Schwab's technique makes for a better reading and understanding of an ancient text and further enhances its relevance to our people in this time of distress. Rabbi Moshe Schwab's editing serves to give his father's teachings a resonance of purpose that will help preserve its sacred message for generations to come.

Thanks to current events, Isaiah's prophecies have a greater relevance now than ever before; Isaiah's words point to the message of ultimate salvation that will be our destiny in the end of times.

Several examples will demonstrate the genius of Rav Schwab's method.

Chapter 51: 3, "For G-d has comforted Zion, He has comforted all of her ruins." Rav Schwab states: "When G-d comforts Zion, and brings about the Geulah [salvation], it will not be a partial redemption, in which only a part of our problems will be solved. Rather, when

the geulah comes, it will be final and complete, encompassing all of Israel's ruins; it will be total redemption."

Rav Schwab continues with the verse, "And He has made her desert as Eden, and her dry lands as the Garden of G-d.' Arid lands in Israel which were formerly uninhabitable will bloom as once did the Garden of Eden."

"In addition to this simple meaning of our phrase, it also alludes to something more. With the final Geulah, the historic process of the world will have achieved its purpose: that mankind return to Gan Eden. When man was created, G-d put him into Gan Eden, but was expelled from it because of his sin. However, the Geulah will signal the dawning of the era in which mankind, led by Israel, will have come full circle, and return to the status of Adam HaRishon while he was in Gan Eden. In this sense we can say that 'for G-d has comforted Zion' means that when G-d comforts Zion at the time of the Geulah, the lost Gan Eden will be restored, but this time Zion will be the Gan Eden. After its sins are atoned for, and Israel finally finds its nechamah [consolation], the lost Gan Eden will be back on earth — and it will be in Zion."

The images created and interpreted by Rav Schwab expands upon the text and gives a whole new and more optimistic meaning and message to the reader. To us, this message of optimism gives the text a practical value post-Tisha B'Av.

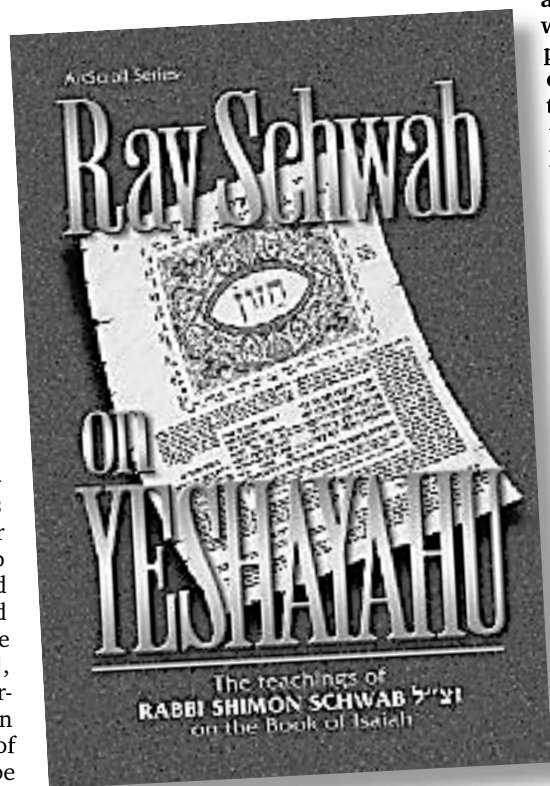
This optimistic redemptive tone leads to the verse's conclusion, "Rejoicing and happiness will be found there." Rav Schwab concludes with a drash, "At the final geulah, sason, outward rejoicing and simcha, a sense of inner happiness, will become permanent."

This eschatological sentiment expressed by Rav Schwab is both timely and prophetic.

**A personal note:**

These prophetic words have a very special meaning to both Rabbi Moshe Schwab and myself. These words from the prophet Isaiah cited above are from the last verse of the haftorah from Parshat Eikev, which is both our mutual Bar Mitzvah haftorah.

May the recitation of this passage once again this year help instill within all of us the hope for that final redemption as foreseen by the prophet, and give us the strength and fortitude to face our adversaries with both courage and confidence.



