

Jewish prayer • UAE's kosher caterer • Days of Awe

# The Jerusalem Report®

SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

COVERING ISRAEL, THE MIDDLE EAST & THE JEWISH WORLD

## Between Heaven and Earth

Why is Jerusalem planning  
a cable car at a holy site?



09/09/2020

ג'רזלם ריפורט

המחיר בישראל: 21.00 ₪ באילת: 17.90 ₪  
NY & North NJ \$4.00 Elsewhere in US \$5.50

# Truly Outstanding

Tabor Winery, winner of 9 medals in the  
Israeli Best Value Competition 2019



**T A B O R - Better Together**

EMEK SHAVEH



- 10 Between Heaven and Earth**  
Why is Jerusalem planning a cable car at a holy site?  
*by Mordechai Beck*

LEAH RAAB



- 14 Jewish prayer**  
Alone and together in Jerusalem during the pandemic  
*by Robert Hersowitz*

COURTESY



- 20 UAE's kosher caterer:**  
Dubai-based Elli Kriel  
hosts both the US  
and Israeli delegations  
*by Linda Gradstein*

## VIEWPOINTS

- 8 Controlling the past**  
*by Robert Horenstein*  
**9 Five new year resolutions**  
*by Ariel Erani*  
**43 My Sar-El experience**  
*by Elizabeth Yellin Morley*

## JEWISH WORLD

- 17 Prayers to end the plague**  
*by Joel Rappel*  
**22 David and Laura Merage:**  
Philanthropists supporting Israel  
*by Steve Linde*  
**25 The 9/11 attacks and the resilience of New York**  
*by Joseph Scutts*  
**30 Reform Judaism in Britain**  
*by Neville Teller*  
**38 Doctor Chatterley's passion**  
*by Simone Cohen Scott*

## MARKETPLACE

- 26 Lessons from the Great Depression**  
*by Shlomo Maital*

## MIDDLE EAST

- 30 Macron in Beirut: When the past  
and present converge**  
*by Josef Olmert*

## CULTURE

- 32 A pianist's point of view:**  
The marvelous possibilities of music  
*by Riva Schertzman*

## HISTORY

- 34 How it really was! The rooster and the peacock**  
*by Avraham Avi-hai*

## COMMENTARY

- 38 Viruses, William Osler and antisemitism**  
*by Jacob Sivak*

## BOOKS

- 42 A literary adventure with Sar-El**  
*by Neville Teller*

## PEOPLE & THE BOOK

- 44 Days of Awe:**  
A time for reflection and a call to action  
*by Rabbi Ron Kronish*

## DEPARTMENTS

- 4 From the Editor**  
**5 Inbox**  
**6 Opening Shot**  
**7 14 Days**  
**46 On the Front Lines**

Cover photograph courtesy Emek Shaveh of an illustration of the planned cable car station in Jerusalem

Published By:

THE JERUSALEM REPORT  
PUBLICATIONS LTD. 2008

P.O. Box 1805, Jerusalem 91017  
Tel. (972-2) 531-5660

Editorial: [jerusalemreport@gmail.com](mailto:jerusalemreport@gmail.com)

Subscriptions: [subs@jpost.com](mailto:subs@jpost.com)

Website: [www.jpost.com/Jerusalem-Report](http://www.jpost.com/Jerusalem-Report)

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** Steve Linde

**SENIOR EDITORS:** Amotz Asa-El (News),  
Eric Mandel (Security), Linda Gradstein (Features),  
Shlomo Maital (Economics),  
Mordechai Beck (Arts), Ralph Amelan (Books)

**SENIOR CORRESPONDENTS:** Judith Sudilovsky,  
Patricia Golan

**CORRESPONDENTS:** Bangkok: Tibor Krausz

New York: Mark Banschick Paris: Bernard Edinger

London: Monte Jacobson Moscow: Julie Masis

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Mark Weiss, Robert Horenstein,  
Greer Fay Cashman, Avraham Avi-hai, Neville Teller,  
Shula Kopf, Paul Alster, David Geffen, Moshe Dann,  
Robert Hersowitz, Françoise Ouzan, Benita Levin,  
Josef Olmert, Rabbi Ron Kronnisch

**COPY EDITOR:** Avi Gold

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER:** Daniela Michal Gleiser

**ILLUSTRATOR:** Pepe Fainberg

**CEO Jerusalem Post Group:** Inbar Ashkenazi

## ADVERTISING

Israveel

15 He'achim Mi'slavita, Tel Aviv 67010  
Fax (972-3) 561-0777

## North America

86-90 188th Street, Jamaica, NY 11423-1110

## SUBSCRIPTION SALES

North America: 1-800-827-1119

1-888-576-7881 (8 a.m. – 4 p.m. EST)

Israel: \*2423

UK: 0-8000-283-945 (4 p.m. – 10 p.m.)

Australia: 61-2-9371-7549

Elsewhere: +972-3-761-9059

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

North America: 1-800-448-9291

Israel: \*2421 or 1-800-574574

Elsewhere: +972-3-7619056

All correspondence outside the U.S. should be sent to The Jerusalem Report, P.O. Box 57598, Tel Aviv 61575 Israel.

**Printing:** Hadfus Hehadash Ltd., Israel

The Jerusalem Report (USPS # 006-871) publishes 24 issues a year for \$109 per annum by The Jerusalem Report publications Ltd, P.O. Box 1805, Jerusalem, Israel and distributed in the USA by The Jerusalem Post (U.S) Inc, 86-90 188th Street, Jamaica, NY 11423-1110. Periodical postage paid at Brooklyn, NY and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to The Jerusalem Post, 86-90 188th Street, Jamaica, NY 11423-1110.

© 2020 The Jerusalem Report Publications Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction, distribution, replication, translation, storage on a database, or transmission in whole or in part of this publication without written permission is prohibited



## FROM THE EDITOR

### Of poetry and prayers

**I RECENTLY** received this poem from Roberta Chester, a Jerusalemite originally from Maine who authored *Light Years*, a wonderful collection of poetry.

#### In Those Days

*In those days the city lost its voice.  
The quiet rushed onto the roads and streets  
finding each crevice and alley, pressing  
against the stones  
and filling the vacuum that Nature abhors,  
its silence weighing heavily on us inside,  
and in all the outdoors.*

*In those days when the city lost its voice,  
masked and gloved we sidestepped each  
other past  
the shuttered stores, remembering the  
whistles and bells  
the steel scraping the concrete,  
the screech of tires against the curb,  
the wheels on the pavement  
the insistent shouts and cries calling back  
and forth  
each to each, the give and take of our  
public lives,  
the blaring, impatient horns and  
the brakes –  
all the cacophonous hum and raucous  
din of life.*

*Those days I wondered  
when later the real displaces the surreal,  
and we are relieved to dwell on our usual  
familiar fears,  
will we ignore being pushed and shoved,  
so grateful to heal  
we could forgive the oblivious, rude  
invasion of our space.*

*Will that noise that used to grate  
against my ears all day and half the night  
be, when it returns, a cause to rejoice –  
as sitting as close on the bus and in the  
café as we wish –  
we will speak to each other while the city  
speaks.*

Although this powerful poem doesn't men-



'Shacharit in quarantine,' by Leah Raab

tion COVID-19, its message is compelling. We all yearn for the time now referred to as B.C. (Before Coronavirus) and pray for an end to the pandemic. It reminded me of a Yiddish ditty I had penned, channeling my late father Hilyer Linde, just before Passover in April:

#### A Pessadik Poem

*Oy vay, I'm okay  
I hope you are too  
Don't sit on shpilkes and don't shvitz  
Be as busy as life permits  
COVID-19 struck with contempt  
Making humanity feel farklemt  
We survived Ramses No. 2?  
Nu, this plague will pass too!  
The world will weather the crisis  
Of farkakteh coronavirus  
Let's pray it'll all be over  
By NEXT Passover!*

Ahead of Rosh Hashanah, I was sent two superb stories – one on praying in Jerusalem during the pandemic by Robert Hersowitz, and the second on prayers to end the plague by Joel Rappel (both of which appear in this issue) – together with marvelous illustrations of Jewish prayers during corona by Ra'anana artist Leah Raab, whose works are on exhibition at the Leonardo Gallery, 13 Leonardo Da Vinci Street, Tel Aviv ([www.LeahRaab.com](http://www.LeahRaab.com)). In the spirit of the Jewish new year, we apologize to readers and ask for forgiveness if we have offended you in any way in our reporting and writing, commentary and cartoons.

Shana tova!

– Steve Linde

Send letters by email to: [jerusalemreport@gmail.com](mailto:jerusalemreport@gmail.com) Please include your full postal address. The editor reserves the right to edit letters as appropriate. Priority will be given to brief letters that relate to articles in the magazine.

**The British Jewish vote**

I found Neville Teller’s article regarding Britain’s Jewish voting bloc disturbing (“Winning back Britain’s Jews,” August 17). It would seem that the Jewish vote is based on the ideology that if you disagree with the consensus you must be canceled and fired. This abhorrence to dissent is accepted by Sir Keir Starmer as reason to fire Rebecca Long-Bailey and thereby win back the Jewish vote. Frightful. Whatever the values of Britain’s Jews today it is far from truly Jewish values of fairness, kindness and humility. In fact, it diminishes the Jewish community to be seen as needing to be coddled and protected by canceling its enemies. There are no easy paths to dealing with bigots. Beware Jews of Britain when a politician makes decisions based on scoring political points and not on ethical values you can be sure that when the time comes, Britain’s Jewish community will be collateral damage to another bloc the politician seeking to ingratiate himself with.

**Julius Ringelheim**  
New York, NY

*Neville Teller responds:* The failure of Labour under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership to deal with antisemitism within the party spread well beyond the Jewish community and became a major factor in the December 2019 general election, leading to Labour’s worst result since the mid-1930s. Keir Starmer dismissed Rebecca Long-Bailey because she had endorsed a typically antisemitic assertion by the actress Maxine Peake regarding the death of George Floyd – namely that the technique of kneeling on a victim’s neck had been taught to the Minneapolis police by the Israeli secret services. It was Long-Bailey’s failure to dissociate herself clearly from that endorsement, even when it had become obvious that it was totally untrue, that led to Starmer’s ethical decision to dismiss her from his Shadow Cabinet. It is not only the Jewish vote that Starmer is seeking to regain; it is the confidence of the British electorate as a whole.

**Arab and Jewish rights**

Over the past century many Jewish, Arab and Western leaders have had convenient amnesia over legal rights to

sovereignty in “Palestine” – which originated in the wake of World War I (“The Jordanian option,” July 6). In effect, in exchange for the Arabs securing their rights to establish states in Iraq, Syria and Transjordan, the Jewish people secured their rights to establish a state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

To provide the “Palestinians” (most of whom flooded into the embryonic Jewish state from different parts of the Middle East for jobs) with the right to establish their own state, the British – under their mandate which covered both sides of the Jordan River – ceded to the “Palestinians” an area east of the river four times the size of the area west of the river ceded to the Jews, which led to the establishment of the State of Israel (See: *A Crackle of Thorns* by Sir Alec Seath Kirkbride).

In conclusion: The Arabs cannot gleefully accept their national rights while denying them for the Jews.

**Jack Shebson**  
Arnona

**Important Notice to North American  
JERUSALEM REPORT  
SUBSCRIBERS  
Regarding Renewal Forms**

Recently, it has come to our attention that several companies are sending renewal forms to our subscribers and representing themselves as authorized agents of The Jerusalem Report. Please be advised that some of these agencies are not authorized to act on behalf of The Jerusalem Report, and this involves a possible fraud.

In order to renew your subscription, please respond to Jerusalem Post sales team calls, or fill out renewal forms sent by The Jerusalem Report/Post or by authorized agencies only.

Recent unauthorized agencies we encountered are: Publisher Payment Service, Austin TX, Pacific Magazine Billing, San Marcos CA, Magazine Billing Network, Reno NV, National Magazine Services, Elmsford NY, Publishers distribution Services, Brea CA, Publishers Billing Services, Reno NV & Escondido CA.

The fraudulent companies may use other agency names, so this list is not conclusive.

Should you have any doubts regarding the authenticity of a renewal form that you have received, please contact our Customer Service Department

**By calling toll free 1-800-448-9291 or by  
sending an email to subs@jpost.com**

**The Jerusalem  
Report**



# Opening shot

A young man carries balloons down Jerusalem's Jaffa Road as a light rail train passes by

MARC ISRAEL SELLEM



CHRISTOPHER PIKE/REUTERS

**HISTORIC FLIGHT** Jared Kushner, senior adviser to US President Donald Trump, US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien and Israel's National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat disembarked at Abu Dhabi International Airport after El Al's maiden flight to the United Arab Emirates on August 31. The plane, named Kiryat Gat and adorned with the word "peace" in Arabic, Hebrew and English, was also the first Israeli flight over Saudi Arabia. "I ask everyone today to join us in celebrating this peace, and to help us expand it throughout the region and the entire world," Kushner said upon arrival at Abu Dhabi, adding that the Abraham Accord between Israel and the UAE announced on August 13 would be signed at an official ceremony in Washington.

**TERROR ATTACK**

Rabbi Shai Ohayon, 34, was murdered in a terrorist stabbing at the Segula Junction in Petah Tikva on August 26. Police said the suspect, identified as Khalil Abd al-Khaliq Dweikat, 46, a father of six from the Nablus area – was arrested near the scene shortly after the attack. Ohayon, who is survived by his wife Sivan and their four children, Tohar, 13, Hillel, 11, Shiloh, nine, and Malachi, studied at a religious seminary in Kfar Saba.



COURTESY

**HEZBOLLAH THREATS** The IDF went on high alert for Hezbollah attacks on the northern border with Lebanon at the end of August after Israeli aircraft struck Hezbollah posts in Lebanon. The attack came in response to sniper fire against IDF troops near Kibbutz Menara, which caused no casualties. The IDF fired missiles at targets in southern Syria late on August 31, according to Syrian state media, reportedly killing 11 people, including seven Iranian-backed militants, three Syrian soldiers and a civilian.

**EXPANDING TIES** Kosovo will soon establish diplomatic relations with Israel and become the first Muslim country to open an embassy in Jerusalem, while Serbia will relocate its embassy to the city as well, US President Donald Trump announced on September 4 at a White House summit with the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo. A day later, Malawi's new president, Lazarus Chakwera, announced that his country would be the first African state with a diplomatic mission in Jerusalem. In response, the Palestinian Authority warned that it would sever ties with any country that opens an embassy in Jerusalem.

**FESTIVAL FUN** The Israel Festival and the Jerusalem Jazz Festival were scheduled to take place between September 3 and 12, despite the coronavirus pandemic. This year, the festivals included only Israeli artists presenting performances of theater, music and dance with some reference to the virus. Live performances were limited to small audiences, but the events can be viewed online at [www.israel-festival.org/en/](http://www.israel-festival.org/en/) and [www.jerusalemjazzfestival.org.il](http://www.jerusalemjazzfestival.org.il).



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

**SCHOOLS REOPEN** Education Minister Yoav Gallant accompanied Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a visit to a school in Mevo Horon as 2.4 million Israeli students began the new school year on September 1. The cabinet kept schools closed in "red cities" with high infection rates at the request of corona commissioner Prof. Ronni Gamzu. Israel was set to impose a night curfew in some 40 red cities and restrict movement over the High Holy Days after its death toll from COVID-19 surpassed 1,000 on September 6.



# Controlling the past

**IN GEORGE** Orwell's famous 1949 novel *1984* about a dystopian society, the protagonist, Winston Smith, works in the Records Department at the Ministry of Truth, the agency through which the ruling Party controls history, memory and "truth." The Party slogan ominously declares, "Who controls the past, controls the future."

*1984* is a warning about the mutability of the past and the dangers of systematic manipulation by denying, distorting, or ignoring essential historical facts. Control of the past, even when history is fabricated, determines what's taught (or not taught) in our classrooms, drives public opinion, and influences public policy.

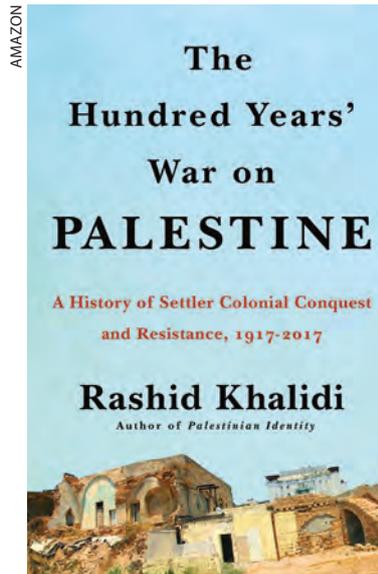
This is well understood by the protesters who've been calling for the removal of Confederate statues in the US because they were erected not as benign symbols of "Southern heritage," but as monuments in celebration of white supremacy. They're demanding that America own up to a past of deep-rooted institutional racism, one that has been largely whitewashed in our high school history courses.

Orwell's warning is also germane to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Notably, the Palestinians have achieved wide acceptance of their narrative of oppression and victimhood despite its falsifications of history. According to this narrative, Israel is a "colonial-settler state" whose establishment in 1948 was imposed on an unwilling indigenous Palestinian population that was dispossessed of its land and "ethnically cleansed."

The Palestinians' success is reflected in the sizable portion of both the American Left and Western European public that have fully embraced their narrative. Inaccurate historical accounts advanced by Palestinian propaganda, including misrepresentations of the Zionist movement, are often presented as fact on the pages of major newspapers and from the lecterns of scholars at prestigious universities.

Take, for example, a newly published book by Rashid Khalidi, a professor of modern Arab studies at Columbia University and one of the most prominent academics of Middle East studies in the US. Speaking on C-SPAN in Washington in February, Khalidi said he wrote *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonial Conquest and Resistance, 1917-2017* for "the American general reader." The title says it all.

Although Khalidi claims to draw on "a wealth of untapped archival materials," his book turns out to be just another recitation of the standard Palestinian narrative: Israel was established as a settler colonial state in Palestine with the support of the imperial powers, and the Zionist enterprise necessitated the removal – or at least subjugation – of the "indigenous" Arab population.



The cover of Rashid Khalidi's book

Khalidi's central premise is Zionist (and Western) culpability for all the tragedies that have befallen the Palestinian people. A compelling account—if only it were true. Indeed, it may have been more aptly titled, "The War on a Hundred-Year History of Palestine."

Nowhere in this book does it mention that the entire Arab world vehemently rejected the 1947 UN partition resolution in favor of a two-state solution for Palestine. The resolution, Khalidi laments, "was just another declaration of war... a blatant violation of the principle of self-determination." Yet, it was the creation of an independent Arab state in Palestine that every Arab government, backed by the Palestinians, voted against.

Besides, who "declared war" on whom? It was the Palestinians who initiated hostilities on November 30, 1947, the day following the adoption of the partition resolution. Immediately after the Jews proclaimed their new State of Israel a few months later, five Arab armies invaded it in what the secretary-general of the

Arab League called "a war of extermination."

Employing classic Orwellian obfuscation, however, Khalidi tells us the Arab armies didn't invade Israel, they merely "joined the war."

Of course, Khalidi's book is only the latest polemic that distorts the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Reading similar works, you won't learn that Palestine was a sparsely-populated, neglected territory of eroded hills and malaria-infested swamps as was reported by 19th-century visitors to the region, such as Mark Twain.

You'd have no idea that the early Zionists avoided purchasing land in areas where Arab tenant farmers might be displaced, settling for uncultivated tracts. You would miss the fact that a higher standard of living generated by Jews drew large waves of Arab immigrants to Palestine (Arabs subsequently counted as part of the "indigenous" population). Nor would you know that the 1948 Palestinian refugee problem resulted largely from Arabs fleeing their homes – often with the encouragement of Arab leaders – long before they were threatened by the fighting.

Sadly, this well-documented history is unknown or ignored in many progressive circles whereas the Palestinians' fictitious narrative is accepted as gospel. The latter must therefore be actively confronted and exposed. Otherwise, we may be headed for a future of declining American public support for Israel and rising delegitimization. ■

*The writer is director of community relations and public affairs at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland*



# Five new year resolutions

**ROSH HASHANAH** is the traditional season for Jewish New Year’s resolutions and fresh starts. I vividly recall opening up a new notebook at the beginning of every school year, excited at the opportunity to start fresh and get it right this year. To keep my writing neat, stay up to date with my schoolwork, and to record only good grades on its pristine white pages.

