

Berkshire JEWISH VOICE

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Jewish Sisters' Rock Band: Combating "Factory Farming" and "Cyber Bullying"



"Truth on Earth" - Tess, Kiley, and Serena

Through their original protest music, the progressive, social action, rock band 'Truth on Earth' — Jewish sisters Serena, 18, Kiley, 17, and Tess, 15 — are dedicated to furthering the fights against "factory farming," which sees animals undergoing immense suffering when slaughtered for food, and the fast-growing problem of "cyber bullying" — intimidation via email and other internet communication.

The first concern led to the teens' tune, "Factory Farm":

There are killers in here - They run this place. How'd it get like this? Take a look at their face. From the time I was born - this is all I recall. Blood and guts on the floor - smell of death down the hall.

Come join my nightmare now - You'll be sad you did. Hope you like my body parts, after they - slice me into bits. Welcome to our death camp here - on the

factory farm. The Nazis would be proud - Where the hell's our mom?

The second finds them singing. "Shot with a Bulletless Gun":

Last night I died a thousand deaths. Blindsided in the dead of night. I try to explain what it feels like - When you're shot in the back of your mind with a bulletless gun by a kid that you don't even hardly know.

Was it something I said to them - Eyedunno - As they plotted their vengeance - here it comes. There it goes. I tried to recall what I did that caused these viscous attacks on my personal life. Invisible swords thrown by kids that I barely know.

Kiley said of the group's first focus, **TRUTH ON EARTH**, continued on page 5

Eight Teens From Israel: Bring Wonder, Assumptions, and Opinions

By David Verzi



Lihi Shapira and Shira Glanz

Proving, perhaps, that at least in free societies it is a constant, in late December eight teens visiting from Bin-yamina, Israel, brought a characteristic mix of adolescent wide-eyed wonder, diversely-gathered assumptions, and sure-footed answers reflecting approaching adulthood as they arrived in the Berkshires via a program organized by the "Connecting with Israel Committee" of Hevreh of Southern Berkshire in Great Barrington, with individual daily events supported by various community sponsors including the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires.

Lihi Shapira, 17, Ela Ullmann, 17, Tal

Poran, 16, Shira Glanz, 15, Tal Koresh, 15, Guy Orr, 15, Lior Shilo, 15, and Itai **ISRAELI TEENS**, continued on page 6

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HEADS UP!



From 1 to 3 p.m. on February 12, 19, and 26, noted artist Michel Paul Richard will instruct, 'Heads Up,' a sculpture workshop that will see participants creating half-size heads in clay (story on page 14).

JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE BERKSHIRES ISRAEL SOLIDARITY DRIVE

The **Israel Solidarity Drive** will help provide the funds to address growing humanitarian and social needs among the 900,000 Israelis living under the threat of missile attacks from the Gaza Strip. These needs in Southern Israel have been identified by our partner agencies, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Jewish Agency for Israel, as part of a major UJC/Federation system effort to provide solidarity with the people of Israel during the current conflict. **The Federation system is committed to raising at least 10 million dollars to address the identified needs.**

Funds will be used for: Immediate relief and direct services and equipment to the most vulnerable populations including trauma relief, support packages of basic equipment and programming for children in bomb shelters, services for residents in absorption centers and single day and overnight respite activities for youth; services that support emergency caregivers such as team training and support for physicians, nurses, social workers, mental health instructors and first responders; and, services that reinforce local capacity under fire such as hotlines and internet sites that provide information and immediate trauma relief and refer callers for treatment. **No administrative costs will be deducted from funds raised.**

To donate by check, please make the check out to UJC Israel Solidarity

ISRAEL SOLIDARITY DRIVE, continued on page 11

Sderot: Standing Strong ...but Ready to Duck

By Michael Ury



Shelter in Netiv ha-Asara announces: "From Love, Peace is Born"

In mid-November, I attended the annual meeting, or "General Assembly," of the Federations of North America held

in Jerusalem.

