

THE JEWISH STAR

VOL 10, NO 4 ■ JANUARY 28, 2011 / 23 SHEVAT, 5771

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Agudah protests adoption Jewish kids in non-Jewish homes?

By Michael Orbach

Agudath Israel is filing a friend of the court brief on behalf of a Jewish mother whose two children were placed in non-Jewish foster care. The organization claims that Rensselaer County Social Services in upstate New York violated state law when it placed the two children — a 2-year-old boy and 6-month-old girl — in non-Jewish homes.

Rabbi Mordechai Biser, general counsel for Agudah, said that the children's mother requested they be placed together in a Jewish home, a request the agency did not fulfill. When Rabbi Biser contacted the agency, it refused to move the children, despite the availability of Jewish homes.

"I've never had this before," Rabbi Biser said. "I've dealt with a number of situations where children have been placed in foster care. Once we make a protest, within 24 hours the children have been switched [to Jewish] homes."

Agudah, a multifaceted Charedi organization run by a council of Orthodox rabbis, is submitting the brief before the mother's parental rights have been fully terminated. Part of the social service agency's refusal seems to stem from the complexity of the case. The mother, who is Jewish and "has a very Jewish last name," according to Rabbi Biser, is a heroin addict who lives in housing projects next to the Orthodox shul. The boy was placed in his foster family, a lesbian couple, a year and a half ago. Rabbi Biser said that the couple's sexuality has nothing to do with the protest. "We would be objecting just as vigorously if the boy was going to live with a non-Jewish heterosexual couple," he said. When the woman's daughter was placed in foster

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Simcha Katz would rather be learning

New OU president takes office

By Michael Orbach

Simcha Katz was planning on spending his twilight years immersed in the reedy commentaries of the Talmud when Rabbi Menachem Genack, CEO of the Orthodox Union, called him. It was 2005, and Katz had retired from his position as a professor in the City University of New York.

Rabbi Genack wanted him to be the head of the Kashruth division of the OU,

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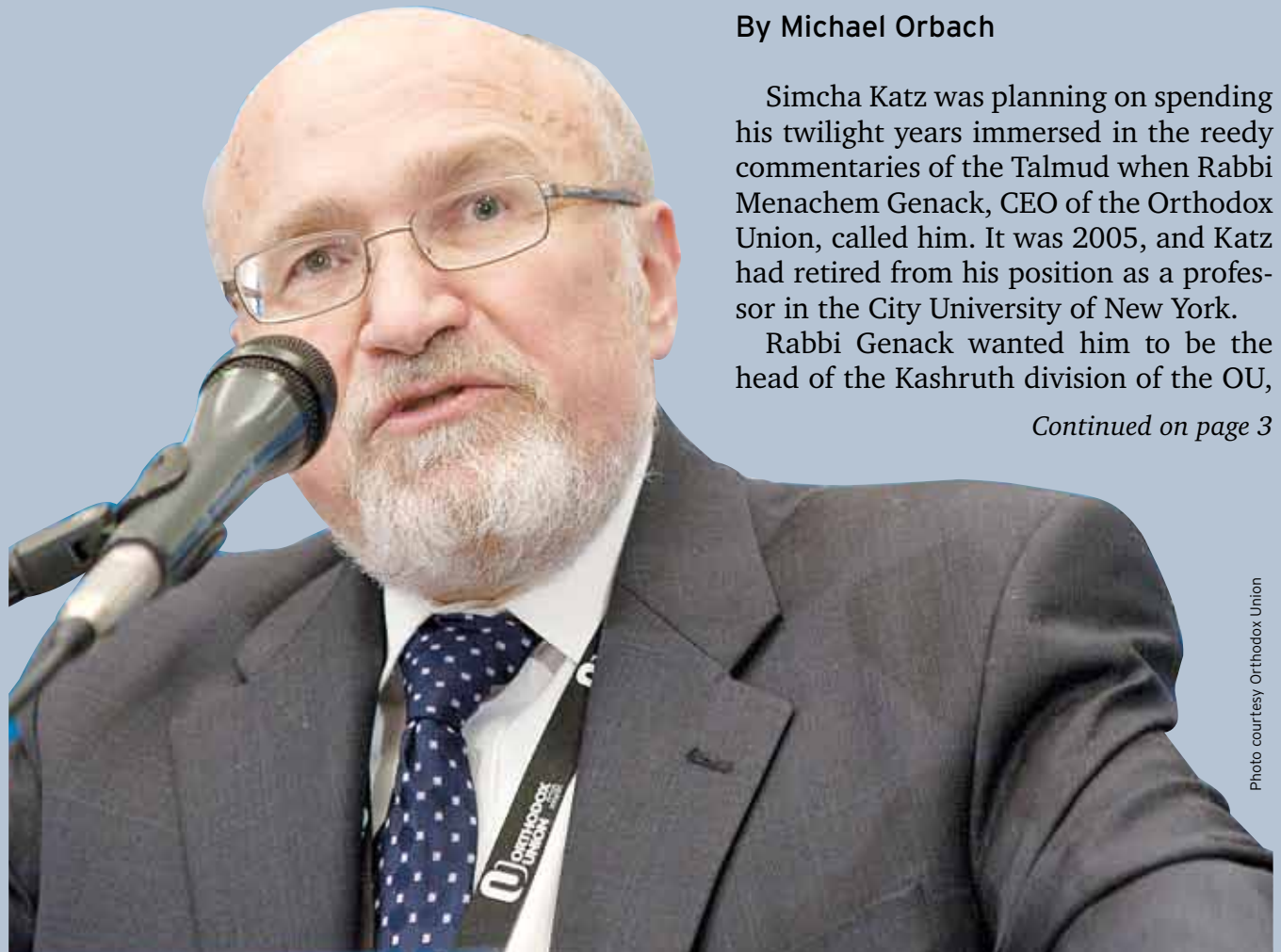