COVID-19 turned the world upside down and changed our expectations of education. As we approach a new academic year, we may resolve to make dramatic changes. To become more creative educators, as we strive to cope better with the new technologies that we are required to use. To prepare more engaging lessons for our students, as we help them adjust to the challenges of distance learning. What took us by surprise in the spring should now be familiar, and we all want this school year to be successful, productive and relevant for our students, despite the disruption of last year.

However, as adults, we know that we are unlikely to be able to fulfil all those good intentions. After a few days and a few pages, we will probably slip back into old patterns. We might lose our tempers with our students and ourselves. The challenges we face will not disappear; keeping our students inspired and motivated will not be any easier this year. Financial worries will cast their shadow over all of us, necessitating cut-backs and sacrifices.

So what can we realistically hope for in 5781? What New Year’s resolutions can we set for ourselves and for our institutions? How can we inspire our colleagues, students, and children to believe in a more positive future?

**1. Be honest.** Admit to ourselves, our spouses and our children when we are finding life difficult. Support one another through moments of doubt and anxiety. Let’s not try to pretend to ourselves and our children that we have all the answers.

**2. “Let go and let God.”** Knowing that we cannot control the future, or even what we will be able to do next week or next month, we need to acknowledge and accept our lack of control. Use expressions like “hopefully” and “God-willing” to show that we recognize that things may not work out as planned.

**3. “Think Different.”** Apple’s famous tagline was way ahead of its time. Today’s educators, parents, and students must think and do things differently, as we all adapt to a new educational paradigm. Before COVID, most teachers never even took an online course, let alone taught one. Jewish studies teachers are no exception, and Herzog’s new Rimonim teacher training program for Diaspora educators is filling that void. Rimonim teachers gain new skill sets with online tools to enhance their methodological landscape, thereby enabling them to relate better to the challenges faced in today’s virtual classrooms.

**4. Strengthen family bonds.** We realized that one of the groups hardest



COURTESY

Hechal Shlomo, the former headquarters of the chief rabbis of Israel, is now the home of Herzog College’s Jerusalem campus and its International Center of Jewish Heritage

hit by the lockdown was grandparents, who can no longer safely spend time with their children and grandchildren. Phone conversations, and even video calls, became boring and repetitive for those with very little news to share. That’s why we started MiDor L’Dor, a weekly parsha email designed to foster meaningful intergenerational conversations. This enables grandparents with time on their hands to ease the pressure on overworked parents, by helping educate children who are spending less time in school.

**5. Be kinder to ourselves.** Don’t try to be the perfect parent, employee, teacher or spouse 24/7. Overhearing stressful conversations in other people’s homes in the background of Zoom sessions has shown us that we’re all struggling with the new reality, and it’s ok to admit it. If work deadlines have to be stretched, your boss will understand – he has teenagers too!

These are suggestions rather than resolutions because this year we cannot promise anything more than to try. None of us knows what the rest of 2020 will bring. As we pray for a happy and healthy New Year – whether at home or in whatever prayer services we are able to join – let us ask the Creator of the world to help us become better educators, better leaders, and most of all better people. To help us make positive progress and add an extra level of kindness to our interactions. Let us pray for an end to the pandemic, and to the grief and suffering it has caused. ■

*The writer heads Herzog Global, the international Jewish education enrichment department of Herzog College*

# Between Heaven and Earth

Why is Jerusalem planning  
a cable car at a holy site?

By Mordechai Beck

**JERUSALEM IS** not just another city. It is viewed as a spiritual center for the three monotheistic religions. As the late professor and Dominican monk, Marcel Dubois, observed, “It is the pinnacle of relations between the faiths, because it is the only place that we are sure that God touched.”

It is also, unfortunately, a cesspool of continuous conflicts, a mecca of mayhem, a den of disputes. These are rooted in religion, history, economics, politics and, in recent years, urban planning. On one level, Jerusalem is unique in that it is claimed by many people, most of whom do not reside in the city.

For this reason, one “solution” to its various problems has often been to internationalize it, in particular the Old City. This plan has never been realized, though it hasn’t prevented many attempts being made. In Jewish tradition, dating back to the Bible, Jerusalem was beyond the province of any tribe. The sages believed that it was forbidden to own property in the city. It belonged to everybody.

Since modern Israel was established in 1948, the question of Jerusalem has become even more complex. After 1967’s Six Day War, this complexity was sharpened exponentially. Subsequently, the Israeli government felt empowered, for example, to incorporate a number of outlying villages into the municipal boundaries, thus adding thousands of Arab citizens to Jerusalem’s ever-expanding population, which is now close to a million.

The international community felt the necessity of censuring the Israeli government against claiming exclusivity over the city.

This did not prevent Israel from doing precisely that and, in 1980, passed the Basic Law: Jerusalem, Capital of Israel. This made the city indivisible as far as Israel was concerned, even though the law was considered illegal by almost everyone else. The Jordanian government nominated the Old City and its walls as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

As for planning, it could be said that there was little. There had been master plans drawn up under the British rule (1918-1947), but even the most realistic of these, drafted by Henry Kendall in 1944, were never fully implemented, although updated in 1959. After 1967, although the Jerusalem Master Plan of 1968 and a special conservation plan for the Old City and its environs were completed, a series of one-off plans were applied in such places as Ramot (in the north), Armon Hanatziv (in the east) and Gilo (in the south).

Since then, not much has been done to update it through the statutory processes, and the city has been left to the will of developers and politicians. This may be advantageous to them. If there were an official master plan, there would be no need to run to the municipality and ask for permission to build. Instead of rational criteria, we have witnessed power play between interested parties.

Apart from this general lack of direction in relation to planning, there are specific projects which appear with no proper supervision. Even when there are laws in place there is a way of circumventing them. Such is the situation in regard to the current plan to set up a cable car to transport peo-



ple from outside the Old City to a location close to the Western Wall. On the surface it might seem like a good idea, a way of overcoming the lack of facilities for cars in and out of the venerable, but crowded city. But a closer look reveals the tremendous dangers that such a project could cause.

The cable car project was first proposed by the Jerusalem Development Authority on behalf of the Tourism Ministry after it failed to extend the local rail system to the Old City.

In order to circumnavigate the bureaucratic process that could hold up or even prevent such projects, the government drafted the National Infrastructures Plan 86, making it possible to shortcut the planning of infrastructure projects (mainly transportation) defined as “national.”

In the words of the highly-respected architect, David Cassuto, one of the most critical voices against the cable car project: “Circumventing the statutory procedure means that the public is deprived of the opportunity to file formal objections. In the case of the Western Wall cable car, this was no accident; the project’s sponsors understood that public opposition could sink the proposal. This evasion of the statutory



An artist's simulation of the planned cable car to Jerusalem's Old City. The King David Hotel can be seen on the left

his objections, having observed that “the agency behind the cable car project is the Tourism Ministry, not the Transportation Ministry.... It is the Tourism Ministry that is in a great hurry to get it going, clearly demonstrating the reason for bypassing the normal planning processes provided for by law.”

Among Cassuto's reasons for opposing the plan is that fact that “the cable car would destroy irrevocably the national park that surrounds the Old City, containing within it a wealth of archaeological finds, sacred places of worship and holy places, the Southern Wall excavations, Mount Zion with its many churches, and Akeldama at the junction of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys. Within the park boundaries there are a number of tourist attractions that charge for admission, run by the Elad organization under contract from the Nature Reserves and National Parks Authority. These include the Siloam Tunnel and the City of David excavations.

“The cable car project would involve 15 pylons, 11 of them erected within the national park, which, as noted, is supposed to be strictly protected against development and construction. The pylons are to rise to a height of five to eight stories (26 meters). Pylon C would stand right next to David's Tomb and the Coenaculum (The Room of the Last Supper) – a true eyesore.”

Cassuto also quoted the outgoing British High Commissioner who wrote in the preface to the Jerusalem City Plan in 1948 he hoped that “the accomplishments and labors of the years covered in this book may be considered worthy to act as an inspiration and an example to the future generations in whose care our Holy City must rest.”

Besides these historical and environmental issues, Cassuto also cites problems for tour guides (who also sent objectors to this meeting) in that cable cars will split up their groups into smaller units making an

process is an assault on democracy.”

Cassuto was not the only professional to object to the plan. Prof. Elhanan Reiner, a historian, pointed out that holiness that surrounds such a sacred space includes the journey to the place and not just the site itself. This is true not only of Jerusalem, but of many other sacred places around the world. The cable car would destroy this aspect of the site, lowering its status to that of any other tourist site. It would lose its spirituality. By making the visitor come by way of the Elad's Kedem Tourist center, it would “lessen absolutely the uniqueness of the place.”

The Israel Association of Architects and Urban Planners (IAAUP) launched a blistering attack against the proposed plan. In an official meeting sponsored by the municipality on October 10, 2018, the IAA presented its case: “The Israel Association of Architects vigorously objects to the plan to build a cable car to the Old City of Jerusalem, which would detract from its status as a world city, diminish its heritage value, and wound its residents and friends the world over... The statutory process advancing the project is irregular, inappropriate and incompatible with the spatial and his-

toric importance of the place and its central status in the world. The law does not permit a project to be classified as ‘tourist infrastructure’ in a national park that is surrounded by green space.

“There is no place for a process in the National Infrastructures Committee that sets aside the important stages of professional scrutiny, such as urban analysis, full preservation documentation, and an environmental impact statement. Any procedure to build a cable car in this location displays contempt for the status of Jerusalem and its sites that are holy to the three religions. Scenic and cultural values that have been preserved for hundreds of years would be irrevocably damaged by gross technical elements: a series of gigantic pillars, stations and auxiliary infrastructure, adjacent parking lots, and more.

“The IAAUP calls for a broad and serious public discussion of the Old City cable car plan, as required by the historic uniqueness of the site, and honoring the values that the Planning and Building Law is meant to protect.”

Similar words of condemnation came from Cassuto. After presenting a historical overview of the area, Cassuto detailed

EMEK SHAVEH

TOURISM MINISTRY



A projection of the planned cable car station in Jerusalem

integrated tour near impossible. “Guides will not be able to address their entire group while they are using the cable car.

“Jerusalem,” Cassuto says, “and especially its holy places, ought to be ‘conquered’ by means of a physical effort that expresses the yearnings for this holy place. To descend as if on ‘angel’s wings’ would contradict the essential Jewish concept of the ‘earthly Jerusalem’ and of pilgrimage as an ‘ascent by foot’ – the need to exercise one’s limbs in order to reach the lofty goal.”

On a more practical note, he believes that, “in light of Jerusalem’s large, observant population and the status of the Temple Mount for our people, the cable car is highly unlikely to run on Sabbaths and Jewish festivals.... On the Sabbath and festivals, a state-owned transportation system would not operate – and if it did, it would produce no end of additional friction and could even bring down national governments.”

Another practical point would be the location of the pickup/drop-off point, which would be at the not-so nearby First Station. “There simply is no room there for so many vehicles,” he says. “The result would be a massive bottleneck on a major urban thoroughfare, due to the traffic jam outside the First Station.”

The deemed goal of the project, access to the Western Wall, creates major problems of numbers. “The entire Western Wall Plaza can hold a maximum of 5,600 men and women,” Cassuto says. “The cable car could bring 3,000 persons an hour (according to its sponsors) – in addition to those who reach the plaza by other means. The terrible crush produced would require the addition of police posts, emergency vehicles, and security personnel. At times it might be necessary to shut other access routes to keep the pressure from becoming intolerable. But the entries that would be blocked are precisely those used by reli-

gious Jews who come to the Western Wall not as tourists, but to pray.

“The cable car, moreover, will pass over neighborhoods typical of historical Jerusalem. But the residents of these neighborhoods are likely to move away because of the frightening shadow of the cable car that passes over them, close to mosques, churches, and synagogues. The safety of the residents and institutions would be undermined, and they would be victimized by physical, acoustic, and visual blight.”

In summation, Cassuto states: “I wonder if the true aim of the cable car is not to facilitate access to the Western Wall, but rather to bring crowds to Elad’s disproportionate Kedem tourist center. With a total area of 16,000 sq.m. and rising to a height of seven stories (even higher with the cable car), the center will conceal the Old City walls. It is hard to imagine what the sponsors plan to do with all that floor space.”

Elad, an acronymy for the Ir David Foundation, is an association that aims to strengthen the Jewish connection to Jerusalem and renew the Jewish community in the City of David, adjacent to the Arab neighborhood of Silwan.

“The euphoria of winning back the city in 1967, went too far, and Israelis lost their sense of proportion,” says Cassuto. “But now that Jerusalem is ours, why should we turn it into a poor imitation of New York, Las Vegas or even Paris? We forget that now we are Jerusalem. It is up to our cul-

tural and professional conscience to make sure that it remains the Jerusalem we saw in our dreams.”

To realize his objectives, Cassuto announced the formation of the Public Council for Jerusalem. The body will serve as a professional and public forum for discussion and criticism of planning and development in Jerusalem as well as an address for communities to express their opinions about the plans advanced by the planning authorities. It will promote a long-term contemporary vision for the city, one that reflects both its local and universal values and the obligation to its present and future residents.

When *The Jerusalem Report* inquired of Elad what its response was to these objections, its vice chairman, Doron Spillman, wrote: “The Cable Car Project is solely a project of the Government of the State of Israel. We are not involved in the fine details of this initiative. We do realize that the issue of transportation to the area of the Old City and the City of David is a major challenge that needs to be addressed. There has been a lot of discussion about the project and I would suggest that you speak with the government agencies involved, city planners and architects.”

The *Report* then approached the Tourism Ministry, now under Asaf Zamir from the Blue and White party. The ministry remains stalwart in its stand in favor of the cable car: “The Tourism Ministry weighed



An architectural impression of the cable car station next to the existing First Station cultural complex

the relevant aspects before coming to a decision that balanced the importance of the cable car as part of the national infrastructure that will help create a usefulness for the general public, against the claims raised against it. The usefulness of the project overcomes the deficiencies of it.

“The great importance of accessibility, and the generation of a development of tourism in the area of the Old City, the historic heart of Jerusalem, will create jobs for hundreds of thousands of people. The ministry does not disregard the claims made by various bodies and understands the feelings that are raised, but however the public interest is greater.

“It must be stressed that the program for the cable car was passed by the former government in 2018 with a budget of 100 million shekels to expedite the project, and already approved by the Treasury. This sum is in addition to the 100 million shekels budgeted by the Tourism Ministry in 2019. Issues surrounding the project and the claims brought against it were brought before the High Court, which will discuss it

in detail in the future.”

It would appear that the ministry has no interest in detailing what the objections are, or addressing them. Indeed, it says the cable car project will generate an astonishing number of jobs. This is beside the more obvious fact that the issue has been taken up by tourism ministers, and not transportation ministers. All of this suggests that the cable car is another project whose full impact has not been taken into consideration before it is too late.

The High Court of Justice is still out and maybe it is the last resort to save the day. As we wait with bated breath for its ruling, one question seems to be unanswered: Why, with so much professional opinion against it, does the tourism ministry still feel the urge to erect what would seem to be a white elephant in the middle of one of the most iconic sites in Israel, if not beyond? All the history, theology, beauty, all the awesomeness of the place would be wiped away for the sake of a bunch of tourist dollars, of tourists, who are here today and gone tomorrow.

There must be a missing link here that ties all these issues together; a link which can be provided only by the few people inside the ministry or the municipality who think that this scheme could work for anyone’s benefit. It is for them to come clean and show their hand before it is too late.

The planning saga does not end here. If the cable car is not enough, the municipality recently announced plans to erect a large Ferris wheel – some 40 to 60 meters in height – in the area below the promenade of East Talpote, and in view of the Old City. In addition, the same source envisions the building of six hotels, bicycle tracks, an 800-meter omega, a music center, a sculpture garden all in the same area – as well as a suspension bridge running across the Hinnom Valley.

The donors who built the promenade, Messrs. Haas and Goldman, have already expressed their sorrow over the planned developments. They are supported by archaeologists who are afraid that a historic landscape will be ruined forever. ■

# Jewish prayer

Alone and together in Jerusalem during the pandemic

By Robert Hersowitz

**BECAUSE I** have underlying health issues I've been praying alone since the COVID-19 virus invaded the Holy Land. They say that God is everywhere and modern technology really attests to this maxim. Indeed, I joined a Zoom minyan that our local synagogue conveniently arranged. Strangely, the experience of virtual *davening* (praying) has proved to be extremely advantageous.

This turned out to be particularly true when Tisha Be'Av (commemorating the destruction of the two Temples) fell on July 30 in the midst of a heat wave and rising corona infections.

One of the key advantages of virtual gatherings apart from the safety factor is the amount of time that it saves. Instead of getting up an hour earlier each morning, I am able to rise and prepare myself in half the time. I've got into the habit of waking up and walking straight over to the next room where I simply flip the switch of my computer and allow it to boot up. Unhurried and with minimum stress, I perform the daily ablutions, get dressed and then return to the office where I don my tallit and tefillin, say the customary pre-minyan blessings and then reach for the mouse, ready to click on the morning service link.

I've learned a whole new lexicon of terms such as host, mute, unmute, Zoom link, chat, share screen, etc. My daily ritual includes joining the quorum with audio and video and waiting until the neatly arranged Zoom boxes appear with a grid of framed familiar faces and a shrill pinging sound. Suddenly my office is transformed into a *mikdash me'at* (small sanctuary) of worshipers, each one in his or her private domain. Some are in their living rooms, others are in their studies or bedrooms and some are outdoors on their terraces or balconies. There are even individuals joining the minyan from work, from a hospital or a police station where they are on an early shift.

Sadly, the familiar accouterments of the synagogue are missing. There is no Ark, no Torah Scrolls, no *bimah* and no Ner Tamid



'Backyard prayer' by Leah Raab: Six of Leah Raab's works are on exhibition at the Leonardo Gallery, 13 Leonardo Da Vinci Street, Tel Aviv ([www.LeahRaab.com](http://www.LeahRaab.com))

(eternal candle) shining over the Ark. On the positive side however, there are at least 16 people gathered together, separately in their own distinctly different spaces. Everyone can see everyone else (except for those who have chosen not to activate their cameras).

All of this has been sanctioned by our rabbi, who in turn has consulted leading Orthodox rabbinic authorities, such as Rabbi Eliezer Melamed and Rabbi Benjamin Lau.

It is a perfectly kosher gathering of adult Jewish men who can pray together. It is particularly important for those who are saying the Kaddish prayer for a deceased relative. According to the Halacha, the Zoom minyan counts as long as individuals can see each other. This is a ruling that has also been applied to "balcony" minyanim during the corona crisis where prayer services are held during lockdown in buildings where people can stand on their balconies and be heard from a distance.

Naturally most people, including myself, prefer to attend services in a synagogue in the old fashioned conventional way.

Once the pandemic took hold, the Health Ministry issued rules and guidelines which now categorically state that indoor gatherings in places of worship are restricted to

20 people. After six long months of not visiting the synagogue, I have gotten used to this new way of davening and realize that there are certain advantages of praying in a "Zoom minyan," another phrase which has been added to my lexicon. One major benefit of doing this is the ability to control distractions and peripheral noise.

Alone in my office with my headset on, I am able to focus and concentrate on the prayers and infuse them with new meaning and sincerity. The *baal tefilla* (one conducting the service), aided and abetted by the "host" has also got more control. The "host" is able to mute or unmute everyone depending on the level of background noise and potential disturbance such as family chatter, ringing phones, barking dogs or clanging dishes in the kitchen.