On the second day, the four thousand

SDEROT, continued on page 14

PHOTO: DAVID VERZI

In My View

In Jerusalem – The GA 2008

By Arlene D. Schiff

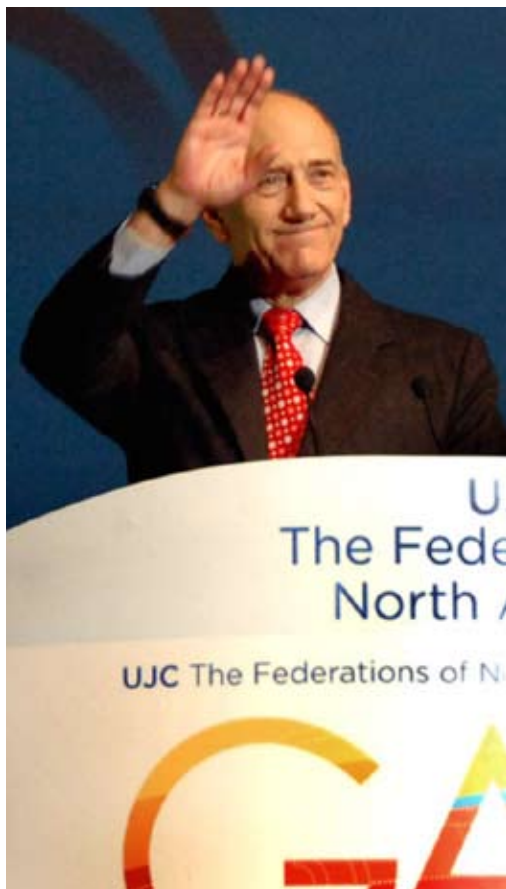


Every five years, the Federations of North America hold their annual meeting in Jerusalem. This year the event took place from November 16 through the 19 and as usual provided those attending with the unique opportunity to see how the Federation's overseas needs allocations improve the lives of Israelis, as well as to hear from some of Israel's top leaders.

"The General Assembly," as this gathering is known, opened with a plenary commemorating sixty years of partnership between the State of Israel and the Federation system. The keynote speaker was Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who said that Israel and the Federation system can cooperate to create a "stronger, more prosperous,

more secure Israel."

As many other speakers during the three and a half day event, Olmert noted that the main issue "uniting Israelis and Diaspora Jews currently is Iran, its nuclear ambitions, desire for 'regional hegemony,' and its support of terrorism in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the West Bank." He requested that the U.S. and its fellow coalition members impose economic sanctions to further isolate Iran.



Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

Olmert also addressed the 900 young people, representing Hillels from across the United States, members of the Israel Defense Forces, and other organizations focused on individuals ages eighteen to thirty.

He said, "You are Israel's greatest asset...you are the future leaders of the Jewish people."

Ze'ev Bielski, chair of the Jewish Agency for Israel, expressed appreciation for the support of the Federation system noting that in Israel "we don't take it for granted....We care about the dollars we get, and we work hard to see that Israel will be the state we want it to be."

The following morning, the opening plenary included presentations by President Shimon Peres, Nir Barkat, the newly elected mayor of Jerusalem, Adam Bronfman, Managing Director of the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, and a performance by the Jerusalem dance company "Ora."

Peres explained that oil "is poisonous," it makes poor people poorer and it is financing terrorism.

He noted that Israel's future is contingent on developing alternative energy sources such as solar power and water desalination. He said this would help "Israel become independent from petroleum energy consumption."

The President said Israel can use its position as a leader in medicine and medical technology to effect peace in the Middle East. He said there isn't a hospital in Israel that doesn't have Arab doctors and nurses working alongside Israelis. He added that his "Peres Center for Peace" has helped Israeli doctors treat 5,500 Palestinian children without health insurance and that it represented "the best investment in peace."

Peres noted the fourth area that Israel must lead in as "homeland security." Israel must continue to fight terrorism. He also advocated for a negotiated peace settlement with the Palestinians, stating: "None of us wants one state with two nations warring forever...We've had enough of it."

Peres said that peace agreements are painful because you have to negotiate with your own people as well as the other side. He noted, "Imperfection is a condition of life. If each side wants to win all the time you won't get anywhere...sometimes you need to close your eyes and accept what is possible to accept."

Peres stated that when he met with President-Elect Obama, Obama asked what he could do for Israel. Peres told him to be a great president of the United States; Israel is the only one who can make peace in the Middle East.

Peres closed by offering the words of David Ben Gurion: "The highest degree of wisdom is to uphold the moral code." Peres said Israel is "a nation with a destiny, a nation with values, a nation with the Ten Commandments — our job is to build a state that will set an example for the rest of the world."

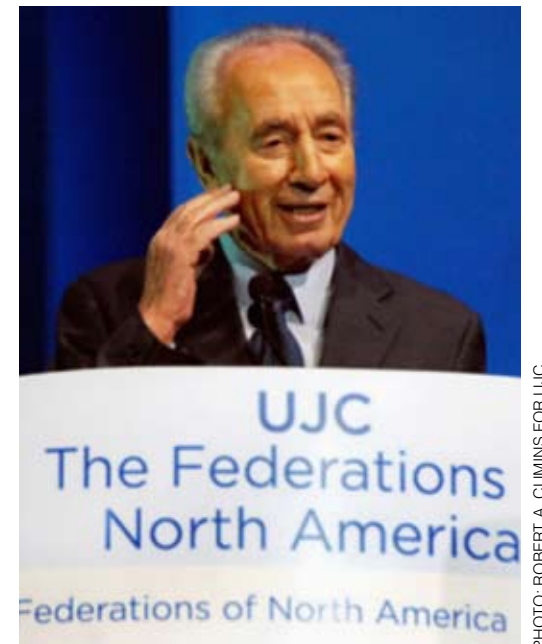
Mayor Nir Barkat offered his vision for Jerusalem. He said: "The capital of the Jewish people should focus not only on tourism, but business and job creation through public and private partnerships...Jerusalem should be and can be a world-class city. We cannot accept Jerusalem as the poorest city in Israel. It must be rich in culture, education, jobs...Every Jew in the world is a shareholder of Jerusalem."