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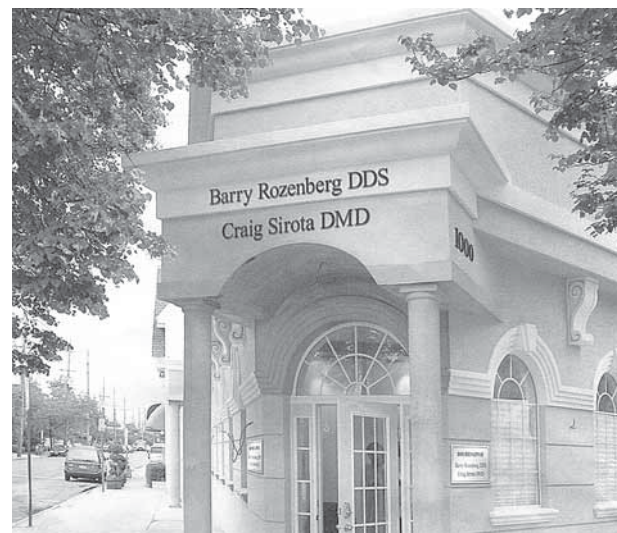
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# That's life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

## Dear That's Life,

The funny thing about visiting day in sleep-away camp is that while you wouldn't miss it for the world, by the end of the experience, crawling into the fetal position seems to be the only thing left to do.

Traffic reports said there was abnormally heavy traffic in the direction of camp, on Route 80 and the New York State Thruway. The reporter said that he did not know why, but the Tappan Zee Bridge, I-95 and other highways had noticeable increases in traffic. Silly reporter: didn't anyone tell you about Shabbat Nachamu and visiting day, the Jewish equivalent of the perfect storm?

Getting up and back from the mountains, therefore, was going to be a 'damned if you do and damned if you don't' situation. Print out all of the Map Quest directions you want, consult a Ouija board and say Tefilat Haderech with all of the right intentions — but you're still going to get stuck in traffic.

This year's return trek did feature some improvements over last year. No one vomited; a big plus. Two of my children fell asleep pretty quickly; also good. We even managed to avoid the bad weather and drove through the bucolic scenery under clear blue skies. All of the silver linings faded away, however, after the traffic hit. We were going nowhere, fast. We shlepped on and on and after three hours decided to stop for dinner. Besides, the baby needed a changing.

As much fun as a road trip is, that moment when you step out of the car after sitting for hours provides much physical and mental relief, and also allows you to assess the inside of your car. Did you want the chips ground into the carpet? No? That's a shame. And you get to see what your kids look like after such a long ride. That was the point when I realized that the baby did not just need a changing, she needed a bath. Pronto.

With only the bathroom of the restaurant at my disposal, I did the best I could, utilizing the sink, a whole bunch of paper towels and anything else with which I could improvise. I was like a Mommy MacGyver. Never in my life did I imagine that a hand blower would come in handy. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would be praying for one to be at my disposal. If only wishing made it so, but it does not. The blessing was that no one came into the women's bathroom during that time. I am not sure how I would have explained the scene, but I imagine it would have been something along the lines of, "Stuff happens."

Back in the car, ready to face the music and the traffic, we were all a little punchy, and definitely at the end of our ropes. My four year-old daughter, who had not napped, was totally overtired and carrying on about everything. "I think you need a nap," said her twin. While I laughed, she did not think he was funny, nor was she amused by the slew of non-moving vehicles on the highway, prompting a tirade of questions.

"Are we still in New Jersey?" she asked repeatedly, not realizing that we had only moved a matter of feet since the last time she asked. "Why? Why are we still here?" she replied angrily. "Why are there so many cars?" she screamed, followed by "And why aren't we moving!" The logical, obvious replies like, 'Because there are a lot of cars' or 'Because there is traffic' were not going to cut it. "We are never going to get home to Woodmere if we don't start moving!" she continued. There was no good answer, so none was offered and we did our best not to laugh.

Over and over again, the questions kept coming. There was nothing to do but reassure her that we were going to get home soon and that the cars would move, all while trying to keep a straight face. Finally, we reached home and crawled into bed. I reflected on the day, knew we were going to gladly do it all over again next year, and wondered how sarcastic my husband was being when he said, "So you want to drive to Niagara Falls? It's only eight to ten hours away."

MLW

## Dear That's Life,

My daughter-in-law Rivky runs a day camp for staff children at a sleep-away camp in the Catskills. There's a lot of mud around from all the rain they've had and my four-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Meir, was told he could only play in the mud in the morning. Once his clothes have been changed at lunchtime he is no longer allowed to play in the mud. Of course Meir didn't listen and played in the mud in the afternoon. He knew he couldn't go home all muddied up, so he went to a neighbor and told her, "My mommy wasn't able to wash my clothes yet after the Nine Days. Could you lend me some clothes?"

"Maybe I should call your Mommy," the neighbor said, to which Meir replied, "Please don't do that, you'll get me in trouble."

I think Meir's Mommy and Tatty are in big trouble.

Barry Elin  
Far Rockaway

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