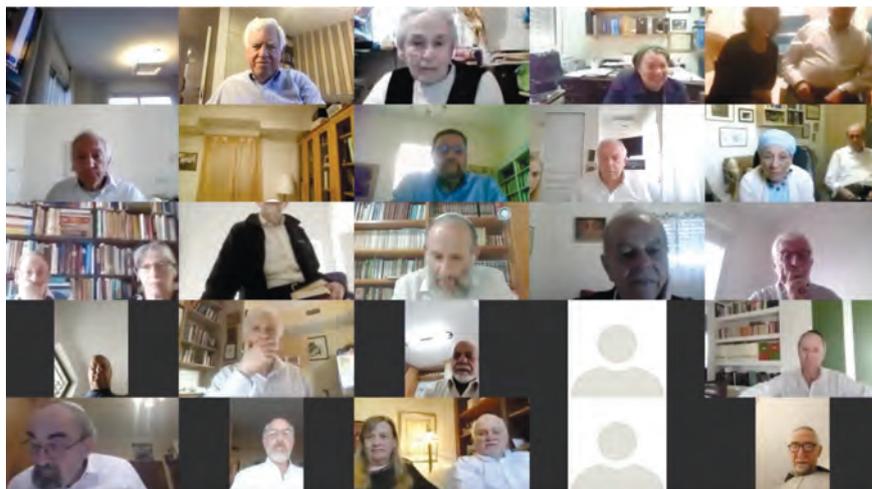
Back in "normal" times I used to attend morning services at the very large and airy Shai Agnon Synagogue in Talpote. On a number of occasions, I would find myself sitting in a pew in front of nonstop talkers. No amount of dirty looks or shushing could halt these "once in a while worshipers" whose main reason for attending services was to say kaddish (memorial prayer) for a relative.

This is one aspect of in-synagogue communal davening that I do not miss. For me, since the start of the pandemic, prayer has become more meaningful in a most unexpected way. In fact technology has enhanced my experience of practicing my faith. Even before COVID-19, I adapted myself to 21st-century living. For several years I've been using an app on my iPad and iPhone that is a digital version of the siddur to pray and follow the service. The app is extremely user friendly and works brilliantly in tandem with the Zoom minyan. I never lose my place and can enlarge the fonts and the screen light levels. The software even detects your location and can point you in the direction of the Western Wall in Jerusalem no matter where you are.

Recently on Tisha Be'av when Kinot (mournful liturgical poems) were recited, the host loaded all the Kinot onto the screen in a clear magnified legible font. Every now and again he would use the cursor and scrolling mechanism to indicate where the reader was up to. This kept us all focused and attentive. It was a huge improvement on what used to happen in normal times when sitting on the synagogue floor, I would quite easily lose the place and drift off into an ADHD stupor.

The prayer services on Zoom have been abridged in accordance with halachic guidelines. While I do miss being blessed by the Kohanim and being called up to recite a blessing during Torah reading, the shorter services are a Godsend for my protracted ADHD!

One thing that is irreplaceable during this period of self-imposed isolation is the contact with friends and acquaintances. I definitely miss going to shul, sitting in my usual seat and meeting up with friends and acquaintances. And yet a feeling of camaraderie has begun to develop in our daily Zoom minyan. As is the case involving face to face contact, one quickly gets to know one's fellow congregants on Zoom. In the synagogue environment, one gets used to identifying people by their manner of dress, their body language, facial expression and



ROBERT HERSOWITZ

The writer's Zoom minyan: A grid of framed familiar faces

physical presence. On Zoom this is more complicated. In some respects one becomes much more visible than one would be sitting in a crowded shul. Zoomers get to see the inside of your living space in magnified proportions. They can see how your "Zoom room" is furnished, how tidy you are, whether you've fallen asleep, or whether you fidget or scratch or engage in other unmentionable gestures! And woe betide anyone who has unintentionally unmuted themselves while having an argument with their spouse or teenage daughter.

**QUITE A** few people who are not members of our shul have joined our Zoom minyan. They are not all from Jerusalem and are scattered across the country. They are not all retired people with underlying conditions like myself. Indeed it is refreshing to see some younger worshipers including a young Israeli police officer from somewhere up North who is sadly saying Kaddish for a parent. We have also had a few women joining the minyan. They, too, often participate when they need to say Kaddish for a parent.

The highlight of the week for us Zoomers is Friday evening. Our shul arranges a special partial Kabbalat Shabbat. It begins

before the official candle lighting time, and is led by a much-loved veteran member of the Emek Refaim Synagogue, Meir Fachler, who has a beautiful voice. This allows those of us who are not yet ready to participate in outdoor minyanim to soak up the special atmosphere of the Shabbat. Fachler leads us in singing some of the familiar tunes that we sing in Shul including the hauntingly beautiful Lecha Dodi prayer. Sadly, Zoom technology has not yet mastered the art of allowing participants to sing together harmoniously. When everyone is unmuted and trying to sing together, the result is a rather garbled cacophony that drowns out Fachler's dulcet tones and so the host, Bob Rosenschein, inevitably activates the "mute all" button. Jewish law places certain restrictions on the Kabbalat Shabbat virtual davening and it has to end just before candle lighting time. Those at home alone are then left to switch off the computer, light candles and continue with the Friday evening service in quiet solitude. The virtual service definitely enhances our experience of Shabbat. We get to see our friends, exchange a quick word, a smile and a wave, comfortable in the knowledge that we have been "virtually" together.

As I started writing this article on the eve

of the Shabbat of my bar mitzvah portion, I contemplated joining the Shabbat morning minyan held in an outdoor space behind our apartment building. It was to be the very first time in six months that my wife and I would venture out to join the group of mostly neighbors who assemble there each week. Arranged by local residents, the minyan got so large that it had to be split in two. Protocol suggests that any would-be participant has to pre-register each week. The services are strictly controlled in terms of numbers, social distancing and the wearing of masks. These minyanim are now completely full and we were fortunate to be given a place. I wanted to get called up to the Torah, to make a blessing and participate in the minyan. My wife and I arose early and prepared to carry our folding chairs downstairs to the outdoor space. We were met by the rather odd sight of the men setting everything up. Chairs were spread out across the vast area. A table with a white cloth was positioned near a wall upon which the “hosts” had placed a newly constructed portable wooden Ark housing the Torah Scroll.

I was advised to seat myself near the back away from the makeshift *bimah*. The full complement of 10 male masked worshippers duly arrived. It was an utterly surreal experience for me. The expanse resembled some sort of Jewish moonscape with figures on chairs wearing a variety of headgear including straw hats and skull caps. Amazingly, from where I sat, I could hear almost every word of the recited prayers and Torah reading.

When it came to my turn to be called up, I was quite emotional. It had been so long since I had been afforded the privilege of being called up to the Torah. I mistakenly approached the *bimah* as I would have done in our synagogue. I stood next to the reader who had removed his mask in order to read from the scroll. He politely allowed me to stand next to him. I instinctively kissed the parchment with the fringes of my prayer shawl through the mask to recite the blessing.

The officiating rabbi stepped forward and signaled to me to step back. I realized then



ROBERT HERSOWITZ

that I'd crossed the line of protocol. The new rules of engagement in the outdoor minyan are to keep one's distance at all costs. Needless to say, I was very careful to recite the concluding blessing from at least two meters away.

Despite the nostalgic feeling of praying with a minyan again, I felt a certain sense of loss. Although the organizers had done the best they could, the rules meant that we were spread out a little too far to enjoy the closeness of a real congregation. The singing and joining in with the service was sparse and thin. Everyone was masked and so there were no smiles or facial expressions or handshakes or hugs to acknowledge one another in the normal human way. Everyone knew that it was important to disperse quickly out of the fear of catching or spreading something.

Secretly, I began to yearn for the comfort of my own apartment and even the Zoom minyan where I could pray without the discomfort of a mask, a fold-up chair, flies and the fear of disturbing upstairs neighbors, where I could pray more or less at my own pace with the ability to focus on what most of us are praying for, an end to this pandemic scourge and an exit from the 21st century twilight zone where we are alone and together simultaneously. ■

An outside prayer gathering in Jerusalem

# Prayers to end the plague

By Joel Rappel

**A NUMBER** of Jewish prayers have been composed since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic at the end of 2019. Their contents reflect differing approaches to prayer and the practice of medicine.

Over the course of the 1,200 years since the writing of the first known siddur (daily prayer book), *Siddur Rabbi Amram Ga'on* (circa 850 CE), many prayers have been written throughout the Jewish world.

In my opinion, the Jewish prayer book is the “memoir” of the Jewish people. A praying Jew sometime in the future will one day read the prayers that were written in our present times – even if they are not formally incorporated into the siddur – and will be able to recreate the events of the pandemic in 2020. The prayers that I have chosen to present here reflect different religious worldviews among Jews in Israel and the Diaspora.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, dozens of Jewish prayers for a cure and salvation have been written. In this context, I will present several new prayers that I consider noteworthy. Of course, even before turning to prayer, one must follow the guidance of Rabbi Akiva Eiger and make sure to adhere to the instructions provided by medical professionals as to how to avoid infection and transmission of the disease as much as possible.

## Prayer of the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef

This prayer makes prominent use of quotes from the siddur and the High Holy Day prayer services, as well as quotes from various verses. The prayer begins with the words, “*Yehi Ratzon*” (May it be your will), a common opening for prayers since the time of the Mishna. A number of words appear frequently in the text, emphasizing the focus of the prayer and the difficulty in coping with the disease. The request for healing and the reference to God as the healer appear seven times, and the request for compassion appears five times; synonyms for disease appear seven times, and decrees are mentioned four times.

*May it be Your will, Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that You be filled with compassion for all of the inhabitants of the world and the inhabitants of this land, and protect them from all harsh and evil decrees that rage and come upon the world. And save us from all harm, plague, disease, and sickness. And heal all the sick who have contracted the disease with a complete recovery. Yours, O God, are greatness, might, splendor, triumph, and majesty – all that is in heaven and on earth; to You, O God, belong kingship and preeminence above all.*

*In Your hand is every living soul and the breath of all mankind, and in Your hand lies the strength and the power to make great and strengthen and to heal one whose soul has been brought to utter dismay, and nothing is too difficult for you.*

*Therefore, may it be Your will – O faithful God, merciful Father, the One who heals all of the illnesses of His nation, Israel, O faithful Healer – to send healing and succor and to deal with great kindness, grace, and compassion with all those who have contracted this disease. We beg of You, O God – may Your mercies be upon all the inhabitants of the earth and upon all of Your nation, Israel. Rise, we beg, from the Throne of Justice and sit on the Throne of Mercy; act beyond the letter of the law and nullify from upon us all the harsh and evil decrees – “Phineas stepped forth and intervened and the plague ceased” And decree upon us decrees of good and salvation and comfort, for the sake of Your compassion, and rip the evil decrees of punishment against us, and may our merits be brought before You. Rise up and help us and redeem us for the sake of Your kindness.*

*Listen, we beg, to the sound of our pleas, for You are the One who listens to the prayers of every mouth. Blessed is the One who listens to prayer.*

*May the words of my mouth and the prayer of my heart be acceptable to You, O God, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

*“I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians, for I the Lord am your healer.” Amen.*

## World Organization of Orthodox Synagogues

On March 8, 2020 (12 Adar 5780), the World Organization of Orthodox Communities and Synagogues published a special prayer to be recited “during the Shabbat services of the upcoming weeks.” This prayer begins with the well-known opening “*Mi She-Berakh*.” It makes a direct request for the health of “those who are ill with the coronavirus,” that God “send them a complete recovery from Heaven” and that He “protect us and all those who are ill.” Like the previous text we examined, this prayer includes many phrases taken from well-known prayers, such as the reference to “the One who makes peace and creates everything” from the Shacharit service and “a complete recovery from Heaven” from the blessing of Rosh Hodesh (new month). The author or authors of this prayer clearly wanted the text to be easily adopted by those reciting it.

It is notable that the authors of the prayer seemed to be under the impression that the pandemic would last only a short time, as they instituted that the prayer should be recited only on Shabbat “of the upcoming weeks.”

*A Prayer for the Jewish People and the Inhabitants of the Entire World*

*The One who blessed the forefathers of the world and the forefathers of Israel, the One who makes peace and creates everything, should bless all the creations of His hands, those who are ill with the coronavirus that is presently raging throughout the world. May God listen to the prayers of all of His creations and respond to them, as Solomon prayed: “May You hear in Your heavenly abode and grant whatever the foreigner appeals to You for. Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You, as does Your people Israel” (II Chron. 6:33). May God send them a complete recovery from Heaven, and may He strengthen and cure them.*

*May it be Your will to renew the order of the word as it was before. Protect us and all those who are ill, so that they will become healthy, so that we will merit to thank You*

*and praise You, and so that the world will be filled with Your glory. For the kingship belongs to You and You will rule in glory forever, as it states in Your Torah, “God will rule forever and ever.” May this be Your will, and we will say, Amen.*

### **‘Mi She-Berakh’ for the wellbeing of those ill with coronavirus**

The prayer composed by hazan Prof. Joseph Malovany, a native Israeli who has served as the chief cantor of the Orthodox Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York City for more than 40 years, is a prayer on behalf of those who have contracted the coronavirus. An experienced hazan who teaches liturgy in Yeshiva University, Malovany connects his new text with the “Mi She-Berakh” on behalf of the ill recited during the Torah reading on Shabbat morning. In an adaptation for modern times, he adds the foremothers alongside the forefathers in the introductory line. Like the previous two prayers, this prayer also requests healing for non-Jews as well: “May He swiftly send the ill of His nation Israel and all the inhabitants of the world a complete recovery from Heaven.”

*He who blessed our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, Aaron, David, and Solomon, and our foremothers, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, the Healer of broken hearts who binds up their wounds, the One who makes salvations sprout, the Creator of cures – I call out to You, and You will heal me. He should bless and cure all those afflicted by the coronavirus in every place in the world, because we are all praying for them and their wellbeing.*

*In that merit, may the Holy One, blessed be He, be filled with mercy for them to cure them and to heal them, to strengthen them and to revive them, and may He swiftly send the ill of His nation Israel and all the inhabitants of the world a complete recovery from Heaven, to their 248 organs and 365 sinews, a healing of the soul and a healing of the body.*

*May this terrible plague be swiftly obliterated, and may He save us from all suffering and anguish and from all afflictions and illnesses. [On Shabbat – On Shabbat we refrain from crying out, but the cure will come soon] [On Festivals – On festivals we refrain from crying out, but the cure will come soon] Now, swiftly, and soon – and we all say, Amen.*

### **Non-Orthodox prayers**

The non-Orthodox movements have also produced creative liturgical solutions in response to the pandemic. In the following prayer, Rabbi Zev Keinan of the Conservative movement presents a request for healing for all of humanity and emphasizes the request for protection from illness and the hope that the pandemic will come to an end:

*Answer us, Lord our God, for we are in great distress. Healer of all flesh who acts wondrously, distance from us all injury and disease and save us from all suffering and anguish. Fulfill the words, “No plague will destroy you... and He will not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home.” Eliminate, in Your great kindness, all destruction and disease from among Your sons and daughters. And fulfill in us and in every man and woman in the world the words of the verse, “No harm will befall you, no disease touch your tent.” Give of Your great power, “For I am the Lord, your Healer,” upon all the inhabitants of Your world and upon all healers of the sick, wherever they may be, that they have the wisdom to heal the sick and prevent the disease from harming the creations of Your hand. Give them wisdom and knowledge to find a vaccine for the virus, speedily in our days. Guard our going out and coming in, for life and peace, now and forever. And fulfill in us soon the words of the verse, “And the plague ceased.” May it be your will, Amen.*

A very different prayer was composed by Bini Talmi of the Niggun HaLev community in the Jezreel Valley. Talmi makes widespread use of language from the Bible and prayers to create a new liturgical text:

*Happy are those who dwell in Your house, exiled now through no fault of their own/ The captives who are bound, who have been expelled from their work/ The unemployed who are anxious regarding their livelihood/ The fathers and mothers who are with their children in their homes/ Whose sustenance is provided in a gift at their doorstep / Their hearts go out to the members of their family/ And no one comes to their home to be there with them/ Only the wonders of the computer remain to comfort them/ When they lack their community/ And they recite a pure prayer for their health./ Hear Israel and give blessing to those who are tired on their watch/ To the medical and security forces, who bend under the weight of their obligation/ Give us hope that the evil will*



*pass and the foundations of the world will return to their sanity/ Open once again the borders of hope between nations in their countries/ Seek the peace of nations and destroy their weapons of war/ May their comfort be only man to man and man to his world/ May a new friendship sprout in the world that will heal after their death/May the produce of the field shower upon them only good/ The innocent human melody has not yet passed, has not yet concluded/ Then men will rise from their beds and the path will straighten as they walk/ The aged will walk in the streets, leaning upon their canes/ Young boys and girls will return to their celebrations/ And like the north star will their righteousness shine./ God of the quarantined and the lonely, please, hear their prayers!*

The following prayer was composed by



Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef (right) leads a prayer for stopping the spread of coronavirus pandemic at the Western Wall on July 21

AMMAR AWAD/REUTERS

the Pardes Institute’s liturgist-in-residence, Alden Solovy, in both Hebrew and English:

*May it be Your will, God of our fathers and mothers, that You cast the light of health and wellbeing on those who have been exposed to coronavirus, those who have contracted the disease, and those who contract the disease in the future, God forbid. Bless them, protect them, and bring them speedily to full recovery. Send them healing of soul, healing of body, and healing of spirit. And let us say, Amen.*

The final prayer was composed in English by Reform Rabbi Elli Tikvah Sarah. The Jewish component is not emphasized in this prayer, but the distress caused by the pandemic is very evident:

*Eternal One, Rock of our lives, we turn to you in the midst of this coronavirus crisis, seeking refuge and a foothold – and also en-*

*couragement as we try to find our own courage.*

*As social distancing prevents us from experiencing the joys of life in community, may the need to withdraw and stay well be accompanied by the urge to reach out to others with compassion and care and to forge and renew connections, even in the absence of physical contact.*

*Recalling the trials of those who went before us and their endurance and survival, may we find the strength to endure even in the face of pain and loss, and the insight to know that this challenging time will pass.*

*As the natural world renews itself, may we be inspired by the wonders and marvels of the Earth to discover through this crisis pathways to renewal and new hope.*

*And let us say, Amen.*

**THE PRAYERS** we have cited here are a

small sample of the myriad of prayers that have been composed as a response to the coronavirus pandemic, which continues to challenge physicians and researchers to stop the infection, heal the sick, and discover a cure and vaccine.

Although Judaism is an ancient religion that may seem to be so rooted in the past that it does not advance at all, these prayers reflect that Judaism has its “finger on the pulse” of contemporary life. In addition to pursuing medical treatments, faith continues to lead the Jew from his birth until his dying day.

It is certainly reasonable to assume that the longer the pandemic lasts, the more prayers will be composed and recited in synagogues and by individuals, expressing the hope for healing and protection from the coronavirus. The effects of this ongoing pandemic are what will determine the status of these prayers in the future. ■

# UAE's kosher caterer: Dubai-based Elli Kriel hosts both the US and Israeli delegations

By Linda Gradstein

**WHEN THE** large Israeli delegation, with dozens of observant Jews, landed in Abu Dhabi on the first direct flight from Tel Aviv on August 31, they needed a way to get kosher food for the gala banquet the United Arab Emirates hosted for both the Israeli and the American delegations. Both National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat, the head of the Israeli delegation, and White House Senior Adviser Jared Kushner, who was at the helm of the US delegation, keep kosher.

To the rescue came Elli Kriel, of Elli's Kosher Kitchen, the only kosher caterer in the UAE. Although Dubai is an hour's drive from Abu Dhabi, Kriel partnered with the US-based Orthodox Union (OU) to make a hotel kitchen in Abu Dhabi kosher and provide three kosher meals for the delegations during their two-day stay.

So what did they eat, you ask? The lunch menu for 100 people included salmon in a lemon butter sauce, with a vegan option of wild mushroom risotto with fresh truffle. Dinner, also for 100, featured appetizers of feta coated with almond dressed with honey-infused pomegranate, and salmon kunafe (the thin noodles with cheese usually served as a dessert) with tomato marmalade, followed by main courses including Greek grilled sea bass fillet with sour lemon marmalade and mushroom cannelloni with truffles and mushroom. For breakfast there were omelettes, hash browns and even vegetarian sausages.