Adam Bronfman said that the "Next Generation" grapples with why to be Jewish given the rise of religious intolerance and indifference. He noted that "the greatest challenge to the Jewish people is not from without, but from within... Jewish peoplehood is being threatened by a lack of inclusiveness. We must create a more welcoming community."

He further went on to state that "Young Jews gravitate to Judaism for ideas, community, and a passion for social action. We must encourage and empower the next generation to find their place in the Jewish community; we must make sure our tent is always open."

Following the plenary, we had the opportunity to participate in two breakout sessions. The first session I attended was titled "Educating Towards a Global Jewish Perspective" and focused on preparing the next generation of Jews to embrace a strong, meaningful Jewish identity, which is a challenge shared by North America and Israel.

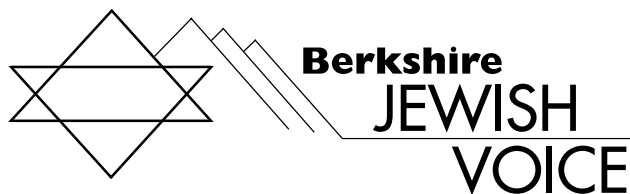
Speakers included representatives of Hillel, the Jewish Agency, birth-right Israel, and the Alexander Muss Institute for Israel Education. All of the speakers noted that the most successful method for instilling a strong



President Shimon Peres

PHOTO: ROBERT A. CUMINS FOR UJC

IN MY VIEW, continued on page 13



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Check out our website! www.jewishberkshires.org

Includes a Calendar of Programs and Events
 Sponsored by the Berkshire Jewish Community

DEADLINES

The next *Berkshire Jewish Voice* (Vol. 17, No. 4) will cover the period February 18 through March 26, 2009. The following edition (Vol. 17, No. 5) covers March 27 through April 30, 2009. **The deadline for press releases and other written submissions, all of which are subject to being edited, is February 17. Because of limitations of space and time, please be so kind as to not submit lengthy articles without first contacting the editor. Advertising deadline is March 11.** For a complete *Berkshire Jewish Voice* schedule, contact (413) 442-4360, ext. 11, or e-mail jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net.

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Texts and Tunes

Behind “the List” ...and “Hepcat” Klezmer

By Seth Rogovoy



Every writer lives in fear of being harangued by those who insist they have a story that *must* be told, and that the writer is the only one who can (and must!) tell it. Even scarier is when a writer is trapped by such a would-be storyteller and can't get away from him and has to listen to some wild tale, typically of some sort of sentimental heroism.

Such an incident happened to a young writer named Thomas Keneally when, after his beloved briefcase fell apart, he visited a luggage store in Beverly Hills, where he met Leopold “Poldek” Pferfferberg, who insisted that he had a story to top the one that the Keneally had just written, a

Civil War novel called *Confederates* (University of Georgia Press, 2000).

As Keneally relates in his new work of non-fiction, Pferfferberg was as charming as he was persistent, and so Keneally consented to look over documents that Pferfferberg insisted Keneally take home with him. The papers revealed the rich history of a conflicted Nazi soldier named Oskar

Schindler, including his efforts to rescue Jewish prisoners from the German death machine.

Originally titled *Schindler's Ark*, for better or worse, Keneally's *Schindler's List* (Simon & Schuster, 1994), has become one of the best known stories of the Holocaust, and through Steven Spielberg's award-winning film adaptation, has forever etched itself in the mass audience's mind as the primary image of the Shoah.

Keneally's new work, *Searching for Schindler* (Nan A. Talese/Random House, 2008), recounts the events leading to his writing the novelized version of the Schindler story, as well as recounting the making of the film. The book includes behind-the-scenes glimpses of Spielberg, Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, and Ralph



Author Thomas Keneally

Fiennes from the movie set. But more important, it's the memoir of how the writing of the book — a story which literally fell into his hands — and the subsequent hit movie based on the book forever changed the course of Keneally's life.

A new CD by Matt Temkin's Yiddishe Jam Band called “Poykler's Shloft Lied” (“Drummer's Lullaby”) revives the large ensemble or small orchestral klezmer sound of the 1940s and 1950s.

It's a style heavily influenced by swing-era arrangements you'd likely hear at weddings in New York and Philadelphia in the late-1940s and 1950s, as rendered by a multigenerational band led by drummer Matt Temkin. “Bor-sht,” for example, takes a classic klezmer melody and sets it to a “hepcat” groove propelled along by Temkin's hi-hat and Allen Watsky's swing-style electric guitar. Clarinetist Mike Cohen, trumpeter Jordan Hirsch, and trombonist Rachel Lemisch make a good tripartite front line, aided by special guest Frank London, the world's greatest living exponent of klezmer brass and best known for his work with the Klezmatics. They're all given their moment in the spotlight on the title track, a sort of Dave Brubeck-meets-klezmer-meets-Santana jazz jam.

