

# THE JEWISH STAR

Independent and original reporting from the Orthodox communities of Long Island

VOL. 8, NO. 12

MARCH 20, 2009 | 24 ADAR 5769

## NO MORE NINTH GRADE

Shulamith H.S. cancels incoming class

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## BIRCAT HACHAMA

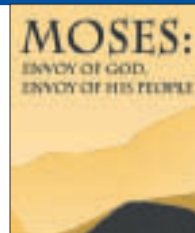
Blessing the sun every 28 years

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## MOSHE'S LEGACY

The Kosher Bookworm

Page 8



### FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH

## The fifth son

BY DAVID SEIDEMANN

The faithful come in four types, in my experience. There are those who carry on their daily routine without seeking any guidance from their clergy, a dangerous course both for themselves and those they interact with. Others ask their rabbi everything — not necessarily dangerous, though all those questions can be dangerously unnecessary. A third subgroup of the faithful asks appropriate questions to appropriately qualified rabbis. This is by far the best path and is probably representative of the norm.



Too many of our students suffer from A.D.D.: autopilot davening disorder; sorely missing from the curriculum is an emotional connection."

But there is a fourth group of those seeking guidance, advice and direction who rely upon rabbis (or priests or ministers and so forth) whom might be well versed in the texts, but are ill equipped to deal with context.

This column is not meant to disparage religious leaders, the majority of whom are eminently qualified to dispense advice in a multitude of areas.

However, I do intend to highlight that a true religious leader knows when to reach out to other professionals to augment and supplement the information he is processing in order to properly help a congregant maneuver through the vicissitudes of life.

This is not heresy. The Talmud recognizes that certain rabbis are more proficient than others in certain areas of law. Jewish law acknowledges whose ruling takes precedence in a health-related dispute between a rabbi and a doctor. The Talmud itself lists the qualities a rabbi must possess before one is permitted to seek advice from him.

I'm not referring to the clear and obvious distinction between the "movers and shakers" versus the "fakers and takers." We all know or should know of the

See FIFTH SON, Page 4

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.



Photo by Michael Orbach

Mindy Gershon of the group United for Justice and Peace offering a left wing view of Israel to a mixed group of elderly progressives and Israel supporters at the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library.

### A first person account

BY MICHAEL ORBACH

Only during the question-and-answer session that followed an otherwise unimpressive anti-Israel lecture at the Hewlett-Woodmere Public Library did things get interesting — so much so that the president of the library's board of trustees, Ben Eilbott, who had held his head in his hands for most of the lecture, threatened to shut down the auditorium.

The speaker was Mindy Gershon, a member of United for Peace and Justice, a

fringe left-wing coalition whose mission statement includes "Ending apartheid and apartheid policies in Israel." She was invited by the Five Towns Forum, which bills itself as the oldest progressive organization on Long Island.

As speakers go, Gershon was poor fare. She stumbled through a presentation of rote anti-Israel propaganda that was peppered with terms like "colonizers" and "apartheid," and marred by technical glitches. Offering little in the way of coherent arguments or

See ANTI-ISRAEL, Page 10

## Around the world in 333 days

New exhibit documents artist's pursuit of a minyan

BY YAFFI SPODEK

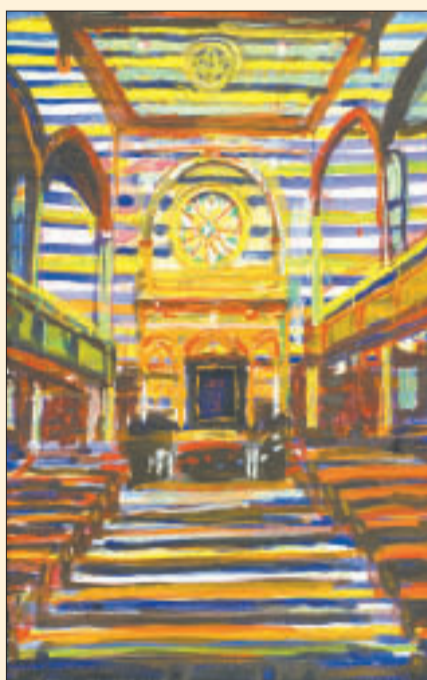
If you're looking for an interesting detour to make while visiting Manhattan, an hour or two of your time would be well spent exploring the Yeshiva University Museum.

Located in an unassuming building on W. 16th St., within the Center for Jewish History, the YU Museum now has several new exhibits on display, providing a fascinating glimpse into different areas of Jewish life. For those who make the effort to stop in (the Union Square subway stop is just a few blocks away) and have no objection to showing themselves around the virtually deserted galleries, there is much to see there.

"Final Mourner's Kaddish: 333 Days in Paintings" by Max Miller documents the artist's physical and spiritual 11-month journey as he recites the Kaddish prayer for his deceased father, Murray A. Miller, in different synagogues across the country.

"Because the saying of Kaddish every

See WORLD, Page 9



Courtesy YU Museum

Artist Max Miller's watercolor portrait of Congregation Kehilat Jeshurun in Manhattan is part of a new exhibit at the YU Museum.

## Non-profits fear Obama plan to lower charitable deductions

'Recipe for disaster,' a fundraiser predicts

BY YAFFI SPODEK

President Obama's budget proposal to limit charitable tax deductions for the country's highest earners will have an adverse impact on Jewish not-for-profits and charity organizations, according to experts in the field.

"I think it will be an absolute disaster," predicted Robert Katz, executive vice president of the American Friends of Migdal Ohr, a charity dedicated to helping underprivileged children in Israel.

"The reality of the Jewish philanthropic world is that 10 or 20 percent of the people give 80 percent of the money," Katz told The Jewish Star. "When you have that equation and impose these kinds of tax restrictions, it's a recipe for disaster, especially in these more difficult times. As charitable as people may be and as goodhearted as I know they are, there is definitely a tax benefit component to their giving."

The budget would cap tax itemized deductions at 28 percent, down from the current rate of 35 percent, for those earning at least \$250,000 a year. People in that bracket would be saving 28 cents instead of 35 cents on every dollar. In addition, the tax rate for the highest income bracket — \$208,850 and over — would be raised to 39.6 percent, up from 36 percent.

Obama has said the change in itemized deductions would raise \$318 billion over 10 years, which would help pay for a 10-year, \$630 billion reserve fund designed to help make health care more affordable and available, according to a report last month in The Chronicle of Philanthropy.

But many fundraisers in the Jewish community do not believe that the proposal will be beneficial. "What it means is that we will get less contributions from donors, and the government, which is already under tremendous constraints for funding, will not be able to handle the additional requests," said Norman Gildin, chief development officer for OHEL Children's Home and Family Services. "Additional needs will arise and the government won't be able to make it up."

"I'm sure the president thinks there are positives, but right now I can't agree with him," said Katz.

Obama has said he hopes the economy will be in a recovery by

See DEDUCTIONS, Page 5

## Seeking second shot at predator clergy

Bid to restart clock on civil penalties

BY MICHAEL ORBACH

It was Pearl Engelman's first trip to Albany.

The Satmar woman, hair covered with a blonde sheitel, dressed in accordance with the strictest laws of Jewish modesty, was aboard a chartered bus filled with survivors of sexual abuse and Brooklyn community activists.

They were on their way to Albany to lobby for passage of the Child Victim's Act, a bill sponsored by Assemblywoman Marge Markey (D-Queens) that would extend the criminal statute of limitations for child sexual abuse from the victim's 18th birthday to the 23rd, and the statute of limitations for civil damages from a victim's 23rd birthday to the 28th. More importantly, the legislation would open a yearlong window to file civil lawsuits in cases

where the statute of limitations has already expired.

Pearl distributed nuts and dried fruit left over from mishloach manot. As the bus reached the RFK Triborough Bridge she passed around photos of her son, Joel, who sat a number of rows behind her watching a video iPod.

The first photo showed Joel in front of a cake on his 18th birthday. He wore a long black coat and black velvet hat, surrounded by brothers-in-law and sisters also in Chassidic garb.