"It was a thrilling moment to be included in this historic event and I was extremely proud to be able to welcome the delegates to the UAE with my kosher food," Kriel said in an interview. "There was a feeling of elation and celebration like the coming together of two families connecting together after a long absence. Elli's Kosher Kitchen partnered up with OU Israel to deliver the

best quality kosher food. I am extremely proud of my team and especially grateful to chef Alex Pavlopoulos in making sure that the guests could receive such wonderful kosher food."

Kriel, a South African with a PhD in sociology, has lived in Dubai since 2013 with her husband, Ross Kriel – who also happens to be the head of the Jewish community – and their children. They are the first kosher family in Dubai.

"We landed in 2013 just before Rosh Hashanah and it was really crazy," she said in a Zoom interview. "Two weeks later we were hosting Rosh Hashanah services in our apartment. It was a bit of a shock to the people around us, because they were used to things not being kosher."

For the first few years, she focused on getting her family acclimated to Dubai, and organizing daily Hebrew and religious lessons on Skype. She said that while they never advertised that they were Jewish, she was open with the teachers at school. For example, she made sure to give the teachers a box of kosher snacks so her kids wouldn't feel left out from birthday parties and other school events.

Whenever observant Jews came through Dubai, including Israeli businessmen, journalists and students, they often ended up at the Kriel's home, especially for Shabbat dinners.

"There were rabbis doing interfaith work coming through or travelers or other people and they would contact my husband and ask, "Is there kosher food available?", she said. "My husband would say, "No, but we have a kosher kitchen and he would invite them to come and eat with us."

The Jewish community eventually rented a villa in Dubai for their growing synagogue, which became public in 2019.



Elli Kriel welcomes National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat at the gala dinner in Abu Dhabi

Even before that in November 2018, the UAE government organized a conference on Interreligious Freedom, and invited religious leaders, including some 15 rabbis, to attend.

"They arrived at the conference and there was nothing for them to eat," Kriel said. "So there came a panicked call from Abu Dhabi asking, "Can you help us feed our delegates?" My husband asked me and said they were willing to pay me, and I said, "In that case, I'll be right there."

That was the beginning of Elli's Kosher Kitchen, a food delivery and catering service based in Dubai. Her culinary background is eclectic. She herself is Greek, grew up in South Africa, and has lived all



COURTESY

Elli and Ross Kriel, her husband, on the beach in Dubai

over the world, including time in Argentina. She says the food she offers is “kosherati”, meaning a fusion of Jewish food and Emirati food.

For example, there is an Emirati dish called balaleet, which is very similar to kugel. There is a dessert similar to rugelach, but instead of being filled with chocolate, it’s filled with dates, orange blossom and cinnamon. There are even burekas filled with a sweet Emirati pumpkin filling.

“These are Emirati recipes for a kosher home,” Kriel said. “It’s blending the commonalities in our food.”

The business gets kosher certification from Rabbi Yehuda Sarna, a chaplain at New York University, who has now become the “chief rabbi” of the UAE.

Food is not just about food. It is about culture,” Sarna said. “Elli’s fusion of Emirati and Kosher cuisine signifies the blending of cultures, the place Judaism is rediscovering on the Arabian Peninsula.”

Kriel’s business is expanding quickly. She has a cookbook coming out with an Emirati partner, and is planning to open a café near the tourist area and hotels. She says she sees food as a way of bridging gaps between people, and says that Israelis and Emiratis have a lot in common.

“We share the values of togetherness,



COURTESY

Kriel shows off some of her kosher culinary creations

warmth and hospitality,” Kriel said. “We both like good food and family traditions, of being around the table and being able to celebrate together. It helps us to see each other’s humanity and embrace each other’s culture.”



COURTESY

Kriel celebrates with OU Israel’s Rabbi Yissichar Dov Krakowski after the kitchen of St. Regis Hotel in Abu Dhabi was made kosher, with assistance from Godrume Kriel of the South African Beth Din



COURTESY

Kriel shopping in the Dubai spice market

# David and Laura Merage: Philanthropists supporting Israel

By Steve Linde

**DAVID MERAGE** is a successful entrepreneur and venture philanthropist who lives with his wife, Laura, an accomplished artist, in Denver, Colorado. The Merage Foundation Israel they established has been actively working to increase the prosperity of the Jewish state for over two decades.

In 1977, David Merage and his brother, Paul, founded Chef America, Inc. best known for developing the popular microwavable snack, Hot Pockets. They expanded their product line and employed some 1,900 people before selling to Nestle in 2002 for \$2.6 billion.

Today, Merage runs Consolidated Investment Group (CIG), a Denver-based company strategically investing in real estate, capital markets and private equity. According to the David and Laura Merage Foundation, the family “takes a hands on approach to their philanthropy, bringing their business acumen, entrepreneurial spirit, and creativity to each and every project.”

*Tell me about your professional path and how you incorporate your business experience in your philanthropic work.*

From an early age, I knew I was destined to be an entrepreneur. My father, Andre, an entrepreneur himself, encouraged us to build a family business as a strategy to foster personal and familial strength. Throughout my college career, I pursued opportunities to learn about real estate investment and management, and quickly became adept at identifying and capitalizing on market trends as I built my real estate portfolio in southern California.

Soon after arriving in California, with absolutely no experience in the food industry and equipped only with ambition, drive, and the support of my brother and father, we founded Chef America, Inc., a frozen food manufacturer in 1977. Building on our early success, we soon began research and development of a frozen lunch

product which we called the Hot Pocket and sold to schools, catering and vending companies. In 1983, Hot Pockets were introduced to retail supermarkets and, within a short time, was a household staple. The company created a considerable workforce – employing 1,900 associates in three states, and generating over 6,000 national jobs through the supply chain.

Today, I am principal of Consolidated Investment Group, a Denver-based investment firm, focusing on Wall Street and real estate investments. CIG holds one of the most diverse portfolios in the country in terms of product type and geography, investing in public equity, hedge funds, fixed income and real estate, both domestically and internationally. CIG’s permanent capital base allows the company to take a disciplined, long-term investment perspective.

At CIG, I have created a culture that fosters an environment of respect, integrity and tolerance of others. There are four rules that I absolutely live by without compromise. These are: honesty, integrity, determination and commitment. I always wanted to take my knowledge of business and management, to give back to the communities that directly affected my life. Along with my wife, Laura, I formed the David and Laura Merage Foundation, whose mission is to promote self-sufficiency through education and community involvement. By incorporating real business experience, an entrepreneurial spirit, and a passion for social impact, we provide the best services and quality no matter what we do, and we go where not many people are willing to go.

*You and your wife Laura are known for your philanthropic involvement. In what areas are you involved?*

Our foundation works in two ways – first through direct philanthropic investment and, secondly, through partnerships. This model allows Laura and I to be truly

diverse in the types of programs and endeavors in which we become involved. The Merage Foundations have positively impacted hundreds of thousands of people’s lives both in the US and globally.

Our foundation, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, is centered on the belief that education is the gateway to optimal life outcomes. In the United States, the foundation concentrates its efforts in promoting Early Childhood Education, Arts and Culture and Community Development.

• **Early Childhood Education:** The foundation is leading Early Learning Ventures, an initiative to enrich education for children ages birth to five years old. Early Learning Ventures is building a network of over 600 high-performing child-care providers, making quality child care more accessible to American families. I am also leading an effort to engage business leaders in early childhood education advocacy.

• **Arts and Culture:** Our foundation invests in public and private arts organizations throughout the US. With Laura’s leadership, the organization founded RedLine, an urban art laboratory promoting the creative expression of resident artists. Laura is also the founder of Black Cube, which works with artists to produce pop up exhibitions in unexpected places while helping artists further their professional careers.

• **Community Development:** The foundation founded Equitas in December of 2013, to raise public awareness and to implement sensible programming and policy for managing mental and behavioral health challenges.

• **Merage Israel:** In 2000, together with Laura and my mother, Katherine, we began our philanthropic work in Israel. The mission of our Foundation in Israel is to empower individuals and communities; we incubate and accelerate circles of change – those who are strengthened, strengthen others, and lead the way to promoting the prosperity of Israel and the well-being of



COURTESY

Iranians to stand on their own feet, integrate into society and become productive citizens of Israel. They would often arrive to Israel in the middle of the night with children and grandparents, exhausted and confused. Upon arrival, a wonderful Farsi speaking partner would meet them at the airport, help them fill their paperwork, arrange for transportation and give them supplies and a Hebrew dictionary. My team would continue meeting with them and helping in any way they could. For the past 22 years, we have created a variety of programs that have improved the life trajectory of hundreds of Iranian-Israeli families, creating multi-generational change.

*What initiatives does your foundation support in Israel?*

My vision for Israel is a prosperous and cohesive society that is committed to the well-being of all its citizens. We believe in the power of empowerment, leadership development and community building. The Merage Foundation Israel (MFI) has two main areas of focus: Community Development and Negev Development.

As part of our Community Development division, we are leading four major programs.

• **Iranian Community in Israel:** For more than 20 years we have promoted the advancement of the Iranian community in Israel mainly through women leadership programs and the exposure of the Persian culture to Israeli society. The program has helped Iranian immigrants become an essential part of every aspect of Israeli life, including Israeli culture, education, military, business, and politics. Over the years, the program has evolved to become a unique empowerment framework for women, which includes over 10 Iranian women's clubs throughout Israel.

• **Wings:** For the past 15 years, the Wings Program has been providing immigrant youth and lone soldiers with the tools they need to enter Israeli society as confident and active citizens. More than 3,000 of these new immigrants serve in the IDF each year. These young people have made significant sacrifices by leaving their homes and families to move to Israel and protect our Jewish homeland. In partnership with the Jewish Agency, Wings offers a continuum of services, from the time they first arrive in Israel and years after their release from the IDF. Wings ensures that these courageous,

young individuals do not “fall through the cracks” of Israeli society, it offers a supportive safety net and helps them achieve their personal goals and aspirations.

• **Connected to Life:** This program supports and trains senior citizens to use smartphones as a means of strengthening their social and familial ties. The program matches senior citizens with hundreds of high school and university students from around the country who coach them on using key tools and apps such as Whatsapp and Moovit, as well as apps that allow them to make doctors' appointments, do online shopping or communicate with their banks. It has been shown that youth teaching technology to seniors fosters generational connections while promoting happier, more confident lifestyles. This program has proven to be ever more relevant during this pandemic and I am very happy to see that our platform is expanding its services throughout Israel.

• **Pakal:** One of the young leaders of our Iranian Community Program, who is an active reservist commander, raised the issue of the lack of social cohesion and disconnect among army reservists. After interviewing dozens of reservist and army officials, we understood that this was a widespread problem. We understood the great need create an opportunity to build a renewed sense of community and solidarity among army reservists. This is how Pakal was born, two years ago. Through a rigorous selection process, this program works with reserve companies that demonstrate a high degree of leadership and commitment to community building. Company leaders receive ongoing support in team building, empowerment training and practical assistance for events, activities and volunteering opportunities. Reserve companies are also supported by a digital platform that allows them to manage and mobilize their communities for action.

• **Negev Development Division:** For the past 15 years, I have been actively involved in the Negev, supporting a variety of projects, from employment and entrepreneurship programs, dozens of festivals and cultural events and supporting local municipalities in the development of strategic plans for demographic growth, urban development, economic growth, health and transportation. We also supported through capital projects such the establishment of a Rehabilitation Center in Sderot, and the Dimona Medical Center, which covers over

David Merage, a strong supporter of Israel

all its citizens. Over the years we have supported hundreds of initiatives, benefiting hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout Israel.

*Tell us about your special connection to Israel and more specifically to the Israeli-Iranian community*

My parents have always been involved in supporting Israel and the Jewish community in Iran. My mother encouraged my interest and love for Israel from a young age. However, I did not visit Israel until I was in my early 40s. Sometimes, an unexpected incident in life presents itself. If you walk through that door you find that there are many new doors that begin to open up. Each door leads to a new challenge that brings joy and a renewed sense of accomplishment. In 1979, my mother put me in touch with a family friend. She was a young Jewish woman in Tehran, who was trying to escape from a very abusive husband with her two young daughters. She wanted to run away to Israel and asked me for help. She did not speak any Hebrew, she had no contacts, no money and was completely lost. My research into her case showed me this was a very typical situation for most Iranians who immigrated to Israel. I was able to help her, and I began actively supporting hundreds of Iranian-Jewish families on their struggling path to Israel. I hired a local team in Israel and our goal became to empower proud

20,000 patients a year and offers the community 10 dialysis beds and emergency support after hours.

Most recently, we have completed a new model focused on promoting regional economic development. Our goal is to strengthen key economic clusters where the Negev has a significant competitive advantage. In order to create opportunities for economic growth and high-quality jobs, the foundation acts as an integrative body to convene and mobilize the key stakeholders and nurture an environment where these clusters can mature and flourish. Specifically, we are currently working on two main programs:

- **DeserTech:** Our program aims to support the development and commercialization of climate change and desert technologies (such as AgTech, WaterTech, renewable Energy, and other sustainable innovations). Part of our work includes promoting the emergence of early-stage DeserTech startups, mobilizing the “entrepreneurial capital” in the region, and spurring innovation by bringing together technology, information, specialized talent, competing companies, academic institutions, and high-quality jobs.

- **Negev Agritourism:** MFI is working with key regional partners to transform the Negev region into a flourishing agritourism destination, attracting a flow of international and local tourists in their quest for an authentic desert experience, a growing curiosity about where our food comes from, and a stronger connection to the land. The Negev is rich in a wide range of agricultural sites and is a fertile ground to turn these into tourism attractions. Our plan includes developing the ecosystem of agricultural tourism in the Negev, by improving the quality of existing agritourism products, supporting the establishment of new ventures and creating jobs.

How do I decide what to invest in? As a venture philanthropist, I always look for the highest social returns on my investment. Following these guidelines, our Israel team develops programs and nurtures partnerships that bring about systemic, sustainable and bold results. We constantly look for opportunities that tap into existing networks and infrastructures that avoid duplication. This allow us to remain lean and to scale rapidly in order to reach our full potential and benefit as many people as possible.

COURTESY

David and his wife, Laura Merage, an accomplished artist



### *Why do you invest in the Negev?*

Decades ago, a vacation in the South of Israel inspired a big question in my mind: ‘Why is Israel concentrated in the center while a huge land in the South remains empty?’ I wondered how is it that this small nation has not developed this vast area, while the cities in the center are crowded, and the housing prices are out of reach for most young Israelis. How can such a small nation forget about this huge part of the country’s territory? I saw in the Negev, Israel’s land of opportunity; a blank piece of paper to write the next chapter of the new Zionism. In my quest for answers, Shmulick Riffman, then-mayor of Ramat HaNegev, and a great Zionist dedicated to the Negev’s development, became my mentor. Arik Sharon and his administration encouraged my organization to embrace this challenge. Also, throughout the years, Shimon Peres supported our work and later became the Minister for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee.

With the support and encouragement of my mother Katherine and my wife Laura, we agreed this would be another great project for the Merage Foundation. For almost 15 years, with the support of a dedicated local team, we granted millions of dollars in hundreds of projects, that touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people,

and turned the Negev into an attractive place to visit and live in.

### *What do you think is the role of philanthropy in the world today?*

I think philanthropy’s role is to empower people so that they realize their full potential. Through our Merage Foundation initiatives we create opportunities that increase well-being and positive life outcomes. I believe that philanthropists must also know that things change, evolve, advance, and that they certainly don’t have all the answers about the needs and solutions of the communities they serve.

I also believe it is my responsibility to contribute greatly of my time, my network and my business acumen. It is a way of life that is transmitted from generation to generation and it is our hope that this approach to giving back is more widely embraced by Israelis. My family represents three generations of philanthropists that began with my parents, and we are now working on a fourth generation: my grandchildren! Since they were young, my children have been actively involved in our philanthropic work, and now they are leading their own foundations, and are promoting their own endeavors with great success. It is my greatest joy to see our philanthropic commitment to Israel extend through three, and now four generations, of my family. ■

# The 9/11 attacks and the resilience of New York

By Joseph Scutt

**I ORIGINALLY** moved to New York in August of 2001, and the “financial capital of the world” has been my home ever since.

On September 11, 2001, I witnessed the 9/11 terror attacks from a high-rise building in the Washington Heights neighborhood of northern Manhattan. As soon as I heard that a second plane had hit the South Tower, I rushed up to the top of Belfer Hall of Yeshiva University.

As I stood on the 11th floor of the building, it was both a sad and terrifying site to see a great mass of smoke arise. The smoke had hovered over the city like dark clouds of doom, displaying no sense of mercy or happiness. The reality that an hour earlier there were two tall building structures that stood high and mighty in the New York sunlight was incomprehensible. As I stared at the dark smoke hovering over the city, I was trying to understand how inhuman and destructive some people would be in causing such an evil act.

The word “darkness” is a very powerful term that can be used to describe either the physical or the non-physical realm of this world. The darkness I had witnessed that day before my very own eyes was of the physical kind, but the darkness that led these terrorists to cause such an act is inexplicable. The more I thought about it, the more I realized mankind has the power to control his or her own destiny for the better or for the worse. To think that the World Trade Center was built by people working together to achieve a common goal of building a structure that would represent the greatness of America’s economic strength brought to mind a positive force. But when people get together to destroy and hurt others, then it is an occasion when darkness plays its greatest role in perpetrating evil.

Who could have imagined that a group of cold-blooded people could crash airplanes into a building and cause untold suffering? These terrorists had proved that they would harm America at any cost and that the only limits they knew were technical limits.

Although evil had found its way of de-



THOMAS E. FRANKLIN

‘Raising the Flag at Ground Zero’ is a photograph by Thomas E. Franklin of ‘The Record’ taken on September 11, 2001. The picture shows three New York City firefighters raising the US flag at Ground Zero of the World Trade Center following the 9/11 attacks

stroying part of the city physically, (harming its people at the same time as it caused smoke to arise from the city and debris to scatter over a vast area), the spirit of the city was not destroyed. Seeing people of diverse backgrounds come together and unite in response to this catastrophe brought great hope and fostered aspirations for the nation’s future. Whether it was by donating blood to the victims, donating food to the rescue workers or by just praying for people who were still missing, impressive numbers of Americans from all around the country demonstrated immense reserves of strength and pride in their country by uniting together to defeat the enemy.

Just as the word “darkness” can be used to describe the actions of those who cause wrong, there is a great amount of countervailing “light” that has emanated from the city in response to this great catastrophe. People had (now more than ever) regained a great sense of pride in their country, and the nation lived up to its name as “The United States of America.”

Darkness is not just smoke that is seen hovering over a city when something is physically destroyed. Rather, it can be seen as a powerful

force that drives someone to do the unthinkable. It’s main intent is to destroy and defeat all those it intends to hurt in every way, shape and form. Little does it know that there is an inextinguishable flame which is man’s spirit, which can never be destroyed and which will live on to defeat the enemy. In the end, the nation as a whole has proven that we are stronger than ever as a people and that no matter how bad it gets, good will always prevail over evil. As a New Yorker who has lived here half my life, I have witnessed many of the defining moments in this great city’s history.

Whether it be the September 11 attacks, the Subprime Financial Crisis of 2007-2009 and now the COVID-19 pandemic, the city has been tested in many different ways but at the same time New York City has shown resilience and always bounces back. It is an honor to be a part of this great city. ■

*The writer received his undergraduate degree in business cum laude from Yeshiva University and his MBA with double distinction from Long Island University. He is a financial adviser who resides in New York and is involved in Israel-based and Jewish advocacy organizations*



# Lessons from the Great Depression

By Shlomo Maital

**NINETY YEARS** ago, on October 29, 1929, the Black Tuesday stock market crash heralded the onset of the Great Depression in the US. It quickly spread to the rest of the world and lasted for a decade, with unemployment soaring to 23%. International trade fell by half. Poverty and hunger were widespread. Only the massive defense spending caused by the outbreak of World War II brought an end to the crisis.

Fast forward. The global coronavirus pandemic this year has overnight transformed record-low unemployment rates in both the US and Israel to historic highs, around 11%.

Israel's gross domestic product shrank at an annual rate of 7%. Bankruptcies soar and hunger spreads. Bank of Israel data show that a third of the lower middle class (fourth and fifth income deciles) are out of work and half of the unemployed in general have college degrees. According to many economists, the recovery will be slow and painful.