“Poykler's Shloft Lied” is a welcome addition to the ever-growing catalog of new klezmer recordings, one that revives a unique and oft-overlooked era of some of klezmer's greatest creativity and innovation. And in the person of Matt Temkin, it also marks the arrival of one of the younger generation's most talented and knowledgeable drummers and bandleaders.

Seth Rogovoy (seth@rogovoy.com) is the editor-in-chief of Berkshire Living Magazine and the author of *The Essential Klezmer: A Music Lover's Guide to Jewish Roots and Soul Music*. His book, *Bob Dylan: Mystic, Prophet, Jew, is due from Scribner Books in 2009.*



Letters to the Editor

Federation Thanked By United Jewish Communities

Dear BJV Editor,

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires for its gift of \$23,863 for the Victims of Terror Fund.

As of November 1, [ed. note: which was before the current war with Hamas] the Fund has helped 485 people (of whom just over 100 are orphans) in 160 places. I have met with several of them from Sderot. Their stories are horrific, but their recovery has been greatly facilitated by the Fund.

For example, Geut Argon, who was in her home in Sderot, playing with her two small children when a Kassam rocket landed only a few yards away from the children's bedroom, totally destroying the room and its contents.

Despite the shrapnel that was lodged in her head and knee, Geut managed to crawl out of the rubble and rescue herself and her children. Geut underwent surgery that removed three pieces of shrapnel; one was deemed too dangerous to remove. The aid that Geut and her family received from the fund was used to repair the Argon home and augment the family's resources while Geut was in therapy.

The generous gift will make a real dif-

ference for people like Geut, whose lives have been shattered as a result of acts of terror against Israel. Not only does it provide concrete help; it also sends them a message of solidarity, telling them that they are not alone, that the Jews of North America stand beside them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to let you know how impressed I am with the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, which has been so caring and generous to those so far away. The kind of cohesion and fellow-spirit that must animate your community is a source of inspiration.

Of course, these things happen only with leadership — so “kol ha kavod” to the Federation and the others who have planned and implemented the fundraising.

Again, many thanks. As I said, your Federation and your community are making a real difference. That's the ultimate tribute.

Best Regards,
James M. Lodge
Vice President, Global Operations
United Jewish Communities
New York, NY

“Dnepropetrovsk” was “Yekaterinoslav”

Dear BJV Editor

The city of Dnepropetrovsk, featured in the October issue of the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* (“Dnepropetrovsk: Ukraine City Growing in Prominence”) was formerly named Yekaterinoslav and known as such by Jews who immigrated to the United States.

Yekaterinoslav, originally named for Catherine The Great, was changed by the Soviets in 1926 to Dnepropetrovsk, the city alongside the Dnepr River.

There was a Yekaterinoslav “landsmanschaft” — a Jewish benefit society of immigrants from the same town or region

— in New York City, the “Association Ekaterinaslaw,” which provided social, welfare, and burial benefits, with a society burial plot at the Old Montefiore Cemetery in St. Albans, Queens, New York.

A history of the Yekaterinoslav Jewish community is online at djc.com.ua, “History of Yekaterinoslav-Dnepropetrovsk Jewish Community.”

Sincerely,
Joel Morris
East Otis

Responding Re: “The Falash Mura”

Dear BJV Editor,

I am writing to discuss the recent JTA wire service op-ed piece by Nate Shapiro and Howard Lenhoff (“Help Ethiopians in Israel, Not the Falash Mura”) published in your December 4 issue.

To provide balance, I'd like to share my thoughts and experiences on the matters noted therein.

I am the founder (1982) and Executive Director of NACOEJ, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry. I participated at the request of the Israeli government in Operation Solomon and, with two other NACOEJ staffers, came out of Addis Ababa on the last plane. I have great respect for Nate and Howard and the late Graenum Berger, whom I revered for their work on behalf of Ethiopian Jews.

However, on the issue of the Falash Mura, I strongly disagree with Nate and Howard, and I feel honored to stand with Elie Wiesel, Irwin Cotler, Alan Dershowitz, successive Israeli Chief Rabbis, the (Ethiopian) Chief Rabbi of the Ethiopian-

Israeli community, the past president of the Israeli Supreme Court, many members of the Knesset, as well as the leaders of the Ethiopian-Israeli organizations and of the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform movements of the United States, who have urged that the aliyah from Ethiopia continue and that aid be provided to the community in Ethiopia in the meantime.

I will say briefly why I feel this is the correct position, and I can supply extensive back-up materials, letters, and reports upon request, including, a letter sent recently by current Israeli Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which addresses the most basic question: “Are the Falash Mura Jews?”