The second image was a grainy black and white snapshot. It was taken on Joel's 19th birthday, Pearl explained. His once curly peyos (side locks) were gone, his hair was long; he resembled a heavy metal musician.

"He has the face of an angel," Pearl said, running her finger over the edges of the photograph "We didn't know any-

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### Shabbat

Candlelighting: 6:49 p.m. ■ Shabbat ends: 7:51 p.m.  
Torah reading: Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei

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THE JEWISH STAR

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



# That's Life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

## Dear That's Life,

Remember the days when you could buy Dimetapp without having to pass a lie detector test or produce character witnesses?

Me neither.

Going to the pharmacy last week to buy some cold medicine, I knew they were now kept behind the counter, lest any nefarious consumers try and unload some zyrtec in their

pockets, so I went straight to the line. I'm really not trying to make light of things — obviously this is a real problem in our neighborhood — but I'm just wondering when someone is going to take glue off the shelves as well. (Note: if you don't understand the reference, please rewatch "Airplane.") I'm seriously more concerned about getting through the Woodmere Blvd and Peninsula intersection without getting hit by someone

who thinks that red lights do not apply to him, than I am about the threat that Advil Cold and Flu poses against my world.

Anyway, when it was my turn at the counter I chose two different products. I was asked to produce my driver's license and then asked to take it out of my wallet so the back could be scanned. 'OK,' I thought, 'this is pretty interesting.' After the person who was helping me scanned the first item, she asked

for my signature.

"Please sign the screen below," she said, "and affirm that you will not use this product to make crystal meth." Completely stunned, as no one had ever used the words "crystal meth" in a sentence to me before in my life, I simply looked at her and said, 'What?' As if I was hearing impaired, she said the same thing again but prefaced her sentence with, "I'm not making this up. Please sign the screen."

Honestly, I'm not that smart. I still can't figure out how to make that fifth grade science project with the volcano and the baking soda. I can spell "periodic table" and I can tell you what I got on my chem Regents, but that's where it ends.

After I signed the screen, she was ready to scan the second product, except that the bar code wasn't in the computer and so she could not sell it to me. She asked if I wanted to get something else instead and I

chose a bottle of Sudafed.

"Can I make crystal meth with that one?" I asked, being the smart-alec that I am, but she didn't blink.

"It depends on which Sudafed you buy," she responded, and then proceeded to tell me the differences between the two. I decided to buy the one that better suited my symptoms, regardless of the fact that it was the one from which I could not make a highly lethal and illegal substance.

I was still having trouble getting over this conversation so I told a friend of mine, who happens to be a doctor and not a smart-alec, what had occurred. She said the same thing had happened to her a couple of weeks before. When I asked her what her response was to the clerk when she had been asked to sign the screen, she said, "Oh! I told them I had stopped making crystal meth weeks ago."

MLW

If something happened to you "that could only happen around here," you've got to share! Was it funny? Outrageous? Hopefully, it wasn't too painful. No matter what, if you type it up and sent it to letters@thejewishstar.com you'll have a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate to Burger's Bar on Central Avenue in Cedarhurst — in other words, you could win an outstanding meal at one of Nassau County's most popular kosher restaurants.

Submissions should include your name, your town, and your daytime and evening phone numbers. Sorry, but anonymous submissions cannot be considered. All decisions by the editors are final and all submissions become the property of The Jewish Star.

In case you were wondering, Burger's Bar is under the supervision of the Vaad Hakashrus of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway, and plays music you can find on MLW's iPod.





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**Marriages**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wedding of Doris Davis (Oceanside, NY) &amp; Yona Hershkowitz (Brooklyn, NY) — March 15, 2009</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Wedding of Jonathan Weissman (Rochester, NY) &amp; Eva Erlich (Huntingdon Valley, NY) — March 15, 2009</li> </ul>
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- Wedding of Donnie Phillips (New York, NY) & Erica Lemansky (New York, NY) — March 8, 2009

### Engagements

- Engagement of Esti Newman (Brooklyn, NY) & Eli Potash (Monsey, NY) — March 15, 2009
- Engagement of Moshe T. Padawer (Brooklyn, NY) & Hindy Fogel (Brooklyn, NY) — March 13, 2009
- Engagement of Tamar Hanau (Woodmere, NY) & Etan Ehrenfeld (Teaneck, NJ) — March 11, 2009
- Engagement of Karen Rossman (Gush Etzion, Israel) & Dovie Rush (Gush Etzion, Israel) — March 11, 2009
- Engagement of Etty Klein (Monsey, NY) & Chanoch Henoch Junik (Crown Heights, Brooklyn) — March 10, 2009

### Upsherin

- Upsherin of Eli Dyckman, son of Ezra & Adena Dyckman (Kew Gardens Hills, NY) — March 15, 2009

### Bris

- Bris of Hershel Tzvi Hellman, born to Faygie (Bomzer) & Jay Hellman (Milwaukee, WI) — March 15, 2009



Tamar Hanau & Etan Ehrenfeld

To view entire galleries, please visit [www.onlysimchas.com](http://www.onlysimchas.com)



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OBITUARY

# Shephard Melzer a'h, 66

BY MAYER FERTIG



Shephard Melzer a'h

Shephard Melzer a'h, chair of the Village of Lawrence Board of Appeals and one of the architects of the merger between Hillel and HILL that formed the Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway, died suddenly last Friday.

Over the last 20 or so years Melzer had faced significant challenges to his health and received two kidney transplants. He was 66.

Melzer, who graduated from Yeshiva College and Columbia Law, was "a voice of reason and

calm and reconciliation in all the venues that he found himself," said Rabbi Kenneth Hain of Congregation Beth Shalom, in an interview Monday. "Just ask anybody who's ever appeared before the zoning board in Lawrence. They'll tell you Shep Melzer was always the dignified voice who tried to resolve arguments."

In addition to his involvement at Beth Shalom, Melzer also performed "a tremendous amount of kindness to individuals," said Rabbi Hain, getting them jobs and medical help. "He

definitely deserves a lot of hakarat hatov (gratitude) from this community."

"I said at the funeral that some of the leadership of HAFTR said, 'We may have had the guts, but Shep had the brains to do what we did.' But he also had a lot of guts, particularly in fighting for his life over these past couple of decades," noted Rabbi Hain.

"I lost a dear friend of over 20 years," he added.

An estimated 900 people attended the funeral at Beth Shalom on Sunday morning.

Melzer is survived by his wife, Judy, and their sons, Adam and Eric, their wives, and a number of grandchildren.

IN BRIEF

### Kosher food pantry operator loses funding

A kosher food pantry in Far Rockaway that has seen a large increase in need — some 90 new people a month, on average — is likely to close in July. The organization that operates the pantry, the Jewish Services Coalition, lost its city funding, said Esther Schenker, the group's executive director.

The group also operates adult employment, ESL, and youth programs.

The Dept. of Youth and Community Development has provided funding since the Jewish Services Coalition began in the early 80s. \$120,000 covered salaries last year for Schenker and another full time employee, and for a food pantry worker, two teachers, an employment

mentor and an office assistant.

All will be laid off, Schenker said.

The funding has been reassigned to two groups based in Rego Park and Jamaica, Queens, said Schenker, who can be reached at (718) 327-6060.

—Mayer Fertig

### Ninth grade cancelled at Shulamith H.S. next year

Parents who thought their daughters would attend Shulamith High School in September must make other arrangements. Last week the school informed incoming freshmen that there would be no new class.

"We sought to have a ninth grade for September in the same way we have approached it in the past," said Rabbi Saul Chill, the high school principal,

in a statement. "Open houses, interviews, speaking to elementary school principals etc... We accepted over 25 applicants. We were told by the board we need 13-14 to have a ninth grade. When all was said and done, we had only 4 applicants."

Students had been told to apply to at least two schools, he noted, as they are every year.