What lessons can Israel learn from the Great Depression of the 1930s and the policies implemented to combat it? The world has vastly changed in the past 90 years – but still, there may be much we can learn.

I posed this question and others by email to distinguished Harvard historian Prof. Lizabeth Cohen, whose May 17 article in *The Atlantic* claimed that “in the 1930’s Americans responded to economic calamity by creating a richer and more equitable society... we can do it gain.” Her most recent books, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-39*, and *Saving American Cities: Ed logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age*, provide deep historical wisdom for our modern dilemmas.

But first, some background. In the 1932 US presidential election, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, defeated Republican president Herbert Hoover in a landslide. During the first 100 days of his administration, Roosevelt spearheaded vast new fed-

DIANA LEVINE



Lizabeth Cohen

eral legislation and issued dozens of executive orders that comprised the New Deal — a variety of programs to produce relief, recovery, and reform.

Cohen writes: “The success of the New Deal was built on more than all the agencies it spawned, or the specific programs it established – it rested on the spirit of those who brought it into being. The New Dealers learned to embrace experimentation, accepting failures along the path to success. They turned aside the ferocious opposition their bold proposals provoked. They organized supporters, and learned not just to lead, but to listen. And, perhaps above all, they pushed for unity and cultivated empathy.”

“Learned to listen.” “Embraced experimentation.” “Accepted failures.” “Pushed for unity.” Among today’s political leaders, I perceive a terrible shortage of those key qualities, worldwide. And as I write this,

there are 175 days until January 20, 2021, when the US president will be sworn in, and 475 days until November 17, 2021, when the coalition deal in Israel makes Blue and White leader Benny Gantz prime minister – though few political observers believe Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will actually let this happen. Can you, as a historian, surmise what might have resulted, had Herbert Hoover been elected in 1932? Are we headed for a similar fate?

Cohen: “Historians don’t generally engage in counterfactuals; we focus on what actually DID happen. But just to indulge you: There was such a landslide for FDR in November 1932, and Hoover had failed so significantly in his efforts to turn around the economy, that there was little chance he would have been reelected. One might come to the same conclusion for Trump today, except that I have never been so aware of efforts to undermine democratic voting as today. Of course, for almost a century, African Americans were barred from voting in the American South by Jim Crow laws and pernicious efforts. So my fear now is that [US President Donald] Trump won’t be reelected and he will challenge the results as “rigged,” to use his favorite language. Or if he does somehow sneak through it will be because many votes were thrown out and voters were kept from voting.

“This is, of course, an outrage in a democratic society. During the 1930s, the focus was on getting first - and second-generation immigrants (who were numerous) to become citizens and to participate in elections. But in my research I never saw concerns expressed that their votes would not be counted, if they were registered.”

“The First Hundred Days” has become a presidential mantra – and it originates with FDR in 1933. He coined the term. The first 100 days of Roosevelt’s presidency began on March 4, 1933. He presented a large package of legislation to the US Congress

to battle the impact of the Great Depression. By the 100th day of his presidency, on June 11, 1933, 13 major laws had been passed. Can you as a historian surmise – if FDR alive today and inaugurated on January 20, 2021, what would do and say in his first 100 days?

Cohen: “I think he would take much the same approach as he did in March 1933: aim to restore Americans’ confidence in the leaders of their country, demonstrate competence and capacity in the federal government to address the twin pandemic and economic crises, create relief programs to help people weather their current difficulties, and then, in time, once things were more stable, to implement some much needed reforms in the United States. He would surely have recognized how damaging to the well-being of the nation is the growing inequality of wealth and income.

“I would hope that were he president in the 21st century he would handle the racial challenges of the United States differently than he did in the 1930s. At that time he was very dependent on a Democratic Party Coalition that included the Southern states and their representatives in Congress. So he went along with racial discrimination in benefit programs (unemployment insurance, social security, fair labor standards, etc.) and in stopping the passage of important legislation like anti-lynching laws. Southerners feared that their economy, built as it was on the cheap labor of African Americans, and the suppression of blacks’ political rights, would be undermined by the New Deal. After the Civil Rights Movement and the progress the nation has made (as inequitable as the racial situation still is), FDR would hopefully have used the Black Lives Matter movement to move the nation forward, not to drag it backwards, as President Trump has been doing.”

FDR focused on what he saw as the number one essential problem: The collapse of banks, as people pulled their money out in panic and many banks failed, destroying family savings. My old friend, New York University economist William Silber, once wrote that within two weeks of FDR’s bank rescue, which included deposit insurance, people redeposited half the cash they had pulled out of the banks and financial collapse was averted. On Sunday night, March

9, Roosevelt spoke to more than 60 million people on the radio, to tell them in clear language, why, what and how: “What has been done in the last few days, why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be.” This was the first of 30 evening radio addresses that came to be called the Fireside Chats.

For leaders in the US and Israel next year – facing a laundry list of enormous challenges in employment, public health, social services, etc. – what can they learn and emulate, from FDR in 1933, if they (implausibly) became students of history and, for instance, read your books and articles?

Cohen: “I hope that both the United States and Israel get new leaders next year. I can’t speak to the problems in Israel, but in the United States the most important thing that a new president can do would be to work to restore more confidence in the federal government.

“For all my huge admiration for FDR and the New Deal – you note in your article that in 1930-36 neither economists nor political leaders truly understood that when people cease to spend money, governments must step up to fill the gap with public spending. As governments spend and borrow almost without limit, they now face mountains of debt; voices are now heard demanding to rein in emergency relief programs. Shades of 1936-37? Do you want to comment?

Cohen: “A pull-back too soon is indeed a real danger. The Republicans in Congress and the White House are already working to curb national spending. Given that this pandemic is not fading any time soon, we will not be able to get back to a normal economy and people will continue to face unemployment, evictions, hunger, ill health, and much more. Many mayors and governors have been exemplary in their efforts to put people before budgets, but only the federal government can take on debt. These lower levels of government will soon need to balance their budgets. Many policy makers and economists, in fact, feel that had the federal government spent more in response to the 2008 financial crisis the nation’s recovery would have been quicker. Will that lesson be learned? I hope so, but a lot will depend on the November election.”

You write, “Roosevelt responded to these challenges from the right and the left by jus-

tifying the New Deal in uncontroversial, almost nonpartisan terms... Roosevelt became a master himself of the radio, brilliantly using his many fireside chats to establish an intimate relationship with the American people.” In the age of Twitter and a Biblical flood of tweets and 180-character pearls of wisdom by both Trump and Netanyahu – if our leaders were to read your article and mend their flawed communication styles – what key lessons would they learn from FDR?

Cohen: “Many Americans despair of President Trump’s obsessive tweeting, but in fact FDR used the radio to reach out to ordinary Americans and create some intimacy between the people and their president. That was particularly important at a time when the Roosevelt administration was expanding the power of Washington and moving authority further away from Americans’ more familiar governance by cities and states. So I would say that the problem is less that Trump uses social media so often – though I do wish he would focus more on doing his job as President of the United States – as the content of what he tweets. He is insulting, divisive, racist, and so many other despicable things. It is baffling that even as his poll numbers drop he makes little effort to recruit support from doubting and disenfranchised voters. Most politicians would be tacking to the center right now. We are left to conclude that these reprehensible views are the real Donald Trump, which he makes no effort to hide.

“FDR took a very different approach and searched for ways of bringing as many Americans as possible under a big tent. Doing so meant he disappointed some potential supporters (such as those more conservative and more progressive), but he built an enormous coalition that gave him landslide victories in 1932 and 1936 and comfortable margins in 1940 and 1944, when he was breaking the longstanding norm that a president would only serve two terms. He judged that he had more to gain than lose by appealing to broadly-held American civic values.” ■

*The writer heads the Zvi Griliches Research Data Center at S. Neaman Institute, Technion and blogs at [www.timmovate.wordpress.com](http://www.timmovate.wordpress.com)*

# Reform Judaism in Britain

By Neville Teller

**ON JULY 9, 2020,** Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef issued an all-out attack on Reform Judaism, while also criticizing the practice of women studying Jewish law at an advanced level. Reform Judaism he described as “fake” and “falsified Judaism,” and Reform Jews as more of a lost cause than secular Jews.

A secular Jew, he said, could be taught and brought back to Torah observance. “A Reform Jew?” he asked, “nothing will help... When everything is fake there is no chance that they will return to Torah observance. Go and speak with people who have come back to Torah observance, you won’t find one Reform Jew among them... A Reform Jew remains a Reform Jew. They have a new Torah.”

Britain’s Reform movement issued a riposte.

“Reform Judaism is disappointed, although sadly not surprised, to read the latest comments of Israel’s Sephardi Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef regarding women’s Torah study and Reform Judaism. Whilst there are many differences in Jewish thought and practice around the world, as there have always been, we must remain one Am Yisrael. We are proud of the immense contribution our female rabbis and lay leaders make to our communities. They are a testament to the undeniable fact that women are just as capable as men in this and all fields.”

And indeed, Britain’s Reform movement affirms an uncompromising commitment to gender equality and inclusion, and seeks to engage with unaffiliated Jews and Jews with non-Jewish partners.

From its very introduction to Britain in the mid-19th century, Reform Judaism has faced a struggle against the established, comfortable, middle-of-the-road, non-haredi Orthodoxy that represented Judaism to most of the nation’s Jewish community at the time – and still does. Despite some notable moves toward a better relationship – and the gap has both narrowed and widened over the years – the religious gulf between orthodoxy, in however attenuated a form, and any other concept of what Judaism is, or could be, yawns as wide as ever.



“We talk instinctively of ‘the Anglo-Jewish community,’” writes Geoffrey Alderman, in his seminal *Modern British Jewry*, last updated in 1998 and in urgent need of a new edition. “There is today no such thing, but rather a series of communities some of which overlap to a greater or lesser extent.”

Judaism in Great Britain is its own thing. Comparisons are possible with some elements of US Judaism, but there is no real equivalence except perhaps within the strictly Orthodox tradition. An analysis of the UK’s 280,000-strong Jewish community reveals at least six varieties of Judaism functioning in its 450 synagogues. Non-haredi Orthodoxy is practiced by more than half, and Reform Judaism in about 20%. Strict Orthodoxy is observed in some 13.5%, and that is followed by Liberal, Masorti and Sephardi Judaism.

Nomenclature can be confusing. American Reform is not equivalent to the UK Reform movement, but more akin to Britain’s Liberal Judaism. UK Reform is comparable to America’s Conservative Judaism, but with a number of distinct characteristics.

The UK Reform movement identifies itself as cherishing both Jewish tradition and what it identifies as “Judaism’s ability to evolve in response to the contemporary

world.” It cites the towering rabbinical figures of the ancient Sanhedrin as examples of a reforming tradition within Judaism which has been lost. It regards the Mishna and Talmud as evidence of their striving to adapt Judaism to ever-changing conditions.

“The demise of the Sanhedrin in the fifth century,” writes Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Romain, a leading figure in Britain’s Reform movement, “robbed Judaism of its dynamic reforming process. The result was an increasing stultification within the faith, and the gulf between Jewish Law and everyday reality widened. Conformity became the hallmark of religious authenticity.” He writes that the rabbis of the Sanhedrin had “reformed Judaism to such an extent that what emerged was no longer recognizable as Biblical Judaism and became known as Rabbinic Judaism.”

The yawning gulf separating Reform from Orthodoxy is explicable by one indisputable fact: Every one of those transcendent rabbinical figures who formed the Sanhedrin, without exception, regarded the Biblical basis of the religion they strove to clarify and interpret as literally the word of God. Reform Judaism does not.

The key, says Romain, is “what happened at Mount Sinai. For the Orthodox, it was

Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner (center) joins a vigil against human rights violations in Iraq outside Westminster Abbey with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby (second from left), Imam Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra (second from right) and Sayeeda Warsi (right) in 2014



LUKE MACGREGOR/REUTERS

Sacks, as he then was, had been chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth – to give the position its full title – for a mere five years. His announcement that he would not be attending Gryn’s funeral was met by the British public in general, and by much of the Jewish community, with shock, astonishment and not a little distress. He delegated his wife and a member of staff to represent him at the service.

The media overflowed with comment, but the scandal was far from over. At the subsequent memorial service, sponsored by the Board of Deputies of British Jews – the body representative of the whole Jewish community – Sacks was present and spoke of Gryn as an honest and courageous Holocaust survivor, but never referred to him as “Rabbi.”

The mere fact of Sacks’s presence at the memorial event was too much for the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. Even though it does not recognize the authority of the Chief Rabbi, it rebuked him for attending and speaking. In response he wrote what could only be described as a letter of apology to the head of the organization, in which he criticized Reform Judaism as a “false grouping” that should not be given recognition, and described Gryn as “amongst those who destroy the faith.”

That letter was doubtless intended as a private communication, but *The Jewish Chronicle* obtained a copy and published it. The furor intensified, calls for Sacks’s resignation grew louder, and British Jewry seemed in danger of blowing itself apart.

It was in this febrile atmosphere that, in November 1998, the leaders of the various Jewish religious groupings came together and pledged themselves unreservedly to pursue communal peace and cooperation. As a result, what became known as the Stanmore Accords was signed by the leaders of the Orthodox, Reform, Liberal and Masorti Jewish movements. As part of this positive effort to foster harmony within the Jewish community, they agreed that non-Orthodox rabbis would not take part in Orthodox services, and vice versa, but that members of liberal Jewish movements could be called up to the Torah during Orthodox services.

The spirit of cooperation on issues that affected the Jewish community was strengthened during the years that Britain’s Labour opposition was led by Jeremy Corbyn, who failed signally to deal effectively with antisemitism in his party. However, when a new general election loomed, Reform’s senior rabbi, Laura Naomi Janner-Klausner, described the Stanmore Accords as “moribund,” and called for them to be refreshed.

She was no doubt aware that the Reform Movement’s general election manifesto, recently issued, encompassed aspects of social policy not envisaged in 1998 when the accords were signed. Modern Reform diverges most sharply from Orthodox practice in relation to the “woke” approach to societal and communal life of the last decade or so. The manifesto document endorsed such policies as the inclusion in all schools of sex education encompassing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender inclusive relationships, and advocated funding for problems disproportionately affecting the LGBT+ community including homelessness and mental health.

Reform Judaism is, by its own definition, liberal and inclusive. Just as it welcomes female rabbis and lay leaders, it finds no difficulty in ordaining LGBT clergy or in conducting LGBT marriages. It includes women in forming a minyan, welcomes non-Jewish spouses and, since 2015, recognizes Jews by patrilineal descent. Many of these concepts were never contemplated back in 1998.

Janner-Klausner has been Reform’s senior rabbi since 2011. When Margaret Thatcher, Britain’s first woman prime minister, but a Conservative, died in 2013, Janner-Klausner – oddly paralleling the Hugo Gryn affair – refused to attend her funeral. Thatcher’s gender could not have been the issue; it must have been her politics.

Janner-Klausner, 57, recently announced that she would be stepping down from the position of Reform’s senior rabbi on October 1, 2020. The movement is in the process of selecting a replacement. Only time will tell whether the Stanmore Accords are robust enough to withstand a “refreshment” process, and remain the basis for intra-communal good will within Britain’s Jewish community. ■

the revelation of God given once and for all time. Reform adheres to the notion of Progressive Revelation: that the will of God is constantly unfolding and each generation has to hear God’s voice in its own time.” That proposition, in orthodox eyes, is the very essence of sacrilege. It explains why the religious chasm between orthodox and reform Judaism can never be bridged.

But we are talking about Great Britain, the nation famed for tolerance, compromise and good manners. Surely some *modus vivendi* must have emerged from the decades of squabble, if not on the religious front, at least on the communal?

Indeed it did, following an incident that shook the UK’s Jewish community to the core, and threatened to topple the early chief rabbinate of Jonathan Sacks.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn, a leading Reform rabbi and a Holocaust survivor, won a national reputation for himself among Jews and non-Jews alike, largely through his broadcasts on the prestigious radio programs, *Today* and *The Moral Maze*. To the public at large Gryn represented Judaism at its best, and the public response to his death in 1996 was overwhelming. Tributes filled the media. As his daughter, Naomi, later recorded: “He was mourned and celebrated as a national hero.”

# Macron in Beirut: When the past and present converge

THIBAUT CAMUS/POOL/REUTERS



French President Emmanuel Macron visits the devastated site of the explosion at the port of Beirut on August 6

By Josef Olmert

**PAST LEGACIES** and memories are arguably a potent political force in Lebanon, as well as in other Middle East countries. Not least among them is the neighbor of Lebanon to the south, Israel. Mentioning past legacies inevitably bring to mind particular dates which are closely associated with them, and in the case of Lebanon, one date stands out as very crucial, a defining moment: This is September 1, 1920, some would say midnight of August 31, the date when France announced the creation of a new state, Le Grand Liban.

So, it is clearly the case, that French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Lebanon on September 1 is not a coincidence.

Macron's first visit in Lebanon was right after the explosion on August 4, which caused at least 190 deaths, 6,500 injuries, left an estimated 300,000 people homeless and devastated parts of Beirut.

In fact, the explosion caused much more than physical damage. It actually presented the Lebanese with a question so many times asked, "Lebanon: Quo vadis?"

Tens of thousands of Lebanese signed a petition calling for the restoration of the French mandate over the country, giving their answer to this question. Macron him-

self told the Lebanese that they need to create a "new order" in their country.

This is a problematic term, reminiscent of the dark days of L'Ordre Nouveau of Vichy France, but still one that makes sense in the Lebanese context. The creation of Greater Lebanon by France was one such attempt to create a "new order."

For two years, between 1918-1920, the future of the Levant was a matter of controversy between the imperial victors of World War I – Britain and France – Arab nationalists, Jewish nationalists and also a new political force, local Christians, mainly Maronite Catholics led by a charismatic Patriarch, Elias Hawayek (1843-1931), who wanted to use the circumstance of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire to establish a new Christian-dominated state, dependent on France, the traditional protector of "our little brothers of the Orient."

With the help of his French Conservative, Catholic allies, he got the prize he fought for. When French General Henri Gouraud entered Beirut and declared the creation of the new state, he added the ominous, emotive and significant line, that "this is the victory of the Cross over the Crescent." And so the fix of 1920 turned out to be the begin-

ning of a century of strife, and not the end of previous centuries of similar troubles. Throughout the last century, the entire complicated history of Lebanon can be summed up as an ongoing attempt to look for a "new order," a fix to the problems that lead to civil wars.

This is a history which is focused on what already happened, and what can still happen. Sami Hermez, a Lebanese scholar based in Qatar, artfully described this grim reality in a book published just a few years back, *War is Coming: Between Past and Future Violence in Lebanon*.

In it, he argued, based on an extensive field research, that the Lebanese themselves are living in the shadow of the grim awareness that "something" is imminent, and "something" means bad news. It does not mean political misunderstanding between different factions and communities. It means war, because political differences in Lebanon usually are contested and resolved through bloodshed. Amid the periods of conflict and violence, there were two notable "new orders" which need to be specifically explained.

One was the National Covenant of 1943, a Lebanese arrangement reflecting the interests

of the then two prominent religious communities, the Catholic Maronites and the Sunni Muslims. It was based on three principles: Lebanon must be independent, Lebanon must stay an Arab state, and Lebanon's political system must be based on confessionalism, with a Maronite president and Sunni prime minister.

It was a winning formula at the time, as it reflected internal Lebanese agreement, backed by a conducive regional reality and unchallenged by international pressures. The formula crumbled, however, when all these conditions seemed to have become irrelevant as of the late 1960s, leading to the greatest of all Lebanese civil wars, that of 1975-1990.

Michel Shih'a, one of the architects of modern Lebanon wrote that "living in Lebanon is a bliss which will continue unless the ideologists and reformers become strong enough to put an end to it." Sadly enough, Shih'a's fears proved to be in place. These were reformers and ideologues, the rising new power of the Shia community and the impact of the external actors – Palestinians, Israel, Syria and Iran – which provided the background to this atrocious civil war.