Rav Amar delivers a resounding “yes,” as do successive Israeli Chief Rabbis and the other leaders I have already mentioned. Available documentation on this point also includes a comprehensive

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The *Berkshire Jewish Voice* welcomes signed letters from our community on subjects of interest to the Jewish community. Letters are printed upon space availability. The BJV reserves the right to edit all letters for content and style. The BJV does not print anonymous letters, insults, libelous or defamatory statements. For verification purposes, please include full name, home address, and a day and evening telephone number. Concise letters are less likely to be condensed. Send letters to: *Berkshire Jewish Voice*, 196 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or email: jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net.

LETTERS, continued on page 5

Reflections

Tying Up Loose Ends

By Spiritual Leader Barbara Cohen



I wrote this column at 4 a.m. on Sunday, December 14, not only because it was due “in a few days” to the *Voice*, but more importantly, it was expected by its editor, David Verzi [ed. note: a/k/a “the deadline tyrant”].

However, noting that my next “few days” would be otherwise busy, I identified this column as a “loose end” — thus, it got me out of bed at a frosty and moonlit hour, as so many loose ends do.

It seems that those things that can be benignly classified as “to do” items and fit comfortably into daylight hours, when left undone grow ominous, larger, and cast a frightening shadow

in the dark of night as they become “loose ends.”

Suddenly, in the hours before dawn, “What’s the big deal?” turns into “IT’S A BIG DEAL!”

So, I made sure to tie up a loose end!

We are in the first month of the secular New Year, a time when many make resolutions seem important and there is a passion and commitment to pursue them.

“Exercise”, “diet changes,” “taking up the violin,” “learning a new language”...all seem shiny and bright and full of promise.

As Jews, this time of year might not hold the same spiritual gravity as does the High Holy Day period — when our New Year’s resolutions might tend toward more moral and spiritual strivings, but nonetheless, even here two weeks before 2009’s start, I feel looming in a big way “It’s Sunday Night Syndrome” — a condition well known to those of us who have never “shaken” school calendar anxiety.

Thus, it is surely time to tie up loose ends.

“*V’havienu l’shalom mai’arba canfot ha’aretz*”... “And bring us in peace from the four corners of the earth” is accompanied by the gathering of the *tzitzit* (fringes) on one’s tallit (prayer shawl), during the

Shema section of the morning liturgy, as both a physical and symbolic gesture.

The words speak of the hope of the ingathering of our people in our own land but can be interpreted more broadly to reflect the bringing home of all peoples from exile; our exile from each other; and the sometimes reconnecting the fractured parts of our own selves.

The November tragedy in Mumbai brought our community together to remember, to honor, and to resolve to not allow terror to undermine our personal and collective efforts for decency and mutual respect.

The fringes of our own society, the mentally and physically challenged, the poor whose numbers are growing every day, the sick, and the homeless...all need to be gathered together and held close, like the *tzitzit*, in love and as a reminder of our interdependence and common fate.

Some things cannot be planned for, in advance, as alas, we do not possess the prophet’s gift, but taking care to be thoughtful about our lives and our wishes and sharing them with our loved ones and our communities, is a way to feel woven into the fabric of our world.

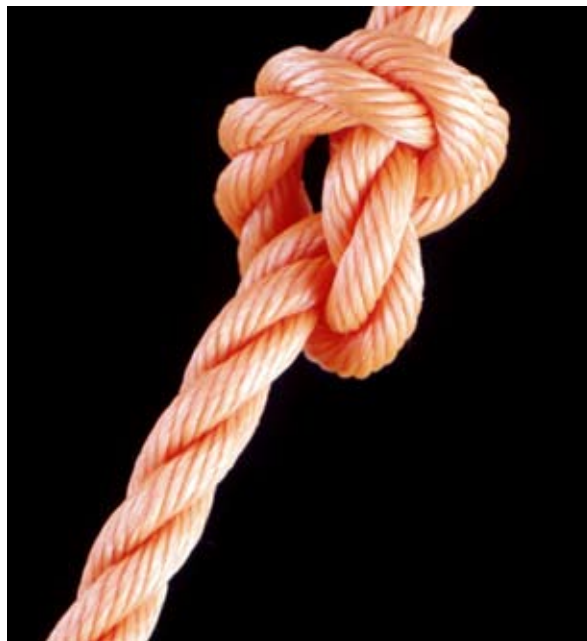
Our health care choices, our end of life directives, and plans for our own funerals, far from being morbid, are ways that we remain conscious of our relationship to others and of the responsibility that we have for our own lives that even survives us.

At Congregation Ahavath Sholom we are beginning to explore this issue as a community and hope to find ways that our community can be an even greater part of our sense that we are “known”...in all phases of our lives.

So, along with losing those extra few pounds, practicing your violin, and finding someone with whom to speak Esperanto, make this a time to tie up some loose ends!

Gather up your four corners and continue into this New Year with all of the hope and promise it holds for us all.

Spiritual Leader Barbara Cohen serves Congregation Ahavath Sholom in Great Barrington.



A loose end tied!