The announcement is a blow to parents who hope the Brooklyn-based older sister of Bnot Shulamith can be maintained despite the administration's plan to shut it down. Fewer modern Orthodox families in Brooklyn make Shulamith unsustainable, school officials believe, though some parents blame declining enrollment on a failure to recruit new students.

Shulamith School for Girls was the first Orthodox all-girls school in the United States.

—Mayer Fertig

# Free mortgage counseling in Cedarhurst

BY YAFFI SPODEK

Local homeowners in danger of foreclosure who can't cope with their mortgage lenders can now avail themselves of free counseling services, thanks to New York Mortgage Advocates, a new program from Labor & Industry For Education, Inc. (LIFE).

"Our goal is to help as many people as we can," said Elie Hecht, the program's co-director. "Sometimes people just need someone to give them a fresh perspective on the issues and payments. We help steer people in the right direction."

The service, based on Spruce St. in Cedarhurst, provides free counseling to people who are already in foreclosure, or are in danger of becoming in foreclosure. The mortgage counselors will also negotiate with banks on behalf of their clients.

New York Mortgage Advocates began providing these services less than three months ago, and are now being funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Housing and Urban Renewal.

Using documentation provided by their clients regarding their budgets and finances, mortgage counselors will "crunch the numbers and figure out a situation where the bank might be willing to do modification," Hecht explained. "There are also other avenues, such as short-selling their house or personal bankruptcy, depending on the person's situation."

The program has been getting referrals from The Eliezer Project, which steers its clients to free services such as this one, to help them ease some of the financial burdens they bear.

"We refer clients to him

## More on foreclosures from Congressman Steve Israel

The escalating number of foreclosures doesn't only threaten people who may lose their homes; it also brings down property values and equity. Reducing home foreclosures and rebuilding homeowner wealth is key to strengthening our economy.

President Obama's new Homeowner Affordability and Stability Plan, effective immediately, will allow families who owe more on their homes than its current appraised value to lower their interest rates. The plan will also help at-risk homeowners avoid foreclosure by reducing monthly mortgage payments. The Treasury Department has set up a website, [www.financialstability.gov](http://www.financialstability.gov), that details how the programs work and whether you are eligible.

This week, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1106, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act. This legislation provides incentives to lenders to modify mortgages and provides safeguards for responsible home-

owners who are not covered by President Obama's plan, but are still at risk of foreclosure.

There are a few additional resources that may be helpful:

■ Hope Now is a government and industry alliance that provides free foreclosure prevention assistance from HUD-approved counseling agents. Go to [www.hopenow.com](http://www.hopenow.com) or call (888) 995-4673.

■ Long Island Housing Partnership — At no cost to you, HUD-certified housing counselors can help you understand your options, organize your finances and represent you in negotiations with your lender. Go to [www.lihp.org](http://www.lihp.org) or call (631) 435-4710.

■ Community Development Corporation (CDC) of Long Island specializes in affordable housing and has a foreclosure prevention expert on staff to answer your questions. Go to [www.cdcli.org](http://www.cdcli.org) or call (631) 471-1215.

— Y.S.

[Hecht] because these services are provided gratis to the client," said Sam Bergman, the executive director of The Eliezer Project. "He is nearby and I have confidence in him, with respect to his legal advice and with helping people re-negotiate their mortgages."

Although the program is currently catering to residents of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway, there are plans underway to expand and open an office in Hempstead, to ser-

vice a wide range of clients, beyond those in the Jewish community.

"We are the community's best-kept secret," Hecht said, "and I think everybody can use a little bit of counseling. Although we are limited to housing, anybody who loses a job could be affected by the ability to pay their mortgage."

To utilize this service, please call New York Mortgage Advocates at (516) 374-4564.

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## Letters

### Tomchei Shabbos gift

To the Editor:

My friend told me that her husband gives a shiur every morning in Lawrence. On Friday morning, a man walked in with an envelope for Tomchei Shabbos. He said that after reading the article in The Jewish Star (Tomchei Shabbos gears up for greater need; March 13, 2009), he decided to immediately write a check for Tomchei Shabbos. Yasher koach on your wonderful article.

**JEANETTE LAMM**  
*Coordinator, Tomchei Shabbos of the Five Towns and Far Rockaway*

#### Editor's Note:

The correct phone number for Tomchei Shabbos is (718) 327-7283, instead of area code (516), as written in last week's article.

#### ABOUT LETTERS

The Jewish Star welcomes Letters to the Editor of no more than 250 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for style, content and space. Deadline is Monday at noon; we cannot guarantee placement. Letters must include the name of the writer, current address and daytime telephone number and may be mailed to The Jewish Star, 2 Endo Blvd., Garden City, NY 11530; faxed to (516) 569-4942; or e-mailed to letters@thejewishstar.com.

### Madoff's fate unfair

To the Editor:

All we keep hearing about is Bernie Madoff. I see a magnificent apartment he lived in, his beautiful wife with her gorgeous hair, perfectly colored and cut, and I think about how he is going to live in a cell.

Growing up in Williamsburg, I remember my mother always saying "schve zu makin a leben." She was referring to my father. He was a furrier and worked very hard. There were seven children to support. He would never work on shabbos and of course was told by the boss that if he did not come in on shabbos, don't show up at all. So he would shlep the pelts of fur, which were very heavy, on the train and work on them the whole night, then shlep them back on the train the next day. He dropped dead at my feet when I was 10 and he was 53. We never lived like the Madoffs, but at least none of the children ever shamed the Kirschner name.

Now, many years later, I lost my husband and so did Ruth. The only difference is she will visit him about two or three times a month. All I do is leave a stone on Seymour's grave. Is that fair?

**JUDY ZIMLOVER**  
*West Hempstead*

## OPINION

# Yes on victim compensation, no on communal bankruptcy

### Editorial

Human nature has played a key role in the dearth of criminal cases and civil lawsuits filed against perpetrators of sexual abuse in our yeshivahs. Experts in the field say victims are rarely able to bring themselves to reveal their ordeals at the hands of educators until they reach adulthood themselves.

For that reason, at least in part, the decks have been stacked in favor of abusers remaining free to repeat their crimes by statutes of limitations that expire when a victim turns 18 or 23, for criminal or civil cases, respectively.

A bill up again for consideration in Albany this week would extend those deadlines and, more importantly, open a one-year window during which old civil cases might be brought.

Unsurprisingly, the Roman Catholic Church is leading an effort to defeat the bill, even in the absence of former Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, who declined to bring it to a vote three times in the past, after it had passed the Assembly.

The Roman Catholic Church after all, has been brought to its financial knees

by a flood of cases involving predatory clergy. It has paid out \$2.6 billion in claims in cases dating to 1950, according to the annual report by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; six dioceses have sought bankruptcy protection as a result.

Apparently fearing jury verdicts in cases of their own, a Satmar umbrella organization in Williamsburg and a Sephardic community group in Flatbush reportedly have joined the Catholic Church in opposition.

Agudath Israel of America is still considering the matter. Agudah's Rabbi David Zwiebel told The Jewish Star's Michael Orbach, "It's a subject of conversation at the highest levels of our rabbinical leadership."

A cynic might imagine that it's quite a conversation: the warring impulses between a continued effort to whitewash the whole problem away versus the prospect of all those greenbacks going away.

Rabbi Zwiebel struck a sensible note, however, when he told The Star that

the real world potential of the bill can't be ignored while neither can the impact of abuse on its victims.

While we wish that Agudah would already have reached a conclusion on a matter that is neither new nor a surprise (not to mention our wish that it had taken a public leadership role on the whole issue of yeshiva abuse many years ago) we can understand their hesitation.

While we would very much like to see draconian penalties for institutions that, in some cases, covered up abuse and browbeat victims and their parents to keep quiet, we don't believe that bankrupting yeshivahs or other community organizations, particularly in these troubled economic times, is a good idea.

We would very much like to see victims get a shot at justice against their abusers and their enablers — if only the criminal statute would be reopened as well — but we reluctantly hope that it comes next year instead, with an amended bill that opens a window for new claims but places some reasonable cap on potential jury awards.

## FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH: THE FIFTH SON

*Continued from Page One*

fakers and takers and should eschew contact with them. I am referring to real, authentic sages who nevertheless render decisions without synthesizing all of the relevant information and viewing issues in context, including the petitioner's stage of life.

My grandfather, a revered Torah sage in Germany and here in America would often say "it's a lot easier to 'paskan treif' than 'paskan kosher.'" Loosely translated, that means it's much easier and requires less critical analysis of Jewish law to say that something is "forbidden," than to analyze the relevant law, apply it to the particular circumstances of the time and find a permissible precedence in Jewish law, to bring another Jew into the fold.

I do not advocate breaking existing laws or customs or creating new one. Instead, I believe that the truly effective rabbi is one who either sees the whole

picture himself or knows that the whole picture requires that he consult with lawyers, doctors, psychologists or other professionals before arriving at a decision.

In my work, I have witnessed devastating consequences when rabbis or clergy of other faiths have dispensed legal or psychological advice to divorcing couples. The professionals then have to come in and undo the good intentioned but poorly premised advice of the clergy.

I would stress that these episodes are few, but annoying. I also wish to point out that in our community we are blessed with a few rabbis who have totally synthesized all of the above and see the whole picture. They are invaluable both to couples and lawyers in resolving matrimonial disputes. As in the past, they continue to work with professionals in formulating the substance and manner of delivery of their rulings.

There is also another layer

of "interference" that must be reckoned with. Often, the greater the scholar, the more "handlers" he has. This is true in both Chassidish and Litvish, or non-Chassidic, circles. The information a scholar might receive therefore is second-hand and sometimes third-hand. It does not incorporate context and pretext. Because the questioner is not present, human psychology cannot be properly employed.

We note that our liturgy speaks of four types of sons at the Seder. But there is a fifth son to be concerned about. And that is the son who is absent from the Seder. There is a son who has not been reached because context and pretext have been absent from the halachic rulings he has encountered.

Reaching this fifth son sometimes requires new approaches that only a sorrowfully few leaders are bold enough to employ. The old vanguard's resistance to changes in approach (as opposed to abrogation of principles, which I do not advocate) is leaving many "fifth sons" excluded.

When a Chassidic leader prohibits a new approach

because it is untraditional, he should remember that all of Chassidus was unconventional when it began.

When a Litvish leader objects to a new approach because it is too emotional, he should be more cognizant of the fact that too many of our yeshiva students suffer from A.D.D. — autopilot davening disorder — and that sorely missing from their curriculum is an emotional connection to our heritage.

I am sure that this article will stir some debate and perhaps criticism. It is not meant as an indictment of our leaders. Rather it is an appeal to our sages to examine context and pretext in both the message of their rulings and the method of delivery so that the fifth son will find his way to the Seder table.

I met with a "fifth son" this past week. He told me that drug and alcohol parties are commonplace, every weekend, among our youth. They are commonplace among Chassidim, the Litvish, the Yeshivish, Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Modern Orthodox, etc. He knows this because he and his friends are regulars. Closing our eyes does not mean it does not exist.

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## NON-PROFITS FEAR LOWER DEDUCTION PLAN

Continued from Page One

the time these proposals would be implemented in 2011. Even if that is the case, fundraisers anticipate that the changes would still have a negative effect on charitable giving.

"Regardless of whether we are in an economic recovery or not, you're still giving the same disincentive to sponsors, benefactors, patrons and philanthropists," warned Gildin. "You're targeting that particular group that gives the most contributions, and if it will impact on their tax deductions, it is inevitable that those contributions will decrease."

In addition to the impact on Jewish philanthropy in general, the budget proposals could have a tangible effect in the Five Towns. "Since many taxpayers in our community have household incomes which would be taxed at the highest rate, our community would be disproportionately affected ... and then in turn impact the charities in our area," said Avi Hirsch, an accountant who lives in Woodmere and works for a not-for-profit foundation in Teaneck, N.J.

Hirsch pointed out that Nassau County is ranked 10th in the nation in median household income, according to the 2008 report of the U.S. Census Bureau. The county's unemployment rate, however, has increased dramatically in the past few months — from 5.6 percent to 6.5 percent from December to January, compared with New York City's negligible increase from 7.2 to 7.3 percent during the same time period.

"We may not feel the impact of unemployment rates currently, because many of our community members who lost jobs have severance pay and generous compensations," Hirsch cautioned. "These benefits won't run out for six months, and so the effects are still unfolding."

He estimated that the community wouldn't feel the impact until perhaps the end of the summer. "People in the community

have seen their portfolios decline so drastically over the last 12 to 18 months and they're giving less as it is," Hirsch said. "The local organizations, which are already facing increased demands for emergency and social services due to the general economic downturn, are going to be facing a much deeper threat because of these two proposals."

Those who have held on to their jobs, as well as businesses, will see their charity deductions limited, which, coupled with the climbing unemployment rate, will

**"If you have these new limits, this could spell a disaster for American charities. Billions of dollars that people would not give makes a dent in an already difficult situation."**

challenge Jewish organizations to meet their budgets next year, Hirsch predicted. "We live in a very generous community, and the president's proposal will not decrease people's desire to give, but will certainly leave us with less to give," he said.

Obama raised \$300 million over the Internet for his presidential campaign, most of it in contributions of \$20 to \$50, but that is not how funds are raised in the Jewish community, said Katz, noting that both larger and smaller charities would be affected.

"Anyone who's giving really big money fits into the higher income bracket," he explained. "The fact is that we rely on those who are significantly blessed with finances to succeed and keep the charitable work going. If the proposal passes, my guess is that it could result in a 5 to 10 percent cut in addition to everything else we've been putting up with.

These people have huge hearts, but they also have needs, and they can only be hit with so much."

And not only Jewish organizations will be affected by the proposal, OHEL's Gildin pointed out. "I think it's a problem for all charities, Jewish and non-Jewish," he said. "Everybody will get hit with the same policy, a policy that is not an incentive for people to give in an economy where people are already not giving."

The loss to charitable organizations nationwide could total several billion dollars a year, according to the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy.

The center examined how the proposed budget would have affected giving in past years, based on data on how much taxpayers deducted for charitable contributions. If Obama's tax plan had been in effect in 2006, Americans with incomes of \$250,000 or more would have decreased their giving by 4.6 percent, or nearly \$3.9 billion according to the center. People at that income level claimed more than \$81 billion in charitable gifts in 2006.

"If you have these new limits, this could spell a disaster for American charities," said Gildin. "Billions of dollars that people would not give makes a dent in an already difficult situation."

Not only would the wealthiest Americans be affected, he added, but so would the many people who benefit from the services provided by charities, which would be forced to cut back significantly on their services.

"Let's not forget those who depend on these charities," Gildin said. "Our ability to provide services that are essential in the community could be curtailed, compromised, or closed down. It would have drastic consequences for many groups and an exponentially negative impact throughout the United States. The timing of this could not be worse."

What do you think?

Comment online at

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## SEEKING SECOND SHOT AT PREDATOR CLERGY

Continued from Page One

thing."

Joel Engelman is currently suing Rabbi Avrohom Reichman, a teacher at the United Talmudic Academy, for sexually abusing him over a two-month period beginning when Joel was eight. The lawsuit also accuses United Talmudic Academy of reinstating Reichman as soon as Joel turned 23 and the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse ran out. Joel's attorney is Elliot Pasik of Long Beach.

The Albany trip was organized by Survivors for Justice, an organization that helps Jewish victims of sexual abuse work with police and civil authorities. Joel is a founding member. So far the group has brought mainstream attention to the issue of sexual abuse inside the orthodox community, including a confrontation between Engelman and his accused molester that aired on Channel 11 News.

Standing with her son who looms a head taller than her and dresses all in black, Pearl cuts a striking figure. She declined to be photographed but invited a reporter to her house for Shabbat. As an orthodox woman, Pearl represents a rare type of reluctant activist.

"I'm fighting for my son's life," she explained.