What has happened in Lebanon since 1990 gives us a good introduction to the present great crisis. In a way, Lebanon has healed in an impressive way from the horrors of the 15-year-war. The "new order," known as the Tai'f Accords of October 1990, provided the political umbrella, creating a different intercommunal balance in parliament and government, reducing Christian power and increasing the Muslim one.

Yet rebuilding political institutions, even with differences from the past, is one thing, but rebuilding society, rehabilitating the human aspect, the relationships which were destroyed, the lives shattered, is something else altogether, and this is why Hermez left his readers with the sober realization that "being unable to deal with the war's causes facilitated war's anticipation into the future."

One of the main socio-political changes in Lebanon – in fact, a major change in the domestic, communal balance of power – has to do with the rise of the Shi'ite

community starting in the 1960s. It was intensified and accelerated by the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 and the fallout from the Israeli invasion of 1982.

Interestingly enough, it was Ariel Sharon, the real architect and instigator of the 1982 war, who referred to the creation of a "new order" in Lebanon. Be it as it may, the fact is that the rise of the Shi'ites led also to a change of orientation among them about the direction of Lebanon.

Until the late 1970s, the Shi'ites were firmly in the camp of those who wanted to maintain a multi-communal, Arab-oriented Lebanese state, though with improvements in their own status.

The rising power of Hezbollah in the 1980s and onward led to something else, the prevalence of Shi'ite communal interests over those of the Lebanese state. In actual terms, it meant choosing Iran over Lebanon, and the most dramatic example of that was and still is Iran's full participation in the Syrian civil war on the side of Bashar Assad, Tehran's ally.

Under Hezbollah, the Shi'ites moved up in the Lebanese socio-political structure from being on the very bottom of the scale to becoming the most potent force, chiefly because of their command of the strongest military force in the country, a force stronger than the official security forces of the state.

This is the so-called "resistance," supposedly the only force in Lebanon ready to confront the "Israeli occupation," which in the reality of Lebanon is a manufactured problem. It is not only the view of the Israelis. Much more importantly is the fact that this is the view of most Lebanese outside of the Shia community, and this is where Hezbollah is confronted with a major challenge – how to act as a responsible government and not as a revolutionary "resistance" movement.

The problem is there because in the last few years Lebanon has witnessed the most serious economic crisis in its history coupled with rampant corruption, government ineptitude and a general sense among Lebanese that the mechanism of government ceased to exist.

According to Transparency International, Lebanon was ranked 138 out of 175 countries in the 2018 Corruption Perception Index. The national debt soared to the point where Lebanon's economy was "between Mount Lebanon to mountains of debt," unemployment soared, and for the first time since World War II, starvation became a problem.

This is where Hezbollah found itself facing a major problem – whom to blame at a time when the blame was on its own doorstep. Many Lebanese believe that the shadow of an imminent war with Israel instigated by Hezbollah as well as a civil war caused by its ever-growing power deter foreign investment and international economic rescue efforts.

Hezbollah has become the problem, not the solution. It is in this context that we need to understand the shock waves caused by the Beirut explosion. It seems to have confirmed to so many Lebanese the feeling that there may be a need for a "new order" – yet another one – in order to recreate the failing state.

There is a famous Lebanese proverb, "Forget the past, learn the lessons," but so many Lebanese simply expect the past to repeat itself and are surely divided about its lessons. It is, therefore, very doubtful whether Macron can prove to be the man of destiny.

The Lebanese are the ones who should do it for themselves, and as sad as it is, they have proved time and again, that they cannot do that. So much for the words of the great Lebanese poet/philosopher, Khalil Gibran, "My Lebanon is a serene mountain sitting between the sea and the plains, like a poet between one eternity and another." What a great, sad country. ■

*The writer is a Middle East expert who has taught at Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Bar-Ilan University, Cornell University, City College of New York and York University (Canada), and is currently at the University of South Carolina, where he was chosen as best professor for 2019 by the student newspaper*

# Culture Report

Music Fashion Dance Film Art Food

## A pianist's point of view

The marvelous possibilities of music

By Riva Schertzman

**WHENEVER I'M** playing a piece of music on the piano like a good jazz arrangement of Autumn Leaves or a Brahms Intermezzo, it takes me to a place of pure joy and allows me to let loose of whatever bothers me. It's such a high.

Music is one of the most powerful and beautiful forces in the world. It can accomplish countless wonders for those who tap into the marvelous possibilities it offers. As a professional woman – a musician, teacher and composer for more than 40 years – music is truly one of my great loves. Whether it be the personal thrill of performing a beautiful piece of music on the piano, for entertainment, healing, or spiritual enlightenment, the ever arising applications of music never cease to amaze me.

As I start most days with exercise, I realize how much more difficult exercise classes would be without music! It makes us move, makes us more graceful, and helps us maintain our balance as we move to the rhythm. The music affects our physiology. The fast rhythm of a song can get the heartbeat going stronger, energize us, or have the opposite effect of calming us down, slowing the heartbeat with slow beats, soft music, or meditative music. It can even reduce our blood pressure! Just listen to a nice slow melodic piece of music.

The Torah teaches that the Gate of Music is located next to the Gate of Torah. Music is such an important spiritual tool as commanded by God to include it in the Temple. When we listen to the prayers or Torah reading being sung, it uplifts us to a higher place and makes



COURTESY

Schertzman's grandson, Eli Schertzman, playing the piano in Efrat

it so much more inspiring to pray. The Tribe of Levi received instrumental and vocal training in order to be able to play music and sing the Psalms of David in the Temple that created an atmosphere of great beauty and joy, drawing in people spiritually and helping them get closer to God.

Their magnificent music was an integral part of the spiritual experience. Also, the Levites played music as part of the korbanot because it was required by God. The Mishna recounts the joyous music and singing during Simhat Beit HaShoaveh. King David played music on his harp so that he would make himself happy and thereby achieve prophesy.

Although I never trained formally as a music therapist, I think that every good and caring music teacher is doing music therapy whether they know it or not.

Music lessons can have a very positive impact on students. I once gave piano lessons to an 11-year-old boy with ADD who was thrown out of school for not doing well. He was crushed from his failures at school, and I

could see the pain in his eyes. I, however, saw him as an intelligent, sweet and loving child, so I used the music lesson to help him see this too. Fortunately, he loved playing the piano. Now as a teacher, I notice that there is always something each student is better at, and I focus on this strength in order to help the student enjoy the learning experience as well as succeed at the lessons.

For instance, one student has a great ear for music, another student imitates very well, another may have a good feel for performing, or maybe even composing music, but hardly ever does a student come to me with a gift for sight-reading music. Well, this boy had a special gift to be able to read music so easily, so I was sure to tell him how very amazing he is and really rubbed it in. This did the trick for his self-esteem, and he loved practicing and playing for me. Not only was it so enjoyable for him to play, but it was obvious that music became a way for him to finally feel good about himself and gain confidence.

The magic of beautiful melodic music



COURTESY

“Riva and Aviva” performing on stage outside Buckingham Palace in London during their tour of England at the invitation of Chabad

combined with powerful words is a winning combination to influence people and change their whole mindset.

When I was younger, living in Betar Illit with my husband and five children, I wrote many original songs which I performed on a keyboard- synthesizer- which had all sorts of drum styles, many instrumental sounds, and of course, lots of “thrills and frills,” sound effects that I used to make my performance more enjoyable and sometimes, humorous. I sang harmony to the songs with another woman named Aviva Karpel of Bat Ayin who was the main singer and very personable “MC” as well as a mother of eight children! Our music for women/girls only duo was known as “Riva & Aviva.” We would perform all over Israel, including the yishuvim in Judea, Samaria and Gush Katif, often wearing heavy bulletproof vests to get there in one piece since we traveled at the times when there were “intifadas” going on. We were sometimes escorted to our concerts which took place in isolated areas by soldiers in their bulletproof fully enclosed armored vehicle jeeps, the IDF Sufa.

On one such occasion, we were taking a “night ride” in one of these jeeps through the winding roads of Samaria on route to a yishuv while wearing our official IDF “vests.” Our bodies were pushed from side to side unto the metal walls as we drove through the darkness. I remember that I’d have to recover from the “jeep sickness” after we arrived, but it was absolutely worth it because it was really “cool.”

Anyway, on route to the yishuv, we learned that a woman from this yishuv was recently murdered in a terror attack. As we arrived to perform in a garden area, we observed the women of the yishuv sitting around waiting

for us looking very, very sad. We understood they were grieving, and yet, we were invited to entertain! How were we going to do this? It took some ingenuity, but we decided to perform a slow melodic song I had written about Rachel Imenu (Rachel our mother), including the words written on her grave in which she cries for the return of her children to Israel (and Hashem assures her that they will return).

Fortunately, the song was very meaningful to the women because the lyrics expressed hope for the redemption. It’s not only the music, but the use of the words added to music which creates a powerful experience. Music brings words to life, adding a whole new dimension of color which helps to touch a person’s heart. After that song, we gradually increased the “tempo” in the songs that followed, until, after a few songs, the whole mood of gloom lifted to a joyous one! Aviva liked to invent dances for the groups we entertained. We even managed to get them up and dancing. It was important to get these women out of their gloom. Music, especially with meaningful lyrics, did the trick.

While I was serving as a piano accompanist for “Mikveh the Musical,” we were on tour in the US last year and asked to conduct a few Shabbaton workshops. The topic assigned to me was “music for healing.” I had to think of something to do with the group on a Shabbos. An idea occurred to me as I was driving while listening to an old familiar song playing on the radio.

It brought me back to bygone days as a care-free girl in my youth and, for a few minutes as the music played, I was back there (“BPT,” before paying taxes). Always inspired by songs like “Chicago’s “You Are My Inspiration,” (or any of Carole King’s songs), the activity I did

with the group was to tell everyone to close their eyes and think of the earliest song they can remember.

Then I went around the room asking participants about their memory. It was interesting to see that focusing on a song from the past not only brought the song to mind but with it, all sorts of old feelings and some things long forgotten. Some participants remembered childhood songs and one woman remembered a very sad song and experience. She wanted to tell us about it which was healing for her to do. Therefore, I was able to demonstrate that hearing music helps to recall old memories and sensations as well as helps to resolve old conflicts.

There’s another neat application of music which music therapist do. Music therapy can help people who are recovering from a stroke or traumatic brain injury. When the left side of the brain is injured, it can damage the area responsible for speech. Because singing ability originates on the right side of the brain, music therapists have found that they can help injured people work around the speech injury to the left side of their brain by first singing their thought and gradually letting go of the melody. Having studied singing, I have learned that speaking is an extension of singing because we are actually speaking on a tone. If we practice saying sentences on different pitches, we can exercise the voice.

Is it ever too late to learn an instrument? If that’s what you’ve always wanted to do, I say, do it! As a music teacher, my favorite students are adults because they have a greater capacity to sit through the lessons than children, and they generally really enjoy the lesson. Of course, adults catch on to the concepts quicker than children. It is true, though, that adults do not memorize as well as children can or may not be able to develop the physical hand dexterity as well as a young person can for playing piano, for instance. Yet it will be enough to have fun and learn a few things. Research shows that music engages not only your auditory system but many other parts of the brain as well, including areas responsible for movement, language, attention, memory, and emotion.

So many different parts of the brain are stimulated that listening and playing or singing music is a good way to “exercise” your brain. The transcendent power of music brings us joy, inspiration, healing, spiritual connection, and even connects us to people as we sing, dance, and partake of the wondrous beauty it offers. ■

*You can download the author’s melodic relaxation CDs, Gentle Waves and Gentle Waves 2, on CDBABY, Spotify or Amazon, or contact her at rivasmusic@gmail.com*



# How it *really* was!

## The rooster and the peacock

**IN HIS** various capacities across many decades, this writer has delivered thousands (yes, thousands) of speeches in cities ranging from Jerusalem to Johannesburg, Melbourne to Munich to Memphis and from Buenos Aires to Birmingham. From the mid-1950s, I would often end my extemporaneous speeches with a quotation from the Book of Psalms that appears in many daily prayers: “The LORD will give strength unto His people; The LORD will bless his people with peace.”

In this, I was deeply influenced by David Ben-Gurion, who often quoted that verse in his speeches. Ben-Gurion was immersed in the Bible, a way of thinking unmatched by any later prime minister. His strategic approaches and judgments – I believe – were swayed by his understanding of the Tanach.

Ben-Gurion’s first concern after World War II was to ensure that the Yishuv, the pre-state Jewish community here, could survive an Arab invasion from all sides. His second was to ensure a flow of immigrants, and in the first instance, people young enough to bolster the nascent IDF. Then came the massive immigration that tripled Israel’s population within a few years.

In essence, his defense doctrine was based on one main factor. Israel is small in numbers, and the Arab populations surrounding us are a multitude. “What we lack in quantity, we must make up for in quality.” That was the first point. The second military aim was that any future war should never be fought on the small land mass of the State of Israel, but always on enemy territory. And the third, applied by his successor, Levi Eshkol, leading up to the Six Day War in 1967, was never to join battle without the tacit or open support of a major power.

Often, in my own speeches, I would reinterpret the verse in Psalms in the light of

KOBI GIDEON/GPO



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hails the historic flight from Israel to the UAE on August 31, 2020, calling it ‘a joyous day for all citizens of Israel, a day of victory, the doctrine of peace for peace’

Ben-Gurion’s doctrine: “When God gives his people strength, then he will also give them peace.” In simple words, Israel’s strength would eventually lead to peace.

To put it in brief, peace through strength is not a new principle at all.

Why, suddenly do we go back to Ben-Gurion? Because Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a man with considerable historic successes, has many tragic character flaws. One of them is a severely damaged ego. Therefore, he is always in need of the limelight, and constant reassurance that he is great. As a result, he is an inveterate credit-thief.

The US-brokered “normalization” deal with the United Arab Emirates is a great step forward for Israel, sufficient unto itself. It is a major change for the Middle East, and a vital message to Iran and Turkey. It needs no frills and frippery. But Netanyahu is Netanyahu.

When he made his statement about it – on

prime-time Israeli television, in prime form and prime blitheness to the truth – he made two false claims. “This is the first peace agreement between Israel and an Arab country in 26 years. It is different from its predecessors because it is based on two principles: ‘peace for peace’ and ‘peace through strength.’ Under this doctrine, Israel is not required to withdraw from any territory.”

How amazing. If “peace through strength” is a “different” principle, then Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin must have made peace with Jordan and Egypt because of Israel’s weakness. Certainly, even the most naive person will not believe that. It is obvious that to call this a “different” principle is a flagrant insult to previous leaders of Israel, and to the IDF.

The second false claim is that the UAE-Israel agreement was “peace for peace,” without yielding Israel territory. More than once,



MATTY STERN/US EMBASSY

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is welcomed to Israel by Chief of State Protocol Meron Reuben on August 24

including in his election campaign “principles,” Netanyahu announced that we would annex the Jordan River Valley area. Then he had to withdraw the claim to placate the US and the UAE. (On a personal aside, I wish to make clear that I believe that we need full control of the Jordan River line. Without the unnecessary blather of the extreme Right and some of the settler leaders, we could quietly have created a fait accompli. But we live in an age of “Blah-blah, ergo sum!”)

The prime minister gave up more than the official annexation of the Jordan line, he opened the way for the UAE to buy sophisticated weaponry, such as the F-35 stealth fighter. The fact is that wily Netanyahu never consulted with his defense minister or his foreign minister. Even the historic delegation that flew across Saudi airspace in the first direct Israel-Abu Dhabi El Al flight was headed by the Netanyahu-appointed National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat, excluding the Defense Ministry and IDF.

This is a sure sign that the F-35s are under discussion. Ignoring military opposition to the sale of such weaponry is an established custom of this tragically flawed personality. He did the same when Israel bought more Dolphin-class submarines from the ThyssenKrupp German manufacturer than the military establishment needed.

Not only was this done behind the back of the IDF and the defense ministry, which were kept completely in the dark, Netanyahu then – again – on his own, behind their back, approved the sale of two Dolphin-class submarines to Egypt. There are murky financial manipulations in this matter, called Case 3000 by the Israel police investigators, but they are tangential to this column. They involve Netanyahu’s close coterie and relatives, but at this stage, not him personally.

The prime minister has denied that he gave a green light to the purchase of the F-35s by the UAE. His denial is as believable as his promise to annex the Jordan River Valley.

Taking a look further behind the UAE-US brokered deal, it is clear that US President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, wanted to pull off a victory for Trump before the Republican Party’s national convention. The UAE has had near-open relations with Israel for a long time. Even Netanyahu had to admit that in his statement, while giving the Mossad more credit than others.

The “others” include the Foreign Ministry and various agencies and companies which have flown under the radar for years, beginning with the period when Netanyahu was not in government at all.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew to Israel to address the Republican convention from Jerusalem. His vain attempt to get more Arab states to join the UAE’s “normalization” may show that there is some competition between the Kushner crew and the State Department. The latter broke one of the first rules of diplomacy: never make a request that will be rejected. Bahrain, Oman and Sudan turned Pompeo down, which is a slap in the face to him, and to Trump as well.

Perhaps the next sentence is a known fact, but it may be a scoop. I clearly recall an American-Israeli was sent to Oman under the wraps to represent Israel’s interest. I do not guarantee the precise year, but do take responsibility for what I write about our clandestine long-standing relations with Oman. Furthermore, Israel has been selling products of peace, such as irrigation systems, as well as hi-tech – and may be even products of war to many Arab states.

The deals were almost always through a third country, and/or the origin of the goods was falsely labeled. Both buyer and seller knew the truth.

Furthermore, for Netanyahu to say “I brought peace... my efforts, etc.” and so on is just another symptom of a weak-egoed man who needs to claim credit for what others have wrought. This is so in every field. The fact that he kept his coalition partners in the dark about the UAE-US announcement “because he was afraid of leaks” is both an insult and a weak departure from the truth. His spokesmen are as leaky as a corroded drain pipe, while Alternate Prime Minister and Defense Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi – both former chiefs of staff – no doubt have kept and keep more secrets than their “partner,” the prime minister, even knows about.

A fellow journalist has written of the “Netanyahu Doctrine: Peace without territorial withdrawal and peace through strength.” The only Netanyahu doctrine I can see is that of a hoarse rooster donning peacock feathers. With these feathers, and his freedom with the truth, he may win election in this Orwellian world. His attempt to sneak into history as a peacock will face the judgment of time, as tens of doctorates and some television series will show the man with many accomplishments and with tragic flaws: a rooster in peacock’s plumage. ■

*The writer has had considerable experience in government and public life across many decades. He served in the offices of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Levi Eshkol, and as world chairman of Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal. Comments: zavrham@gmail.com*



# Doctor Chatterley's passion

**NOT ENOUGH** international attention has ever been paid to the Canadian Institute for the Study of Antisemitism (CISA). It is one of the foremost institutions devoted to the scholarly study of this malady which, after a slight recession post-Holocaust, is rampant once again. The CISA was founded by Dr. Catherine Chatterley in 2010, and the story of how she entered on this path, which would culminate in her spearheading such a project, is interesting in itself. It began with the close relationship she had with her grandmother, a German Lutheran, whose interest in the Tanach (Old Testament) opened up the saga of the Jewish people to this curious little girl. Later, when she learned through reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Corrie ten Boom's *The Hiding Place*, of the specific assault on these same Jewish people under Nazi Germany, in her own words she was "bewildered... and was driven, personally, to understand how this disaster happened. How could the German people perpetrate this kind of crime across Europe and why did people hate the Jews so much that they actually built gas chambers and ovens for them? I just couldn't believe the level of hatred implicit in this event and I searched for information on it as I grew up. It became a serious personal interest. Eventually, I ended up studying the subject at university and moved out of pre-medical science to study history."

The savvy young Catherine from then on carefully tailored her education choices to best facilitate finding answers to her questions. Her undergraduate studies included European History and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at the University of Manitoba, European Intellectual History at Concordia University in Montreal, followed by a Doctorate in Modern European and Jewish History and German-Jewish Literature, which she completed at the University of Chicago. Experiential education no doubt occurred when she worked at the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, recording testimony with Holocaust survivors, while studying for her Masters degree. In Montreal she lived in Outremont, a mixed French and hassidic neighborhood, perhaps a reminder of her early impressions of biblical Jewry.