Young Judaism

Journey to the Rabbinate: First Step

By Rachel Maimin



I have begun my journey in Rabbinical School at the Reform Movement’s Hebrew Union College. This first year, spent in Israel, began with a six-week “ulpan,” an intensive Hebrew-language-plus program.

Thanks to the generosity of the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, I had the opportunity to engage a five-hours-daily study of Hebrew, working not only on grammar, reading, writing, and speaking, but also, importantly, undertaking an exploration of Israeli culture, an endeavor that will continue throughout the academic year, along with many foundational courses for the Rabbinate.

Through texts, newspapers, radio broadcasts, film, and even a few field trips, I started to learn what drives Israeli society.

I arrived in Israel barely feeling comfortable speaking Hebrew; today I have improved enough that I am able to carry on conversations in class and in restaurants, taxis, stores, as well as with my neighbors.

My increased understanding of Hebrew has given me insight into the society in which I am living this year. By far the most fascinating of these courses is a weekly “Israel Seminar.” Through this course, I am being given more than a glimpse into the reality of Israel — through trips to the Galilee and Golan Heights in the North to discuss the early waves of immigration to Israel and to Haifa and Tsfat to learn more about the Progressive Movement in Israel and Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah.

I have had amazing opportunities: learning from well-known Israeli authors such as Eli Amir and Etgar Keret; discussing Israel and Judaism with some of the top high school students in Haifa and Jerusalem; and visiting historical museums in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Particularly meaningful was a day spent learning about Israeli collective memory, civil religion, and the shared beliefs and values of the state.

I visited Mount Herzl, which houses a military cemetery and the graves of many key Zionist leaders and learned about the celebrations of Israel’s Independence Day that occur at Theodore Herzl’s grave at



Rachel Maimin with friend Sarah at an Israeli vineyard

the summit of the mountain.

Tellingly, at the base of this mountain lies Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

As I walked through this museum, I was encouraged to “take it in” not only as a visitor, but also as future Jewish leader.

This attitude permeates my learning; not only am I living in Israel for the year, exploring my relationships with the Jewish State, but I am learning how to help others discover the depths of their interactions with, and understanding of, Israel. Through my study of Hebrew, contemporary Israeli society, and the ancient sites, I am absorbing much of Israel.

My hope is that one day in the future, I will be able to help others experience Israel in the classroom and by leading trips.

Spending her first year studying in Israel, Rachel Maimin, of Lenox, is a rabbinical student at the Reform Movement’s Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.



Rachel Maimin and friend, Rachel, visit a “Shuk” (marketplace) in Jerusalem

FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

TRUTH ON EARTH, *continued from page 1*

"Animals are crammed in cages, separated from parents and siblings, whipped, beaten, tortured, lanced, stabbed, butchered, skinned alive, experimented on, and forced to live and sleep upright or in inhumane conditions in feces and with dirty water. Just as in the Holocaust, animals are routinely degraded in factory farms by sociopaths."

With regard to cyber bullying Serena noted, "Rumors and bad things, usually always lies, can be spread about you to hundreds of people, in a matter of seconds. I was 'cyber bullied' by a group of teenage girls who didn't even know me. People who do this are cowards who can't control their emotional problems in manageable ways so they instead hide behind the computer and say things they would never have the guts to say to your face. Unfortunately, perception is reality and other kids often believe what they hear whether it is true or not. Before you know it, whole groups of people are against you. It can be a very scary thing."

Added Kiley, "There is a new psychosis developing in the minds of kids today where their alter-ego personality makes them think they are safe to hide behind technology and that it somehow immunizes them from their criminal acts. Our music is on the frontline of helping the march forward in a counter assault against this unacceptable

behavior."

Though Humble, Texas-based "Truth on Earth's" opinions and lyrics are uncompromisingly stark and graphic, they see their message as: fully in line with Jewish tradition; within the mission of tikkun olam ("repairing the earth"); a tribute to highly respected icons of the past who engaged in peaceful protest; and in the spirit of their family's tradition of vegan practice (not eating meat, fish, dairy products, or eggs).

Serena noted that she considers veganism to be beneficial for spiritual as well as health reasons and that the group's non-violent diet joins in a logical way with Judaism as the foundation for the general outlook expressed through their music.

"Jews have historically been quite possibly the most persecuted people and at the same time maybe the most blessed by God, proportionate to our small population" said Serena. "Because of this experience, we believe we must be fully respectful and obligated to God by always practicing the most peaceful and humane lifestyles. In our case, that's manifested in our diets, our views, and our music."

Noted Kiley, "In addition, our band's name, lyrical messages, and powerful but peaceful world-changing mission is based upon the lives of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr."

And, as if to answer any critics who might think the three teens are taking on a task that



"Truth on Earth" – Judaism is the foundation of their contemporary protest music

will prove too daunting, Kiley added, "It was Margaret Mead who said 'never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has'."

"Yes we know," said Kiley, "that there are far too many problems in the world for us to tackle them all by ourselves. But, we believe that if like-minded people work and help each other, there isn't anything we can't accomplish together. That's why it is critical we connect and spread

the word."