Pearl spent her day in a whirlwind of meetings with legislators attempting to drum up support for the perennial bill. It has passed the Assembly three times but failed each time to be brought to the Senate, largely due to former Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno and the influence of the Catholic Church, which would be liable for back damages in a large number of cases. The bill was to be brought to the Assembly on Tuesday.

Marci Hamilton, a Cardozo Law School professor and author of "Justice Denied: What America Must Do To Protect Its Children," believed the bill had a strong chance of succeeding.

"We all remain cautiously optimistic," she explained by

phone two days after the trip. "I think we're at a tipping point for survivors for sexual abuse."

Supporters stress that most victims do not come forward until they reach adulthood. For that reason, they say, current statutes make it nearly impossible to file criminal charges or bring civil suits.

Hamilton credited a cross-denominational lobbying effort by Catholic and Jewish survivors of sexual abuse to push the bill forward. Representatives of both groups met in Albany to lobby for the bill.

"The story's the same, it's an abuse of authority," explained Jim Shovah, whose son was raped by the family's preacher. "I didn't know I was turning my son over to a lion."

Speaking to The Jewish Star, Assemblywoman Markey, the bill's sponsor, was open to the challenges her legislation will face.

"My fear is with my own church they're using finance as a reason for not doing my legislation. The real reason is they don't want members of my church to know how extensive it [sexual abuse] is," she explained.

In November, Dennis Paust, the spokesperson for the New York Catholic Conference told The Jewish Star that his group opposes the bill since it unfairly targets non-profits and private institutions. The bill is "about bankrupting the Church," he said, and the Child Victim Act is simply "a trial lawyer bill to enrich trial lawyers."

Another opponent is Assemblyman Vito Lopez (D-Brooklyn), who sponsored a competing bill that would only extend the statute of limitations by five years and would not provide a new window for civil claims by abuse survivors. In a heated exchange with members of Survivors for Justice, Lopez defended his position by noting that the bill only extends the window for victims of private institutions and not public schools.

"That's discriminatory," Lopez said.

When it was pointed out

that Lopez voted for the measure three times in the past, when it passed the Assembly, he explained that on the last three occasions he "had not read it."

Rabbi David Niederman, Executive Director of the United Jewish Organization of Williamsburg, said that they were supporting Lopez's bill.

"This year-long window will make it impossible for innocent people to defend themselves and it will serve as a deterrent for qualified professionals to pursue a teaching career in private institutions," Niederman said.

However, support for or against the bill in the Jewish community is not uniform. "The Jewish community is not nearly as centralized. Even a large number of the rabbis would not mean the Jewish community is opposed or in favor," Hamilton noted.

Rabbi David Zwiebel, Agudath Israel's Executive Vice President, said that they have not yet taken a position on the issue.

"It's a subject of conversation at the highest levels of our rabbinical leadership," Rabbi Zwiebel told The Jewish Star.

"There are likely to be real-life cases that are resuscitated as a result of the passage of such a bill. And that is part of the consideration," he elaborated. "You can't ignore the real world potential of a bill like this in evaluating whether it is the correct thing for our community to embrace. On the other hand, you can't ignore the real impact on victims of abuse."

After a wearying day, the bus left Albany at 4:30 p.m. and arrived back in Williamsburg close to 8:00. Midway through the ride, the bus erupted in cheers when it was announced that Israel Weingarten, who was accused of sexually abusing his daughters, had been found guilty. Pearl asked her son to take out a sweet noodle kugel from the brown bag and give it out to the rest of the riders.

"It's not up to us to accomplish," she said, echoing a passage in the Talmud. "It's for us to do."

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PARSHAT VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

Virtuous testimony

BY RABBI AVI BILLET

After the debacle of the Golden Calf, the question must be asked: were the Israelites completely forgiven for their sin?

Sure, G-d allowed them to survive, with minimal loss of life (0.5 percent of the army age males were killed), and even Aharon retained his post as High Priest. G-d changed His attributes of mercy and made it easier for His "chosen nation" to be fallible humans who can repent when they do wrong.

After the whole incident plays out, the Torah continues with its description of how the Mishkan — the original synagogue — was put together.

The first component of this week's double Torah portion talks about the creation of the materials and the vessels, while the second half of the "double parsha" is the actual erecting of the building, complete with all its accoutrements placed where they were meant to be.

In 38:21, we are told: "These are the accounts of the Tabernacle, the Tabernacle of Testimony..." In this verse, the word "Mishkan" is repeated, and the term "Ha-edut" is added to it, seemingly to describe what kind of Mishkan was constructed.

Whether this was so can be debated.

The Midrash (51:4) asks a more pointed question. Why is it called the "Tabernacle of Testimony?"

Rabbi Shimon bar Yishmael says it became testimony to the entire world that the Israelites had been completely forgiven, and that this forgiveness had come from G-d.

The Midrash produces a parable: A king took his beloved wife, whom he loved most of all, and became angry with her over some incident, and he left her. Her neighbors told her, "He's not coming back, you know."

shall come to visit you." When that day came, the king showed up and they made peace with one another. He entered the palace and they ate and drank together.

Her neighbors could not believe it! However, as soon as they smelled the spices [her perfume], they knew the king and his wife had reconciled.

The Midrash explains that this is exactly what happened with G-d and the Israelites. He had invited them to His palace at Sinai, gave them the Torah, and called them a "kingdom of priests." After 40 days they sinned, and the nations of the world said, "He is never coming back to you Israelites."

Moshe expressed appreciation that G-d forgave His people, but he also requested that G-d make it clear to the nations of the world that Israel had been forgiven for its misdeed. G-d said, "I shall rest My presence in your midst, and all will see that I have forgiven them."

Perhaps the smell of the ketoret (incense) parallels the smell of the king's wife's perfume.

Post the Golden Calf, the Jewish people were blessed with a tremendous opportunity — if not a great responsibility. They needed to show the world that the responsible parties had been removed from the situation, and that the Jewish people were now living virtuous lives.

In a big world in which anti-Semitism is on the rise, members of the global Jewish community must live lives bearing witness to the fact that the Jews have been forgiven by G-d for any misdeeds, that we have weeded out those who seek to do criminal acts, and that we aim to live virtuous lives, as best as we possibly can.

It is time for us to earn the title we were so nobly given by G-d many years ago, to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Avi Billet welcomes your comments and thoughts at avbillet@gmail.com.

For a complete listing of upcoming community events, including items that didn't make it into the print edition, go to www.thejewishstar.com.

Oceanside - The Young Israel of Oceanside will host Malcom Hoenlein as a scholar in residence on Shabbat Vayakhel/Pekudei, March 20-21.

Merrick - Congregation Ohav Sholom is hosting a Melave Malka on Motza'ei Shabbat, March 21 at 9:00 p.m.

Cedarhurst - The Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst is hosting a spring session of the Beit Medrash Program featuring lectures by Rabbi David Fohrman.

Oceanside - The Young Israel of Oceanside is hosting a pre-Pesach lecture on Tuesday, March 24, from 8-9 p.m.

ON THE Calendar

Cedarhurst - The JCC of the Greater Five Towns Kosher Culinary Institute will host Naomi Ross, founder of Jewish Cooking Concepts, on Wednesday, March 25 at 10:00 a.m.

Cedarhurst - The JCC of the Greater Five Towns is having their seventh annual fundraising dinner on Wednesday, March 25 at The Sephardic Temple, 775 Branch Boulevard at 6:30 p.m.

Oceanside - The Friedberg JCC is hosting Haggai Carmon on Thursday, March 26 from 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Cedarhurst - The Young Israel of Lawrence Cedarhurst is holding their 28th annual dinner on Motza'ei Shabbat, March 28, honoring Rabbi and Rebbetzin Moshe and Sori Teitelbaum.

Lido Beach - Lido Beach Synagogue will celebrate their 42nd Annual Dinner in honor of Evelyn and Manny Gross on Sunday, March 29 at the Lawrence Village Country Club.