The newly minted doctor was hired to teach history by both the University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba and for a total of 16 years she did exactly that, at the former from 2002 to 2008, the latter, 2007 to 2018. In 2010 she founded the institute which became CISA, where she is now founding director.

Beginning on a shoestring, she soon received help from one of

Winnipeg's foremost real estate entrepreneurs, Sandy Shindleman, a vehement supporter of Chatterley's vision, who became chairman of her board of directors. The fledgling organization took off, bringing world-renowned scholar/speakers to this prairie city in the center of vast Canada, home to a generous, strongly Zionist, Jewish community. The annual Shindleman Lectures CISA has presented have included such stellar figures as Irwin Cotler, Alvin Rosenfeld, Deborah Lipstadt, Daniel Goldhagen, David Harris, David Matas, Daniel Pipes, Raheel Raza. Recognition of Chatterley's work brought her an invitation to join Prime Minister Steven Harper's delegation to Israel in 2014. Her book *Disenchantment: George Steiner and the Meaning of Western Civilization After Auschwitz* was a National Jewish Book Award Finalist. (Her new book, *The Antisemitic Mindset*, is due to be released soon.) The lectures she's given, the articles she's written, and papers she's presented have earned international recognition, and attending conferences around the world has brought Chatterley in contact with other world renowned scholars.

It was at one of these conferences, at Indiana University in Bloomington, where the 80 or so delegates in attendance acknowledged that a journal was sorely needed for this area of research. Answering the call, in 2016, under the sponsorship of CISA, Chatterley undertook the task of creating one. Published by Indiana University Press, this journal, of which she is editor in chief, is now available in over 3,000 universities and colleges worldwide, and is recognized as the leading academic periodical on the subject.

At this point, enter Tony Comper, former president and CEO of the Bank of Montreal Financial Group. He and his wife were deeply saddened by the growing hatred that seemed to be permeating society; the year 2004 had seen a radical upsurge in antisemitic incidents. They decided to do something about it. In his own words: "My late wife Elizabeth and I founded FAST (an acronym for Fighting Antisemitism Together), in 2005, because we felt that it was important to build a coalition of non-Jewish business and community leaders to stand up and speak out against antisemitism."

They received backing from a coalition of more than 30 influential corporate leaders. Believing the classroom is the ideal incubator for change, they developed two educational programs: Choose Your Voice for grades 6, 7 and 8 (middle school); and Voices Into Action, for grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, (high school) and post-secondary institutions.

Dr. Catherine Chatterley, founding director of the Canadian Institute for the Study of Antisemitism

These educational materials, first on DVD and then online, were provided to teachers at no charge, adapting the content to meet standards across different Boards of Education, in both English and French. The Compers' charitable endeavor has grown to the point where 4.4 million Canadian students have learned about prejudice, human rights, and social justice, through these free curriculum-based teaching resources. Comper says: "To fundamentally change, you need to focus on education of young people and equip them with an alternative narrative to what they are hearing either at home, or in the street, or in the school yard."

When Comper realized FAST was potentially becoming a long term project, he began to look for a way to ensure the work would continue forward. He approached Chatterley with his idea, believing that CISA would be the perfect vehicle for guaranteeing FAST's future. They decided to partner; the official announcement was released to the press just a few weeks ago.

Chatterley has become president and chair of FAST, and is committed to ensuring its sustainability and to meeting its long-term goals. The two organizations, although their mandates dovetail, will remain separate including separate fundraising needs, but the affiliation will allow CISA to promote and support FAST's nationwide human rights curriculum. This will increase the focus on antisemitism, as implied in both organizations' names, and will emphasize the principle that antisemitism is a civilizational problem, not a Jewish one.

As Chatterley puts it: "Antisemitism is part of Western culture. Anti-Judaism is part of Western culture and Islamic culture." In other words, the study of antisemitism belongs in History, not Judaic Studies, Departments. (It was a disappointment for many that the University of Manitoba, where Chatterley taught for 12 years, did not see fit to take the institute into their own history department.) CISA and FAST are a perfect complement to one another and hopefully both organizations will be given the support they need by the Canadian public and beyond. Sandy Shindelman, CISA's chairman, believes that "with today's documented upsurge in antisemitism worldwide, the work of Chatterley and CISA is more important than ever... if that is even possible."

CISA's mandate is to create and promote scholarship and education on antisemitism. The publication of the aforementioned journal with Indiana University Press was an important milestone. Now, Chatterley is venturing into a third growth spurt. With FAST's free online curriculum available to millions of Canadians, the study of antisemitism will be able to reach this same youthful audience. The impact of including antisemitism in FAST's curricula can't be stressed enough. They are designed for all levels of education in Canada including Correctional Services, Adult Education programs, and ESL classes



(English as a Second Language).

Nearly four-and-a-half million students have taken these lessons against prejudice: human rights; the Holocaust and genocide; residential schools; antisemitism; racism; homophobia; sexism and sexual harassment; even cyber-bullying, among others.

As Chatterley puts it, "I am impressed by the broad and inclusive nature of the program and its obvious goal of combating hatred and harassment across the board by using a direct grassroots approach." Further, she says, "As a scholar and educator, I know that the only way we can uproot hatred and antisemitism in our society is through education. What makes FAST unique is that this effort is led by a coalition of non-Jewish leaders."

From intense study of antisemitism and all its ramifications, her career has taken Chatterley to the point where she will be concerned with attempts to root the malady out of the general population. I asked Chatterley about antisemitism in Canada, both past and present. "Jews were disliked as foreigners for their religion and their inability to accept Christianity... and were treated with hostility as economic competitors. The discrimination and exclusion faced by Canadian Jews, until recently, follow from these two primary conflicts, religious and economic... yet... Canada is one of the better places for Jews to live in diaspora today.

Canadian Jews are free from any and all discrimination and enjoy the same rights and freedoms as other Canadians." That said, "Canada has a very high number of antisemitic incidents per capita compared to the United States... and a high number compared to the UK and Germany. The main difference between Canada and other Western societies is that while it has the highest per capita number of incidents, Canada has the lowest number of violent attacks. The steady increase in incidents has been in harassment, most of it online... the internet, social media... ubiquitous use of cell phones."

What better place to start! May the partnering of these two elements, CISA's thrust and FAST's free learning tools, bear fruit – in Canada and beyond.

Regarding her visit to Israel with the prime minister's delegation in January 2014, Chatterley told me, "It was a fabulous experience. We stayed in Jerusalem and I was able to visit Yad Vashem, the Israel Museum, the Old City and the Knesset in session. The most important part of the visit for me personally was the time I spent in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is a very powerful place." ■



# Viruses, William Osler and antisemitism

**TODAY THE** world is a hostage to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed the lives of some 900,000 individuals. All of us are hoping, and waiting, for news of the development of a successful treatment or vaccine, a stark reminder of the extent to which our lives are dependent on advances in medicine.

In fact, modern medicine is relatively new. William Osler, referred to as the father of modern medicine, died in 1919 at the age of 70 – just over 100 years ago. Osler, a Canadian, completed a degree in medicine at McGill University in Montreal in 1872. After postgraduate studies in Germany with Rudolf Virchow, a pioneer pathologist, he returned to Montreal to assume a position on the medical faculty at McGill. From 1884 to 1889, Osler was chair of clinical medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, after which he moved to Baltimore, where he was instrumental in the establishment of the school of medicine at The Johns Hopkins University. From 1905 until his death, he was the Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University.

Osler was, and still is, revered by the medical profession for his contributions to medical education, particularly for introducing the concept of residencies in medical specialties and for his insistence on bedside clinical education to complement didactic instruction. One quote attributed to him is “Listen to your patient, he is telling you the diagnosis”.

What is less widely known is that Osler was a philosemite who appreciated the contributions by Jews to medicine, understood the barriers and hurdles Jews faced in every-day life and was aware of the perils they faced as a result of the antisemitism that permeated German society.

Osler was born and raised in small towns in what is now Ontario. It is unlikely that he had much if any contact with Jews. In fact, the first Canadian census in 1871 indicated there were only 1,115 Jews in all of Canada. Nevertheless, antisemitism was a common feature of 19th century Ontario society, as described by Speisman in *Antisemitism in Canada*, 1992, (Davies, ed.), and as portrayed in *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Gray, 1999), a book about the pioneering lives of Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill, two popular 19th-century Canadian writers.

Osler’s views on Jews and antisemitism are known because of two published medical journal articles that he wrote. One of the

two was published at an early stage in his career and the other at a later point.

The later article, “Israel and Medicine” was published in 1914 in the *Journal of the Canadian Medical Association*. Beginning with the Hebrew bible and its focus on the importance of hygiene, Osler points to the important role of Jewish physicians of the Middle Ages in preserving and transmitting ancient knowledge, to both the medieval Christian and Islamic worlds; in particular, highlighting the medical contributions of Maimonides. He continues by noting that in spite of persecutions and restrictions, Jewish doctors were held in high regard by European courts, as illustrated by a letter in his own library from Pope Gregory XIII (1581) stating “but that there are still many among Christian persons who desiring the infirmities of their bodies to be cured by illicit means, and especially by the service of Jews and other infidels.” Osler goes on to describe how the removal of many restrictions on Jews in the 19th century resulted in an explosion of Jewish contributions to medical science by such figures as Friedrich Henle, as well as by a number of his contemporaries, such as the American pediatrics pioneer Abraham Jacobi. He concludes by stating “In the medical profession the Jews had a long and honorable record, and among no people is all that is best in our science and art more warmly appreciated.”

While this article is impressive as a record of Osler’s appreciation for Jewish accomplishments in the face of adversity, it doesn’t compare to the empathy and concern for Jewish well-being that he expresses in the earlier publication. In 1884, Osler, 35 years old, spent a sabbatical in Berlin. His impressions were published in the *Canada Medical Journal* as an eight-page article titled “Letters from Berlin.” The first seven pages are devoted to descriptions of Osler’s visits with important Berlin medical figures, such as Virchow and von Frerichs, including descriptions of their lectures, interests and research facilities.

Beginning with the words, “The modern ‘hep hep hep...’ has by no means died out,” the final page is devoted to the antisemitism that was prevalent in Germany. Osler notes “to judge from the tone of several of the papers devoted to the Jewish question there are not wanting some who would gladly revert to the plan adopted on the Nile some thousands of years ago.”

As to the Jews in the German Medical Faculties “I know their

Sir William Osler (1849-1919) was a Canadian physician and one of the four founding professors of Johns Hopkins Hospital

---

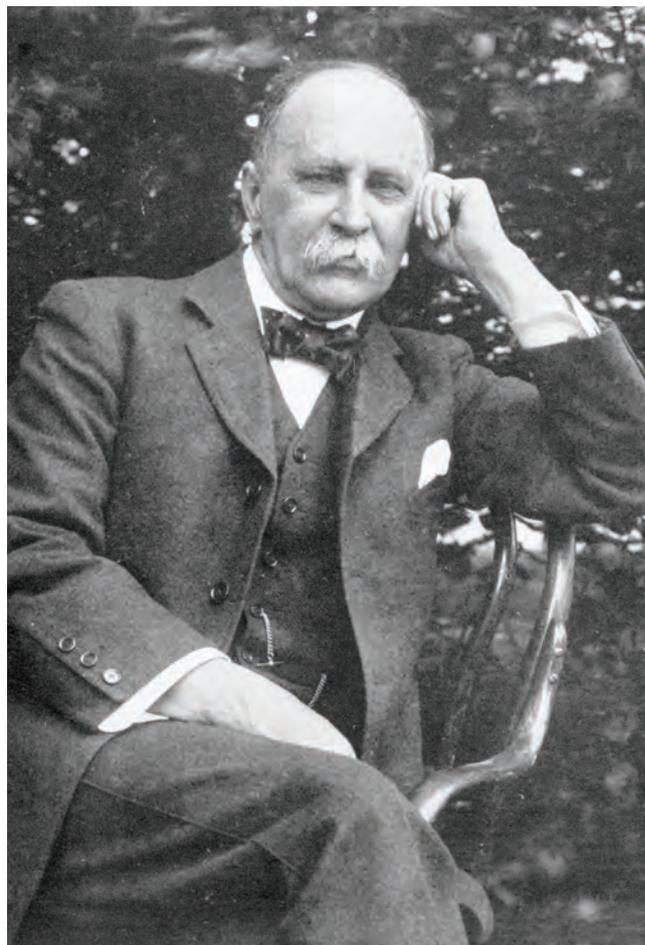
positions have been won by hard and honorable work; but I fear that... the present agitation will help to make the attainment of university professorships additionally difficult.” Perhaps, as has been suggested, Osler sensed the catastrophe that was to come. He writes “Should another Moses arise and preach a Semitic exodus from Germany... they would leave the land impoverished far more than was ancient Egypt by the loss of... material wealth – enough to buy Palestine over and over again from the Turk.”

Where did this sensitivity, understanding and tolerance come from? While there are likely several factors, Osler must have been influenced by George Eliot (pen name for Mary Ann Evans), the celebrated Victorian writer whose last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, is, in part, an appeal for a Jewish national rebirth in the ancestral Jewish homeland. Further, in 1878, two years after the publication of the novel, Eliot published a series of essays, one of which also deals with a Jewish return to national status in Palestine. The title of the essay is “The Modern Hep, Hep, Hep”, the cry used by anti-Jewish rioters in Bavaria in 1819. Osler must have read it.

Growing up in Montreal during the 1950s and 60s, the son of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, I was aware not only of McGill University’s lofty academic reputation, but also, ironically for an institution that Osler helped build, its antisemitic reputation.

Pierre Anctil in *Antisemitism in Canada* and Allan Levine in *Seeking a Fabled City* (2018) note the correlation between an increase in Jewish enrollment at McGill (due to an increase in the number of Jewish immigrants to Canada during the early part of the 20th century) and the imposition of discriminatory admission standards. Whereas in 1913 only 6.8 % of the students were Jewish, by 1924 that number had increased to 25 % of the first year undergraduate class, and 25% of the medical class. The approach used to reduce these numbers was to tacitly impose higher admission standards for Jewish applicants. While rarely made explicit, Anctil quotes from a 1928 letter from Ira Mackay, the Dean of Arts, to the assistant registrar stating “kindly admit all Hebrews with an aggregate over 700 (in matriculation marks) and all non-Hebrews with an aggregate of over 630.” The policy worked. By 1935 Jewish enrollment at McGill had fallen by half.

In the case of the faculty of medicine, a quota of 10% was established, although Levine notes that in 1938 only 5% (eight Jewish



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

students of 160) were admitted. When asked about such low numbers the answer given, an example of self fulfilling prophecy, was that Jewish graduates have a difficult time finding hospital internship placements.

Restrictions on Jewish admissions extended beyond the end of World War II and possibly into the 1960s. My father’s family experienced the medical school quota when twin cousins, both academic superstars, applied in the late 1940s and only one was admitted; the other went to medical school in the United States.

McGill was not alone. Anctil notes that other universities in Canada and the US practiced similar policies. They were designed to protect Anglo-Saxon economic interests, but they were rooted in antisemitism. Levine quotes a Dean of Arts at McGill writing in 1926 “The simple obvious truth is that the Jewish people are of no use to us in this country.”

A number of writers, Bret Stephens and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks among them, have pointed out that antisemitism is a virus that mutates; anti-Zionism being the latest form of the virus.

Will there ever be a vaccine against antisemitism?

*The writer is a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo*



## *It only hurts to pray*

**RODNEY IAN** Birnbaum's purple-trimmed prayer shawl slices through the early morning Jerusalem air with a vengeance. God only knows when, if ever, he'll be this close to the source of all creation. Even among the world's most devout he stands – or more accurately, sways – apart. Every Friday morning for the last five years Birnbaum has made the hour-long trek on noisy, steamy, green buses from his hovel in Har Nof, proud home of Jerusalem's largest graveyard, to the Western Wall.

Anyone raised in an Orthodox Jewish home who has spent tens of thousands of hours in prayer can immediately spot a Johnny Come Lately like Rodney. And so he is. Rodney's Jewish roots are about as deep as spit on a rock. His dad was an itinerant carpenter who never strayed from the fold – mainly because he had never joined the flock in the first place. Last Rodney heard from his pop, the old man was up in the Western Cascades of Oregon, cutting down pine trees by day, reciting Hindu chants as part of a commune by night.

Rodney now climbs the first rung on the celestial ladder, softly but fervently singing from Psalms 30 and 67. His thoughts drift to a mocha-skinned girl named Naomi Blue. It's 2007 all over again. Birnbaum met Blue 13 years ago while he was still living in Los Angeles. They locked eyes during a Zionist Organization of America young professionals' mixer at California State University, Northridge's Oviatt Library. They vibed, went out for drinks, impressed each other with obscure facts about the Oslo Accords, got drunk at a dive bar they both loved – Scotland Yard on Sherman Way – and stumbled back to Rodney's place warbling the Israeli national anthem.

As the sun came up over Birnbaum's San Fernando Valley bedroom window, he felt altogether at peace. He had momentarily lost all memory of the slow-motion train wreck his life had become. A week before he and Naomi chatted the night away over a bottle of White Zinfandel in his apartment on Zelzah Avenue, Rodney had been let go from his job as one of five deputy editors at the *Los Angeles Daily News*. He was also three months behind on his rent. And let's not forget his prized 2003 Honda Civic DX, which had been recently repossessed. In LA, the only people you're likely to see walking the streets are the homeless, clinically insane or the odd method actor losing himself in a role.

Meanwhile, Naomi had bought a one-way ticket to the Land of Milk and Honey and was flying out in a couple of days. Ms. Blue looked good naked, smelled good always and had an easy charm about her. So, it was a no-brainer what Birnbaum's answer would be when she popped the big question: "Want to fly to Israel with me?"

A back spasm jolts Birnbaum back to the here and now, right during the Shema, where he's supposed to be contemplating God's greatness and oneness. Rodney was a star fullback for the not-so rough and tumble El Camino Real Conquistadors, a school that excelled in academic decathlons, not athletics. But he messed up his back after the final snap of the final game of his high school career.



He slowly healed, and now only feels pain when he prays. In some weird way, standing and bowing inside a synagogue or at the Kotel replicates the movements of a running back being taken down by a hard charging lineman. The chiropractor who drew this comparison between prayer and pig skin, one Dr. Rafael Ben Rafael, got his training from a Cyprus-based online medical school. It's worth noting that Dr. Ben Rafael is currently standing trial for the role he played in a scheme to defraud the Israeli Health Ministry out of millions of shekels.

Winter in Jerusalem turns bones brittle, so it cuts like a knife this last time Rodney prays at the retaining wall built around the Sec-

—  
A man holds up his cellphones  
to the Western Wall



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

ond Temple by that wicked and wily King Herod the Great. But this time, the intense throbbing is dulled by the happy text he had received a few minutes earlier, as he crossed St. James Street into the Jewish Quarter – right above the Cardo. His mother Myrna had come around. After months of agonizing ambivalence, she agreed to let him crash at her place in Tarzana until he landed a job as an urban planner with the city of Los Angeles.

He completes the prayer session, folds up his tallit, kisses it and gently places it back in its clear plastic bag covering. He managed to stay on Israel: The Ride for over a decade, far more than any Los Angelino he'd met here. Naomi Blue, the girl whose pretty laugh

had lured him across the world's second largest ocean was long gone. She met and fell in love with an Israeli fighter pilot who was neither. But he was a bona fide psychotic, so Naomi fled back to the West Coast a decade ago. She eventually married a well-mannered, well-groomed and well-spoken human resources executive named Weisberger.

Rodney boards the big blue and white flying machine that will magically transport him back to the Dodgers, Sepulveda Boulevard and non-Jews. The sharp stabbing sensation in his back suddenly ceases. He can't help but wonder whether this is because God has decided to throw in his support or abandon him altogether. ■

# A literary adventure with Sar-El

By Neville Teller

**SAR-EL** – a Hebrew acronym for “service to Israel” – is an extraordinary organization, known in English as Volunteers for Israel, a name it shares with its sister organization in the US. Founded in 1983 by retired Israeli general Aharon Davidi, its self-appointed task is to enable people from across the world to come to Israel as civilian volunteers in the Israeli army. They pay their own way, and for a few weeks undertake routine, but sometimes back-breaking, manual labor on army and air force bases – work that would otherwise have to be undertaken by military personnel.