Tess was quick to point out that the increasingly popular group's concert proceeds also significantly buoy up their philosophy. "Seventy percent of our profits," said Tess, "go toward supporting causes and organizations we feel are making a difference and the rest is for our equipment, traveling, and a college fund."

"This is a band that walks their talk," said recording artist, and composer Peter Buffett, son of billionaire businessman

Warren, while other well known philanthropic personalities have taken note as well.

Said actor and environmentalist Woody Harrelson: "Truth on Earth is very cool. I really dig what they're about."

Also expressing concern about such issues as world hunger, child abuse, the effects of war, media violence, and substance abuse, "Truth on Earth's" latest release, "Peace through Non-Violent Protest" is available on the "Reveal Entertainment" label.

LETTERS, *continued from page 3*

responsum written by Rabbi David Golinken of the Conservative movement.

As to accusations that Falash Mura in Israel secretly attend Christian churches, missionary Bible classes, etc., I am shocked at the "op-ed's" retelling these old, completely unsubstantiated tales.

I tried on many trips to Israel to find evidence of such behavior. There was none to be had. I begged accusers to give me names, places, and dates. No one would (or could).

In contrast, I have authoritative, signed statements refuting the charges, and testifying that the Falash Mura are practicing Judaism in Israel. I myself can testify that in Ethiopia they pray and study in a program designed for them by the Israeli Chief Rabbis, called "Return to Judaism."

Today, the remnant of this community is eligible for aliyah only under very strict criteria (much stricter than the Law of Return), including unbroken maternal lineage, appearance on a 1999 census, and residence in Gondar for at least a year. We believe most of the 8,700 Beta Israel in Gondar will qualify—and we are asking that they be promptly examined for eligibility under these stringent rules, and that those who qualify be enabled to make aliyah as quickly as possible.

In the meantime (and the length of time is entirely up to the Israeli government), we must continue to feed and educate the severely impoverished, poorly nourished Beta Israel children in Gondar. (Land for

a new school for the children of the 8,700 has been donated to us by the Ethiopian government).

We have guaranteed to the Ethiopian government that we will aid no additional Ethiopian Jews. But to adequately protect the lives and health of these future citizens of Israel while they are still struggling for survival in dire poverty in Ethiopia, and to prepare them for aliyah, we need substantial financial assistance.

If the Jewish Agency wishes to take over this task, which we have longed for them to do, we will be very happy to relinquish it, and devote ourselves entirely to our very successful programs in Israel, helping thousands of Ethiopian-Israelis every year achieve the education they need to take their proper place in Israeli society.

For leaders of American Jewish groups who have played major roles in the redemption of Ethiopian Jews to have to waste valuable time and energy arguing over the aliyah of a tiny portion of a last remnant of this community, or the right

of Diaspora Jews (indeed, the obligation) to assist them while they are suffering in Ethiopia, is a terrible waste of our energies and resources.

Those wishing to discuss any of these matters further, can reach me at (212) 233-5200, ext. 0; by fax at (212) 233-5243, or by email at nacoej@nacoej.org (Attn. Barbara).

I will be glad to supply the back-up materials mentioned above.

For authoritative information about the political and legal aspects of this issue, or for details about the various census lists involved, please contact Joseph Feit of the New York City legal firm of Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett by email at JFeit@stblaw.com.

As a lay leader, Joseph has spearheaded the effort to obtain for the Falash Mura the simple right to have their qualifications for aliyah examined.

Let me again make it clear that this is a

humanitarian crisis. Elderly and infirm Jews, nursing mothers, families, and young children who came to Gondar in the hope of applying for aliyah at the small Israeli consulate there, are suffering needlessly. They cannot return to their original villages in Ethiopia, where they no longer have land or houses. Their needs for food, shelter, and medical

care must be addressed while the political and administrative matters related to aliyah are reviewed and resolved.

Sincerely,
Barbara Ribakove Gordon
Executive Director
North American Conference
on Ethiopian Jewry.
New York

VOLUNTEER? IT'S VITAL!

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FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

ISRAELI TEENS,

continued from page 1

Sagir, 15, attendees of the same Binyamina high school near Israel's central coast, had come to the United States to tour from Pittsfield to Stockbridge and New York to Boston — and celebrate Hanukkah and experience Christmas; ski and shop; and 'eat American' while interacting with their new-found teen friends in the Berkshires and their families.

The group talked easily of both here and home.

Coming from a small nation where "everyone is Jewish," the teens were curious and, possibly, more than just a bit concerned, about the survival of cohesive Jewish communities in the United States, which they repeatedly and emphatically noted as such a "big" country.

"You can cross Israel in six hours," they said, "It took five just to get from Newark Airport to Hevreh."

They noted that Judaism easily prospered in Israel, benefiting from a national "communal" consciousness, but the teens were quizzical: How could Judaism thrive in the United States where the stress was on "individuality?"