Cedarhurst - The JCC of the Greater Five Towns has scheduled a "Cooking Concepts" class, just in time for Passover, with Chef Naomi Ross, on Tuesday, March 31 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Lawrence - Parents of students in District 15 are reminded to file their child's request for Private School Transportation no later than April 1, 2009.

Looking for a Passover seder?

This year, UJA-Federation of New York's Resource Line will offer referrals to those in the New York Jewish community who wish to observe the holiday but don't have a place to participate in a seder.

Woodmere - The Young Israel of Woodmere hosts a Torah Conference Call (TCC) Program every Monday through Thursday from 12:30 to 1:00 p.m., and Sundays from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Long Beach - Long Beach Medical Center hosts a Gamblers Anonymous group Mondays at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Room D at Long Beach Medical Center, 455 E. Bay Drive.

ONGOING EVENTS

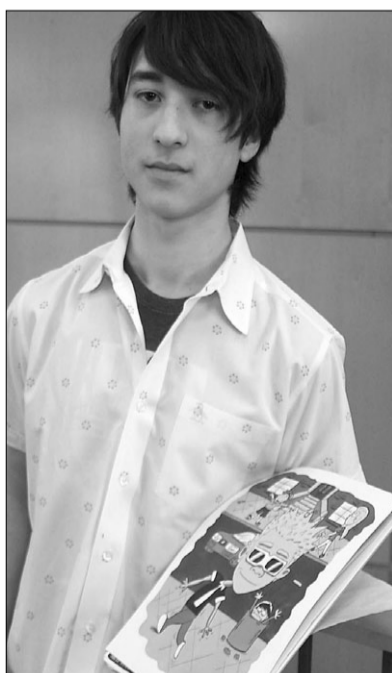
Cedarhurst - The Beis Medrash of Cedarhurst is introducing a Flexible Morning Learning Program, which will take place every Monday through Thursday from 10:30 a.m. until 12:45 p.m.

Cedarhurst - The "Sunday Night Torah Lecture Series" in memory of Shari Siman-Tov z"l is held weekly at 8:00 p.m. at Congregation Shaare Emunah, the Sephardic Congregation of the Five Towns.

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# Shedding new light on Bircat HaChama

YU symposium explores the unique blessing

BY YAFFI SPODEK

Bircat HaChama, a blessing on the sun that is recited just once every 28 years, can be made on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, Erev Pesach, when the sun is said to occupy the same position in the solar system as it did when it was created on the fourth day.

Rabbi J. David Bleich — whose book, "Bircas HaChamma," (Artsroll, 1981) was updated and re-issued this year in honor of the occasion — drew a standing-room-only crowd when he addressed the topic on Sunday at Yeshiva University. Hundreds of men and women came from all over the tri-state area and gathered in Furst Hall on YU's Washington Heights campus to hear Rabbi Bleich and other Torah scholars discuss the solar phenomenon from both a halachic and scientific perspective.

In his opening remarks, Rabbi Yona Reiss, Dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), introduced the topic by relating its Talmudic source in Masechet Brachot (59b). There, Abaye explains that the blessing — "oseh ma'aseh b'reishit — is recited when the cycle of the sun is completed every 28 years, at the time of the vernal equinox.

Rabbi Reiss noted that this year's occurrence is the 206th time that Bircat HaChama will be recited since the world's creation in year 1. He pointed out that the infrequency of the bracha (blessing) turns its recitation, and the days leading up to it, into a time for reflection, "on where we were 28 years ago and where we will be 28 years from now."

"The sun rises and the sun sets," Rabbi Reiss observed, quoting a verse from Koheleth, "which is a metaphor for all of life and our experiences."

Rabbi David Pahmer, Shoel U'Meishiv at RIETS, then took

the podium and gave a detailed multi-media presentation on the astronomy behind the blessing of the sun, and how Chazal (our sages) were able to calculate its precise time and date.

"The sun takes exactly a year to make a full circuit around the sky," Rabbi Pahmer said, noting that the moment of the vernal equinox occurs when the sun is on the celestial equator. Although the equinox technically falls out on Tuesday, April 7 at 6:00 p.m., that night is halachically the beginning of the fourth day. Therefore, he concluded, April 8 is the day on which one should look at the sun after it rises and recite the blessing.

Rabbi Bleich spoke next and, intent on not repeating any information found in his book, chose to focus on the specific text of Bircat HaChama, "oseh ma'aseh b'reishit." He believes that these words, also used in other blessings, characterize three distinctive types of brachot.

The first type is a bracha said over natural wonders such as the Grand Canyon or Mt. Everest. "This is a bracha on a historical phenomenon of ma'aseh b'reishit," Rabbi Bleich said, "something that you don't see on a regular basis and you are thanking Hashem for creating it when He created the world."

The second kind of bracha is made on a creation that Hashem is creating right now, such as lightning. "It is a bracha for presently created phenomena," said Rabbi Bleich. "The problem is that we are desensitized, and every once in a while, we need a jolt to realize that teva (nature) is really just another neis (miracle) from Hashem."

The third and final type of bracha which uses the phrase "oseh ma'aseh b'reishit," is the Bircat HaChama, which Rabbi Bleich defines as an "evocative bracha."

"It's not responsive to what Hashem has created in the past

or present," he observed, noting that although the sun won't look any different on April 8, it will be returning to the place in which it was created. "This is a reflective bracha, so I can internalize what I see and think about this experience. It's designed for reflection and introspection."

What is unique about Bircat HaChama, Rabbi Bleich continued, is that nobody would understand its significance unless they had studied it beforehand. This analysis of the celestial world brings one to the realization that the universe is "galgal v'chozer" (a repeating cycle) only because Hashem guarantees its existence.

"Bircat HaChama is praising Hashem for continually creating the universe," Rabbi Bleich stressed. "It is a result of our intellectual awareness after reflection and introspection."

Rabbi Bleich also pointed out that the date to recite Bircat HaChama fell out on Erev Pesach at only two other times in history: Yetziat Mitzrayim (Exodus from Egypt) and the year preceding the miracle of Purim, both occasions after which the Jews merited a geulah (redemption).

"That is not to say that this means the geulah is coming this year," Rabbi Bleich quipped, "but since the next time it will occur on Erev Pesach is in about 500 years, I will say that this year is the last Bircat HaChama guaranteed to be on Erev Pesach."

He concluded by offering a connection between Bircat HaChama's reflective nature and Pesach, when a person is obligated to view himself as if he had left Egypt — two "evocative" mitzvot recognizing Hashem's hashgacha (Divine providence).

"When these two mitzvot fall out at the same time," Rabbi Bleich observed, "they are two yesodot (foundations) of emunah (faith) coming together, and these two concepts are not unrelated to the geulah."

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KOSHER BOOKWORM

Pesach and Moshe's legacy

Recently I came across a very astute observation that will serve as the theme and tone for the Bookworm essays for the coming holiday season. Written by Rabbi Dr. Francis Nataf, one of Israel's premier young theologians and religious thinkers, it is as follows:



Alan Jay Gerber

"We are now in the season of faith-building that begins at Purim and ends at Pesach. More than at any time in our calendar, it is a season when we remember the long term. It is a time of reading the Megillah and recounting the Haggadah. In this context, we may first be surprised to recall that these documents tell us about processes that pass through the darkest times in Jewish history. And yet there are few times that surpass the joy of these readings. Year after year, we are overwhelmed

by the bird's eye clarity of these presentations. Through them, we are able to see that the context of darkness was one of deliverance and unparalleled Divine revelation.

"As a people, being able to see a bright future throughout the worst of times has allowed us to survive. Knowing that there are generations that will follow and carry on our mission and lead mankind to communion with G-d has certainly given more than one Jew the sense that no matter how hard, there is reason to keep going, to have and raise children and above all to stay Jewish."