For 18 years Mark Werner, a US corporate lawyer, forsook his comfortable American lifestyle for several weeks to slog away as a Sar-El volunteer, in a practical effort to demonstrate his commitment to Israel. Now president of Volunteers for Israel, Werner has used the journals he kept over those years to describe his experiences working within the Israeli military.

The extent of the Sar-El reach is quite astonishing. Every year, up to 5000 people flock to volunteer for logistical and routine graft in Israeli military barracks. Even more surprising, perhaps, is that some 20% of those volunteers are not Jewish. Since its inception, the project has brought more than a quarter of a million volunteers to Israel from 30 countries.

Werner recounts how he once asked a particularly friendly soldier, Joshua, what his comrades actually thought of the motley collection of volunteers who had been working on his base for the past few weeks,

“They all think you’re crazy,” was the reply at first. “They are required to sacrifice three years of their lives to serve our country. They don’t understand why you would leave your families and your comfortable lives in your home countries to work on our base.”

That was not the end of the conversation, though, for Joshua continued: “But there’s something else... They call you ‘angels from God’ behind your backs.” He explained that the presence of the volunteers made a huge

difference to the shift patterns on the base. Backlogs of work that would otherwise certainly have to be disbursed among the military personnel, eating into their off-duty and leave time, amazingly vanished. Instead of working overtime, as they would undoubtedly have had to do, soldiers were finding that they were allowed to go off on weekend leave an hour early. “You are angels from God,” said Joshua.

Werner recounted his early experiences of being embedded within the Israeli military in his first book, *Army Fatigues: Joining Israel’s Army of International Volunteers*, and he takes up the story four years on, in the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War.

Inevitably his periods spent on army and air force bases, albeit for a comparatively brief time each year, mirror Israel’s history over those eventful years. This volume begins in 2006, in the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War. The young soldier, Gilat Schalit, had been captured by Hamas, which was subjecting the country to intensive rocket attacks. At the same time, in the North, Hezbollah had launched a strike on Israel from within Lebanon, sending Iranian-made rockets to strike inside Israel. All-out conflict had broken out and the UN had brokered a ceasefire.

Werner had booked his flight to Israel a month before, determined to maintain his Sar-El volunteering schedule. Once on base, he found himself one of a batch of a hundred volunteers, and learned that the conflict, far from diminishing the annual flow, had resulted in a jump in the usual numbers.

His subsequent periods of service, during which he was joined by his son David on five occasions, covered Israel’s three wars against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. From the multitude of episodes he describes, working hard in less than comfortable circumstances with people from all over the world, Werner distills two great themes.

First was the intense comradeship that developed among them, friendships that often outlived their two or three weeks spent together. Heavy manual labor undertaken side



**A Passion for Israel:  
Adventures of a Sar-El Volunteer**  
Mark Werner  
Gefen Publishing House  
Hardcover: 488 pages; \$29.95

by side seemed to foster and cement a special kind of camaraderie.

Second was a theme Werner says he heard time and again from his companion volunteers as to their motives for undertaking the experience. Acknowledging that individuals may well have varied and personal reasons for signing up with Sar-El, Werner discerned one central inspiration – a passion to help preserve the state of Israel. From Jewish and non-Jewish volunteers alike, says Werner, this passion emanated “loud and clear”.

In *A Passion For Israel: Adventures of a Sar-El Volunteer*, Mark Werner describes a unique volunteering opportunity – there is nothing quite like it available anywhere else – and the sense of intense personal fulfillment that it provides to those who avail themselves of it. His account of his varied experiences when planted within the Israeli military not only makes absorbing reading in itself, but explains a little of how Israel’s defense forces operate, and the pressures that are placed upon them from time to time. On both counts, *A Passion for Israel* is recommended reading – and if it invokes a desire to share this unusual volunteering experience, so much the better. ■



# My Sar-El experience

**A DECADE** ago, while on a visit to Israel, I ran across two men having breakfast, alone, in the hotel where I was staying. The dining room was empty, except for these two men. As it was a Shabbat, I was curious (perhaps a little nosy) as to why they were dining in the hotel. They told me they were in Israel to do Sar-El and explained what it was.

Never having heard of this Sar-El “thing,” I was very taken with this fascinating idea that Americans were using their vacation to help Israel. I couldn’t stop thinking about it after my return to the US, and I told my family how meaningful it was and something that I wanted to do. Unfortunately, as the mother of four teenagers, I was not in a position to “join up.”

Five years later, having made aliyah to Netanya in 2016, I found myself at a Shabbat dinner with a woman who, during the course of the conversation, told me she had just returned from a week on an IDF base with Sar-El. Needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that one could volunteer for Sar-El, while living in Israel.

I grew up in New Jersey, knowing there are military bases in the state, but most people never get to see them. We hardly even got to see soldiers in transit, never mind, on duty. Yes, there are soldiers, but they are sent overseas or spend most of their time on bases and live there or nearby – often not close to their homes prior to enlisting in the military.

There is a real disconnect between living in the US and what the soldiers are doing. Living in Israel, it is a totally different story. You cannot go anywhere in Israel without seeing soldiers on or off duty. They ride the trains, the buses and they even hitchhike. They are in cafes, markets, malls and even ice cream shops. They are a part of Israeli life and, for the most part, they are very young. It is a little unnerving the first time you ride a train or a bus or go for ice cream and there are young men and women, some in uniform, some not, with their rifles slung over a shoulder. Even off duty, an Israeli soldier, who has a gun, usually keeps it with them at all times. The soldiers here are protecting the very small country that I am now a part of, a county the size of New Jersey, where I came from. There is a deep awareness, that they are protecting me, something I never knew I needed. Finding out that I could be a volunteer here, to support them, was a “life-quake” for me.

I have done lots of volunteering in my life, but nothing as meaningful as participating in Sar-El. I have been on bases nine times, a week at a time. The bases that I have been on have all been logistics bases, and, believe me, even though I get to wear a uniform, no one gives me a gun. I have worked in kitchens chopping vegetables, peeling potatoes (good old fashioned KP duty) and washing floors. I have cleaned and organized warehouses and helped repair communication equipment.



COURTESY

A group of Sar-El volunteers in 2019

My favorite place is the medical base where I unpacked and sorted old supplies that have come back to the base to be replaced by new supplies. I worked side-by-side with soldiers and civilian employees. On every base our volunteers are greeted with smiles and hugs. The soldiers there are so grateful for the support as well as relief from some of their own work.

The IDF has selected soldiers (*madrichot*) who stay with the volunteers while on the base to make assignments, ensure everyone has a bed to sleep on (two or more to a room), and offer meaningful Israeli/IDF programs in the evenings.

At times the work is exhausting. I have napped in a chair in a warehouse after workday because I was too tired to walk back to the dorm, exhausted and at the same time so energized. I have made many overseas friends from the US, Canada, England, Norway, Germany, South American, South Africa, France and the Ukraine. Most are Jewish, many are not. They come year after year with the same love for support for Israel that I have. Because of COVID-19, the thousands of volunteers that would normally come to volunteer are unable to do so. I am currently organizing English-speaking Sar-El locals to do daily work on the medical base (no sleepovers). The extra bonus in all this – the woman I met that night at that long-ago Shabbat dinner is now one of my very best Israeli friends. ■

*The writer, who lives in Netanya, is a volunteer ambassador for the Komen Foundation, Hadassah Hospital and Sar-El*



# Days of Awe

## A time for reflection and a call to action

**THE UPCOMING** holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – also known as the Days of Awe or the High Holy Days – will be very different this year, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. In Jerusalem, where I live, it appears that attendance in synagogue in large numbers will be prohibited.

Reform and Conservative synagogues will hold services via Zoom, which will be very strange since they will lack the power of crowded synagogues with their feeling of intense community.

Orthodox and many Conservative synagogues will not use Zoom on these holidays, but will have small gatherings of limited numbers of participants, mostly outdoors.

In this year of the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be much on our minds for personal and communal reflection. Foremost will be issues of life and death, sickness and health, in the light of so much illness and mortality in the world during the past several months.

Will any of the prayers and poems that we recite on these holidays help us deal with these issues? Will they stimulate us to think about our lives as human beings on this fragile planet, where hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves and wild fires are happening more frequently and with more intensity?

In my mind, there is one prayer which will ring true with so many of us this year on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is actually a poem, a *piyut* (Hebrew for a religious poem from the Medieval period). It is known as “Unetaneh Tokef” prayer, loosely translated as “The Sacred Power of This Day” (see the Mahzor Lev Shalem of the Rabbinical Assembly).

This poem is usually sung with seriousness and sensitivity by the cantor, often with a choir, or by the *shaliach tzibur* (the person leading the service). There are many popular melodies for this prayer, including one that we hear in Israel on the radio for weeks in anticipation of these holidays, which have helped make this liturgical poem well known among secular as well as religious Jews.

In a majestic metaphor, the Jewish poet of the Middle Ages imagined God is like a shepherd and we, the Jewish people, are his flock. This intensely religious poet wrote:

“As a shepherd examines the flock, making each sheep pass under the staff, so you (God) will review and number and count, judging each living being, determining the fate of everything in creation, inscribing their destiny.”

I do not take this poem literally, any more than I would try to understand any other poem word for word. Like many good prayers and poems, it is mainly symbolic, laden with meaning. I don’t really think that my destiny is actually inscribed during these High Holy days. But I do think that this prayer – and others during these days – help me think about my place on this earth as a human being and as a Jew who has a responsibility to myself, my family, my community, my people, the human family, and to the earth.

And then come the really serious verses that I believe resonate

with us so much every year, and especially this year:

*On Rosh Hashanah it is written, and on the fast of the Day of Atonement it is sealed.*

*How many will pass on and how many will be born?*

*Who will live and who will die?*

*Who will live a long life and who will come to an untimely end?*

*Who will perish by fire and who by water? Who by sword and who by beast? Who by hunger and who by thirst? Who by earthquake and who by plague?*

Wow! It is almost as if this poem was written by someone living today. Without doubt, these are the central questions that are uppermost in our minds this year as we are mindful of so many people becoming ill and dying during our current plague. At the same time, we are painfully aware of the massive fires in California and other places, and the terrible rain storms of recent years, which get worse and worse as climate change deniers prohibit the necessary environmental legislation that is vital to save our Earth. In addition, we are witness to more and more severe earthquakes in the world, as well as the current plague of the coronavirus!

So many people during the current coronavirus plague have come to an untimely end. Moreover, all too often this has happened as a result of the irresponsible mishandling of the plague by so-called leaders in many countries, including the one I live in, Israel, and the one I used to live in, and am still a citizen of, the US. So many lives could have been saved by quicker and more intelligent science-based action! I sometimes think that our most serious plague is the one of self-centered, immoral leadership in today’s world.

The first part of this prayer lies in the existential questions that it raises for us to think about. But there is more.

The second half suggests a powerful and poignant way for us as Jewish human beings to improve our lives, to make the best of them, even in these difficult times.

*Teshuvah, T’fillah and Tz’dakah have the power to transform the harshness of our destiny.*

According to a creative responsive reading in Mahzor Lev Shalem, the real meaning of this punch line is:

“Repentance, prayer and good deeds have the power to change the character of our lives.”

I have purposely used this new translation, since I think that it is better than the older ones in previous prayer books. The most common translation – the one that many of us grew up with – which was based on medieval Hebrew, read: “Repentance, prayer and charity cancel the harsh decree.”

It was as if we could somehow avoid illness or death. While some sickness in our lives and death are both inevitable, we have within our human power the abilities to deal with these challenges in new ways, with great resilience, that were not possible for previous generations. Some people live lives of continual suffering; others find



A man blowing the shofar at the Western Wall days before Rosh Hashanah

ways to deal with pain and injuries creatively and with fortitude. Some people face death only with fear and trembling; others find ways to die with dignity.

The message of this prayer – and of the High Holy Days as a whole – is that we have within us the capacity to change, to be better people, to create a more just and fair society, for all of God's children. In addition, it is clear that repentance and prayer alone are insufficient. Showing up in the synagogue and worshiping on these days is not enough. Rather, these days are designed to help us become better human beings, to care not only about ourselves but also about our family, our friends, our community, our people and our planet.

At this time, this means that we will act responsibly and ethically by wearing masks, observing social distance and washing our hands regularly. This will demonstrate that we care not only about ourselves but also about other people, about public health, the health of our communities and societies.

In addition, it will mean that we join with others around the world to protect our planet from extinction, and urging our governments to pass responsible environmental laws. It will also mean that we act responsibly by voting for ethically sensitive leaders who are neither narcissistic nor corrupt, but who have the genuine interests of their countries and their people in mind.

Yes, repentance – going through a genuine process of change – and prayer and good deeds contain within them the power to change the character of our lives. They can give us some reliable resources to transform the harshness of our destiny as responsible, ethical,

caring human beings.

The “Unetaneh Tokef” prayer is chanted on Rosh Hashanah before the blowing of the shofar: “The great shofar will be sounded and the still small voice will be heard.”

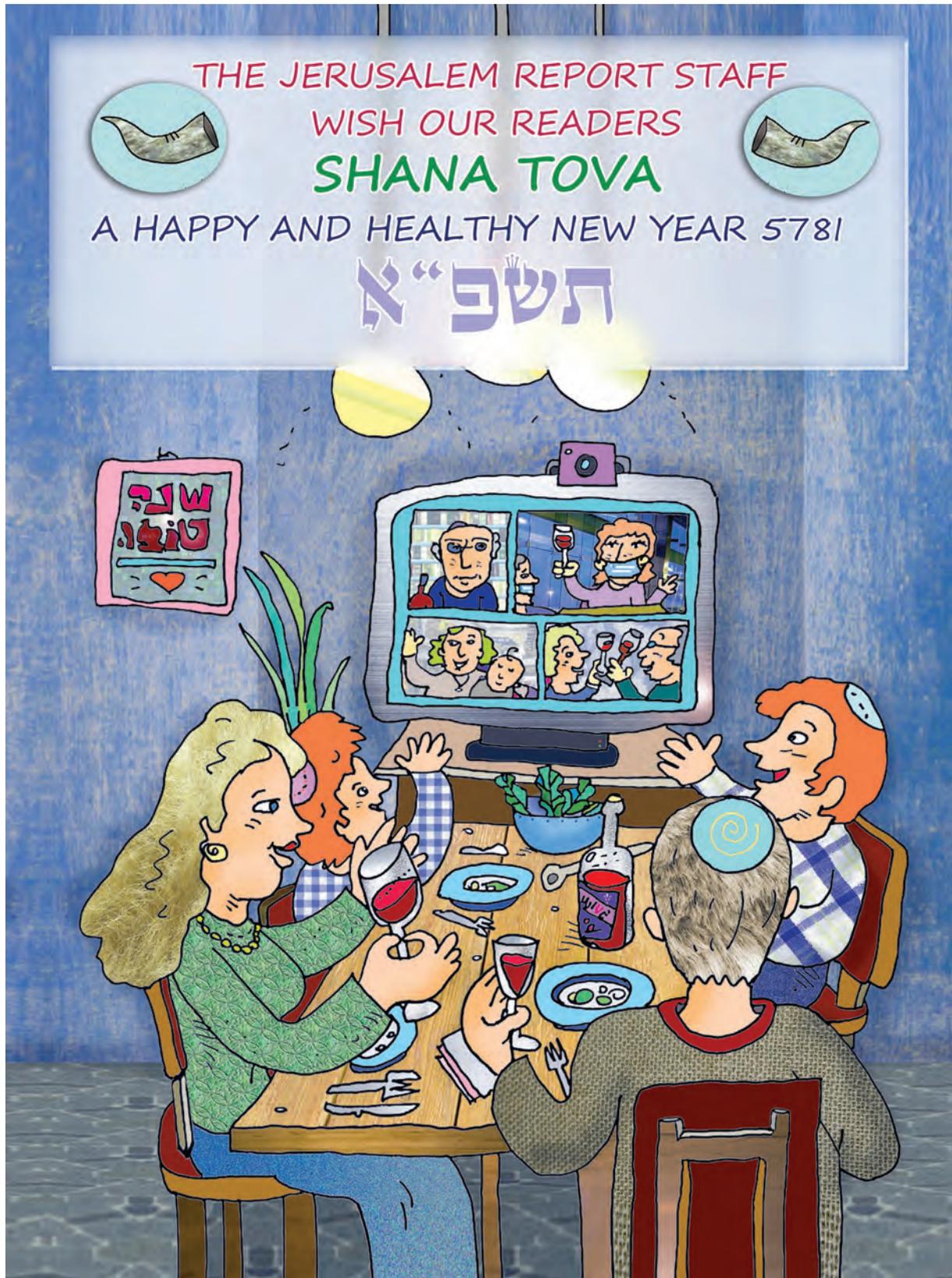
When I was growing up, my father, Rabbi Leon Kronish, who served as the rabbi of Temple Beth Shalom in Miami Beach, Florida, for more than 40 years, prepared a special supplementary booklet for Rosh Hashanah, which included “Unetaneh Tokef.” I bring it with me every year to synagogue on this holiday. I remember learning from him that the still small voice is the voice of conscience. In this service, he talked about the meaning of the blowing of the shofar. Among other things, he wrote:

“The shofar reminds us of the Biblical command: ‘Proclaim liberty throughout the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.’ The shofar once again sounds the clarion call to freedom. May the republic of Israel herald humanity's redemption from oppression, injustice and war.”

When we hear the shofar this year – whether in person or via Zoom – let us be mindful of our destiny and our ability to shape it for the betterment of our societies in the here and now.

Shana Tova! May it be a good year, a better year, a healthier year. ■

*The writer is a retired lecturer, educator and interreligious peace activist. His most recent book is *The Other Peace Process: Interreligious Dialogue, a View from Jerusalem* (Hamilton Books, 2017). He is currently working on a new book about peacebuilders in Israel and Palestine. For more about him, see his website <https://ronkronish.com>*





**THE JERUSALEM POST**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE #JewishFuture**

# SHAPING THE JEWISH FUTURE

## Politics | Populism | Pandemic

**24.9.2020 | 7 PM Israel Time | 12 PM EST**



**BENNY GANTZ**  
 Alternate PM & Defense Minister



**RONALD S. LAUDER**  
 President of the World Jewish Congress



**REUVEN "RUV" RIVLIN**  
 10<sup>th</sup> President of Israel



**DAVID FRIEDMAN**  
 US Ambassador to Israel



**MORGAN ORTAGUS**  
 State Department Spokesperson



**GABI ASHKENAZI**  
 Foreign Minister



**HALIE SOIFER**  
 Executive Director of the Jewish Democratic Council of America



**ELI COHEN**  
 Minister of Intelligence



**DANIEL ATAR**  
 World Chairman of KKL



**GILA GAMLIEL**  
 Minister of Environmental Protection



**TED CRUZ**  
 Senator, American politician and attorney



**MK YAIR LAPID**  
 Leader of the Opposition, Chair of Yesh Atid-Telem



**DR. RAN GOZALI**  
 Executive vice president, head of Rafael's land and naval systems division



**MK MICHAL COTLER-WUNSH**  
 Chair of the Knesset's Drug and Alcohol Use Committee



**MAJOR GENERAL YITZHAK JERRY GERSHON**  
 Habithonistim's Leadership Team Member



**DR. OHAD KARNIELI**  
 PHD, MBA  
 Founder & CEO at ADVA Biotechnology



**DANIEL B. SHAPIRO**  
 Diplomat and former Ambassador of the US to the State of Israel



**MATAN VILNAI**  
 Chairman of the Commanders for Israel's Security and former Deputy Chief of Staff



**NICKOLAY MLADENOV**  
 United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process



**JORDANA CUTLER**  
 Head of Public Policy for Facebook Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

Watch the Direct Broadcast at [jpost.com](http://jpost.com)



For more information: [conference@jpost.com](mailto:conference@jpost.com) | Learn more: [www.jpost.com/JewishFuture](http://www.jpost.com/JewishFuture)

# BARON HERZOG



BRINGING QUALITY CALIFORNIA WINEMAKING  
TO THE TABLE FOR OVER 30 YEARS