"In Israel we live Jewish culture all of the time," they said, "In the United States, it has to



Lior Shilo, Itai Sagir, and Guy Orr

be learned — one holiday at a time, one prayer at a time. Maybe, Jews in the United States have to be sure to learn each element to show that they are Jewish; to prove it. Maybe this is done so American Jews can pass the traditions on to future generations. In Israel, we just know the customs and Hebrew too, American Jews have to be taught these."

"For me, personally" said Ullmann, "being Israeli is part of being Jewish. For me to be Jewish, I have to live in Israel."

"But, yes," they noted, "we have a great deal of American popular culture in Israel. We like it, so we have it, but it will not and has not limited the growth of Israeli popular culture. In fact, in the past ten years Israel has really de-

veloped, caught up, and is exporting its own entertainment, fashion, and food."

"Americans," they said, "should come to Israel to see our real life; we're not all about war and we don't ride camels."

"And, like in the United States, we like 'to party' — but with less alcohol and drugs," said Orr, though all the teens agreed that parents in the United States were "more strict," because, from a domestic-crime point of view, America was far more "dangerous" than Israel.

One clear expression of the close, communal nature of their native land was the teens' unflinching sense of patriotism. With the armed service mandatory for both sexes at age 17, Shapira and Ullmann, noting their eminent entry, led the others in



Ela Ullmann, Tal Koresh, and Tal Poran

expressions of enthusiasm for the Israel Defense Forces.

With the role of women in combat limited, both of the soon to be female soldiers hoped for "military intelligence" training and assignments.

"Every Israeli girl's dream," noted Ullmann. "Of course, I am looking forward to service" she said. "It is important because we are surrounded by countries and groups who don't really like us, so we have to defend ourselves."

Said Shapira, "In addition, it is our responsibility to give back to our country and to our community."

While reflecting Israel's being encircled by hostile nations and terrorist organizations, the teens noted different reasons for the always imminent aggression.

Some identified jealousy of

Israel's Westernized economic, political, and social systems; some cited the history connected to the 1948 division of the land; others noted the desire of Israel's enemies to gain geo-political advantages; some said that the ongoing hatred was in itself "an ideology," almost, now, without reason; while others saw it as a strictly religious conflict.

Thus, with at least two to three years of military service in the unsettled region awaiting them after high school graduation, the teens plans for beyond (unlike their American counterparts) regarding university selection, course of study, and career were not at all clearly in view nor seen as pressing.

Yet, all were adamant about one thing — they would stay in Israel.

National Yiddish Book Center Seeks Interns

AMHERST — The National Yiddish Book Center is now accepting applications for its renowned "Steiner Summer Yiddish Program." The Book Center will select 18 students for six weeks of immersion in Yiddish language, history and culture, June 14 to July 24, 2009. The deadline to apply is February 2 and no prior knowledge of Yiddish is required.

Interns receive free tuition and credits (through the University of Massachusetts) for two undergraduate courses, and access to all Book Center activities and resources, including public programs, exhibits, and the Book Center's collection of a million Yiddish books.

In addition to intensive language and literature courses, each student engages in a scholarly, creative, or experiential learning project related to Eastern European or American

Jewish culture.

The curriculum includes a three-day field trip to Yiddish sites in New York City and several special events. Detailed information and an application form are available on-line at www.yiddishsummer.org.

The faculty teaching in this summer's program reflects the wide range of contemporary Yiddish scholarship and the variety of disciplines and subject areas related to Yiddish studies. Among them are: Samuel Kasow, the Charles H. Northam Professor of History at Trinity College in Hartford, CT and a lead consultant to the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw; Hankus Netsky, founder and director of the internationally renowned Yiddish music ensemble the Klezmer Conservatory Band and research director of the Klezmer Conservatory Founda-

tion, a non-profit organization dedicated to research in and perpetuation of Yiddish music; and Naomi Seidman, Associate Professor of Jewish Culture and the director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and a scholar of Yiddish and Hebrew literature.

Also, David Shneer, Associate Professor of History and director of the Program in Jewish Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, and an expert on Jewish life during the Soviet era; Yuri Vedenyapin, Yiddish language and culture instructor at Harvard University and the Summer Yiddish Program's Academic Director, whose special interests include old and modern Yiddish literature, East European Jewish folklore, and the history of Yiddish dialects and literary standards; Hanan Bordin, senior



Interns among 'the stacks' at the National Yiddish Book Center

lecturer in Yiddish Language at Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and Nahma Sandrow, author of *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater and God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation*.

This summer will see the opening of the Book Center's "Kaplen Family Building," a new educational wing housing classrooms, a student commons, a kosher kitchen, a recording

studio, and other educational resources. Beginning in fall 2009, the Kaplen Building will be the venue for innovative year-round educational programs in Jewish culture for adults as well as students.

Summer interns will have the opportunity to apply for the Center's "Jewish Cultural Fellows" program. Up to three interns will be selected to serve as Yiddish "ambassadors" on their home campuses, bringing first-rate Yiddish programming back to their own colleges or universities.

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