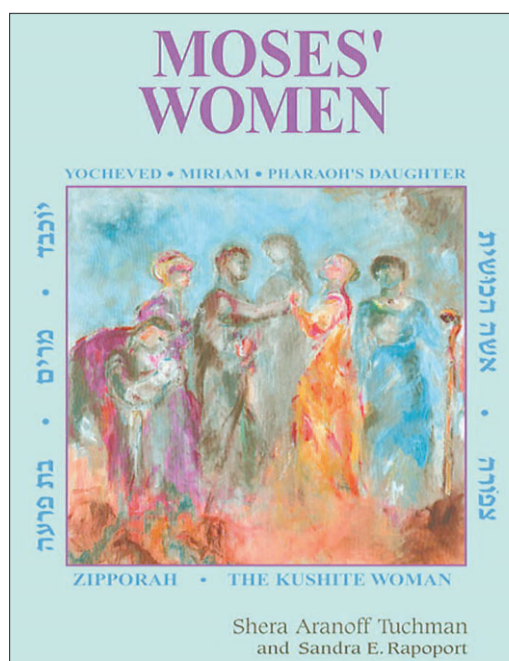
"It may not be an exaggeration to say that a key to Jewish longevity is the awareness of longevity itself."

Herein we have that magic

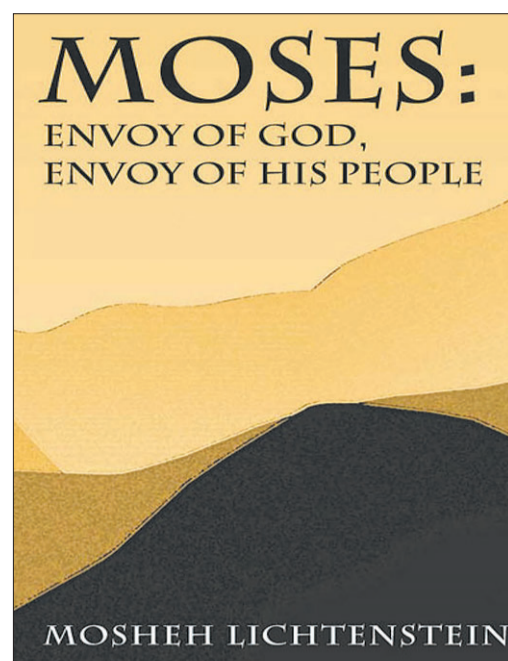
formula that has kept us a people who have survived, from Biblical times to this day. Being the only nation from those bygone days who still inhabits the same land, adheres to the same faith and speaks the same language, we have come to see longevity through the eyes of history as seen in the words of the Bible and in the writ of our holy liturgy.

The books to be reviewed in the next few weeks will reflect this theme. The holiday of Pesach is filled with the awesome story of the struggle for religious and physical freedom. This is played out in the actions of those who led us under divine guidance, the main player being Moshe son of Amram, the Levite. It was to be Moshe's destiny to be our people's liberator, lawgiver and arbiter of the very standards by which our faith is guided upon to this very day.

"Moses: Envoy of God, Envoy of his People," (Ktav,



Shera Aranoff Tuchman and Sandra E. Rapoport



Images courtesy Ktav Publishing

Two books of particular interest this week to The Kosher Bookworm.

Yeshiva Har Etzion, 2008) is a collection of essays, sermons and divrei Torah produced over the course of many years by Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein of

Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel. Taken together within this one volume and thematically linked through the personality of Moshe, Rabbi Lichtenstein brings together the great leader's spiritual impact and gives it a literary focus that few before him have ever done within the traditional mold.

Consisting of four sections, from the episode of the Burning Bush, the Golden Calf and the Revelation at Mt. Sinai, Rabbi Lichtenstein describes in sharp terms and images the history of that era and the personalities who inhabited the time, in terms of their spiritual impact upon our people's history and the history of the world.

The interpretive method employed in this book is based upon a literary analysis of the sacred texts coupled with an informed exposition of the interactions between Moshe and the people. This human touch is what makes this study of the events of the Exodus so unique as compared to other cognate works. Of particular interest to the serious reader would be the last chapter, "The Midrash and the Text," which is a methodological segment that details the author's exegetical approach. His detailed philosophical take of the text utilize the approach of Midrash as well, as an interpretive tool in dealing with the text.

According to Rabbi Lichtenstein, the purpose of this study is to provoke serious thought and stimulate interest in the parshiot, and to encourage an approach that factors the human element into its perspective. This approach aims to accommodate even those who have minimal appreciation of our religious tradition, but who would value a sophisticated approach based upon real history and learning.

"Moses' Women" (Ktav, 2008) is the next book dealing with another facet of Moshe's life journey. Written in seven parts, this study uses great detail to describe — in a very respectful and scholarly manner

— the role that various women played in Moshe's life, including Batya, Miriam, Zipporah and Yocheved.

Their relevance to Moshe's success and their influence upon his life and leadership style is given great attention. Based upon the classical sources and commentaries, from Radak, Targum, Rambam and Rashi, the authors also include the scholarship of such modern Jewish luminaries such as Rabbi Shaul Berman, Binyamin Lau, Adin Steinsaltz, Yehuda Nachshoni, and Yosef B. Soloveitchik, z"l, as well as Dr. Nechama Leibowitz z"l and Dr. Aviva Zornberg.

The authors are Dr. Shera Aranoff Tuchman, who teaches a weekly class in Biblical commentary at Cong. Kehilath Yeshurun (RAMAZ), and Sandra E. Rapoport, a litigating attorney who also specializes in rare Hebrew books and manuscripts. They are to be commended for their high quality of scholarship, made readable for all to learn from.

Moshe's longevity as a leader of the Jewish people served as the benchmark for what became the prime example of what defines religious and civic leadership for our nation. His longevity spanned the years from slavery to liberation, from the swamps of Egyptian servitude to the spiritual heights of Sinai and the borders of the promised land. No leader in Israel since has exceeded Moshe's combination of grit and determination.

The Chumash reads as a litany of woe and travail. These books give us a better appreciation of Moshe's legacy. Moshe was to prevail, as was the nation he led, to survive as a witness to G-d's presence among us and our world.

Taken together, these two books make for an interesting and informative reading and learning experience, thus setting an appropriate intellectual tone for the upcoming Pesach holiday.

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Courtesy YU Museum

The Chabad synagogue in Vermont was one of the many shuls Max Miller visited on his journey as he recited Kaddish for his late father.

## AROUND THE WORLD

Continued from Page One

day was such an important part of my life, I felt compelled to create images capturing this experience," the artist explains in a narrative posted by the exhibit. "I created a watercolor of each place where I said Kaddish — as a historic record and for personal reasons."

At the front of the gallery, a portrait of Miller's father against a silver background sets a powerful tone for the rest of the display. Each of the 50 paintings depicts one shul and every image is a vibrant watercolor done on paper, identical in its rectangular dimensions — but the similarities end there. What is striking about the exhibit is the diversity displayed in the paintings, both from an aesthetic, artistic perspective as well in the variety of shuls being portrayed.

Some shuls are painted from a bird's eye view, as if Miller is standing in a balcony looking down into the main sanctuary. These pictures are often abstract, and allow the viewer to get a general sense of what the entire shul looked like, from an architectural angle. Other paintings are more detailed and concentrate specifically on one aspect of the synagogue.

For example, in the picture of Temple Judea in Gables, FL, Miller focuses in on the intricately designed stained-glass windows, using a kaleidoscope of vivid colors to portray that aspect of the shul. The same detail is applied to Miller's painting of The Young Israel of Flatbush, a shul that held extra significance since his late father celebrated his Bar Mitzvah there in the 1930s.

In other paintings, Miller chooses to focus on various other components of the shul, including the parochet (curtain) covering the aron kodesh (Torah ark), the ark itself, the bima, rows of pews, hanging chandeliers, or a unique skylight featuring a Magen David (star of David), as is the case in The Shul at Bal Harbour, Florida.

Some paintings depict the shul from the outside, providing an exterior view of the building itself, and, even more interesting, the surrounding landscape and scenery. The Beth Israel shul in Miami Beach looks right at home against its balmy Florida backdrop, replete with palm trees and rays of sunshine lighting up the building. However, not every shul in Miami is located so strategically; Temple Menorah is based on a regular Florida street, as evidenced by the traffic lights and wires depicted in the foreground.

Also of note is the wide variety of shuls that Miller visited throughout his travels. Large majestic synagogues and smaller temples, spanning across the religious spectrum; places all across the United States, as well as several shuls in England are

all part of the exhibit. Well-known, more established shuls, such as the Bialystoker synagogue on Manhattan's Lower East Side are painted alongside more obscure venues such as Agudas Achim of Ohio and Havura in Vermont. A few paintings even depict people praying inside the shuls, both men and women — though their faces are not discernible — with some men wearing a tallis or yarmulke as well.

The exhibit also showcases Miller's written observations and thoughts on each of the shuls he visited. Some selections are descriptive analyses, as Miller admires the architecture of specific buildings, while others are anecdotal, with the artist offering entertaining commentary on the eclectic group of people he encountered along the way.

"Aside from his family, the two things that were most important to him were Judaism and architecture," Miller says, describing his late father and explaining his motivation to create the exhibit. "Presenting this project to the public provides an opportunity for those within the Jewish community and for those in other communities, of all ages, to witness and honor the tradition of the Mourner's Kaddish, and to reflect on their own humanity and spiritual journeys."

A second exhibit, "Testimony and Memory," features a collection of contemporary Torah mantles (covers) designed by Carole Smollan. Smollan worked out of studios in London and Portugal to design a series of ornately decorated miniature mantles from textile remnants of chuppahs (wedding canopies) she created for couples around the world, using silk, velvet, paint and stitching. The mantles have Jewish themes such as creation and the Ten Commandments, incorporating Hebrew and English verses from the Bible related to different stages of the life cycle.

The third new exhibit on display, "Joseph, the Bull, and the Rose" uses the theme of the bull (shor) and relates it to the biblical character of Joseph. Through a series of paintings, Mexican artist Anette Pier uses the image of the bull as a metaphor for Joseph, demonstrating how bullfighting is a dance and power play with the matador, paralleling Joseph's relationship with his brothers.

The YU Museum is open Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and Mondays, when admission is free, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. For holders of a Yeshiva University ID card, admission is free at all times. For more information, please call (212) 294-8330 or visit [www.yumuseum.org](http://www.yumuseum.org).



Courtesy YU Museum

A depiction of the exterior of the Cuban synagogue, a sephardic shul in south Florida, was among the 50 portraits in a YU museum exhibit featuring the work of Max Miller.

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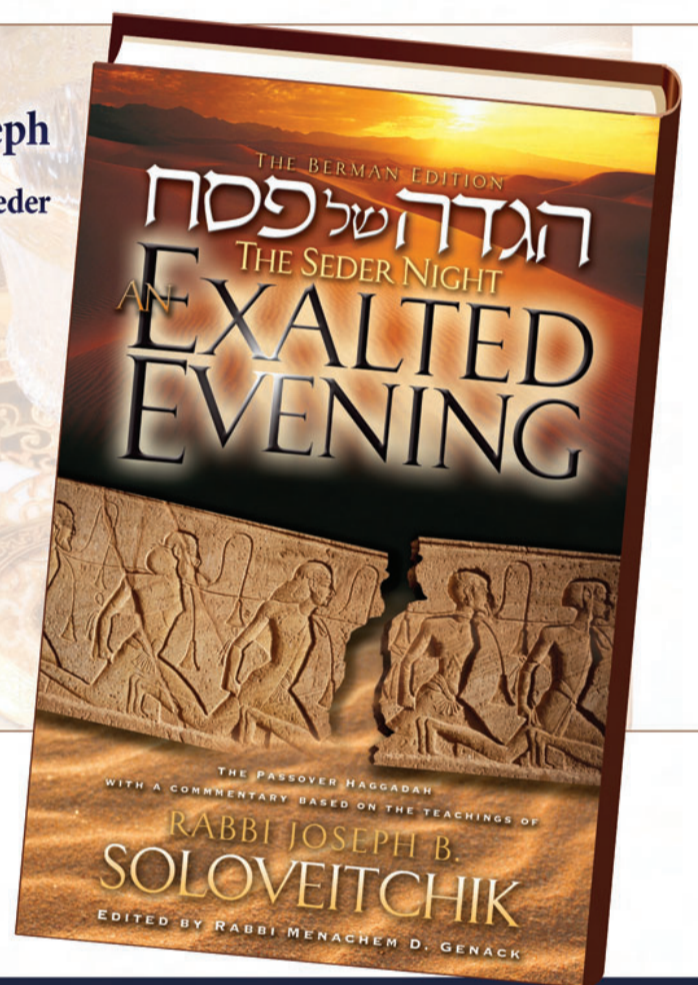
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### Manhigut Yehudit honors local leaders

Manhigut Yehudit, the largest faction inside the Likud party, celebrated its Seventh Annual Dinner on Shushan Purim, Wednesday, March 11, at the Sands of Atlantic Beach. Dr. Paul Brody of Great Neck received the Eretz Yisrael Award and is pictured in the middle, holding Israel's flag and dancing with his son, Joey. Manhigut co-founders Moshe Feiglin, president, and Shmuel Sackett, international director, are dancing in the left section of the circle next to Rob Muchnick, Manhigut's U.S. Director, with his son David on his shoulders.



Mrs. Shirley Slomka (left) receives her gift pillow from Sarah Golda Spira.

## Pillow party at Woodmere Rehab

On Shushan Purim, March 11, Sarah Golda Spira of Lawrence presented handmade pillows to the residents of Woodmere Rehabilitation and Health Care Center, as part of her Bat Mitzvah celebration. At a party held in February, the Bat

Mitzvah girl and her friends decorated the pillows and packaged them in gift bags adorned with the words "Feel Better."

Sarah Golda, a student at TAG, spoke to dozens of the residents during her visit and personally gave each one a pillow.

"As one walks up the hallway in the facility, each bed has a unique decorative pillow on it," said Leba Sonneberg of Woodmere Rehab. "Sarah Golda brought great joy to our residents with this outstanding mitzvah project."

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### ANTI-ISRAEL SPEAKER

*Continued from Page One*

proposed solutions, she instead relied on virulent tropes and clips from Al Jazeera (in one memorable YouTube clip showcasing non-violent Palestinian tactics, a non-violent protester used a slingshot on a civilian).

There was an easy distinction between the two different groups of people in the audience: Pro-Palestinian senior citizens with either long hair or no hair, and 20 or so very angry observant Jews jumping out of their seats. During the Q and A, Gershon was struck with a barrage of questions from audience members who gleefully pointed out her errors. In the best sequence of the evening a series of particularly large factual errors was uncovered and Gershon admitted that she "was not a historian."

"Then why are you here?" someone yelled from the back.

Alan Dorfman, president of the Five Towns Forum, struggled to maintain control of the crowd, pleading in Yiddish to no avail for people to "hold their horses," as an angry debate flared between audience members. Earlier in the evening, Dorfman shoved a reporter and used an expletive to tell him to leave. He apologized after the event; when asked for his thoughts he said the evening "could have gone better."

Earlier in the day the event itself generated some minor outrage with calls for a protest intended to force its cancellation.

Susan de Sciora, the library director, explained outside the lecture hall that she was in a difficult position.

"We don't support their view, but we are a public forum to meet and we don't censor," she said, adding that as an individual she thought that Gershon's opinion was one sided and that any cancellation would only "give prominence to those views."

The sentiment of the observant Jews who attended Gershon's presentation was one of unanimous disgust.

"It was a disgrace," said Carol Feinerman.

Ellen Duncan, a Five Towns Forum board member with an Irish accent said she was exceedingly happy to have invited Gershon, despite the controversy.

"We are in America, we have much more in common than our difference of opinion," she asserted.

However, another view was present as well.

"You're Jewish," an 87-year-old woman who refused to give her name informed The Jewish Star's correspondent, "and you think you're better than us."

No ma'am, just you.