Photo courtesy Orthodox Union

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David Nesenoff, famed for Helen Thomas interview, appointed publisher of The Jewish Star

By The Jewish Star staff

Seven months ago, an interviewer's softball question to Helen Thomas, the dean of the White House press corps, "Any comments on Israel?" led to the explosive answer that cost Thomas her job. Her proclamation for the Jews to "get the hell out of Palestine... and go home to Poland and Germany..." made news around the world. It also brought notoriety to her interlocutor, David Nesenoff, and launched him on an odyssey of speaking and writing about the incident and present day anti-Semitism. It is a mission Nesenoff expects to continue now that he has been appointed publisher and editor of The Jewish Star by the paper's owners, Clifford and Stuart Richner.

"When it comes to Jewish news, local is global," Nesenoff said. "And when it comes to Israel news, global affects us locally."

Nesenoff's famous interview was seen by millions of viewers within 24 hours of its posting on the Internet last June. Since then, he has written for The Washington Post and appeared on Fox News, CBS News and CNN. Additionally, he has produced a documentary film, lectured to numerous communities and lived in the Old City of Jerusalem for two months. Nesenoff has been embraced by the Orthodox community for exposing Thomas' bias against the Jewish state. Unfortunately, Nesenoff has received thousands of anti-Semitic emails since the video was posted.

In August, Nesenoff was the Keynote Speaker at Yale University's inaugural symposium on global anti-Semitism. The Simon Wiesenthal Center named Thomas' comments as the number one anti-Semitic slur of 2010.

Helen Thomas, who at the time offered regrets for her words and quickly resigned from the Hearst Corporation, has since made further objectionable remarks. Thomas told a recent audience, "Those rich Zionists control Congress, the White House, Wall Street and Hollywood."

The Jewish Star has maintained award-winning journalism standards including its coverage of sexual abuse inside the Jewish community and its consistent sharp commentary on local and national politics. The recent compelling and controversial Agunah story, first broken by The Jewish Star, was featured in The New York Times.

"I was attracted to the paper's serious commitment," Nesenoff said. "And I have great respect for its history in always capturing the relevant Jewish news. I would like to contribute to that journalistic dedication as well as highlight the strengths of our religious Torah communities." He added, "We will also be steadfast in revealing the truth about those who seek to hurt our local neighborhoods, our people and our homeland."

Nesenoff will discuss the Helen Thomas affair in an exclusive interview in next week's Jewish Star, his first issue as publisher.



David Nesenoff

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Agudah protests adoption of Jewish kids

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care a month ago, the woman, with the aid of the community, requested that they be placed together in a Jewish home.

"A Jew has a neshama (soul)," explained Rabbi Leible Morrison of the Beth Tephilah synagogue. "They want to do the right thing even if they themselves don't do the right thing."

It is unclear whether the mother requested that the children be placed in a Jewish home when the boy was initially placed in foster care. According to Rabbi Biser, both foster families are planning to adopt their respective children, but they will only be allowed if the mother's parental rights are completely terminated, which is before the court.

"We don't take any position on whether she is a fit mother or not," Rabbi Biser said. "Our only interest is that if you take the children they have to be in the same faith home."

Randy Hall, the commissioner of the Rensselaer Department of Social Services did not respond to requests for comment in time for The Jewish Star's deadline.

The Agudah is basing its objection on a statute of child custody law that maintains that any child "remanded or committed by the court to any duly authorized association, agency, society, or institution" should be placed "when practicable... under the control of persons of the same religious faith or

persuasion as that of the child."

"Basically [Rensselaer County Social Services] made a mistake and now they want to continue the mistake," Rabbi Biser said. "Now they want to make that permanent. Once a child is adopted there's no recourse ... I don't feel that the department, because of whatever reason, lack of inquiry, negligence, made a serious mistake and that this child be lost forever for the Jewish people."

Rabbi Biser claims that the agency is not moving the children because the move would not be "practicable," since the boy has already bonded with his foster parents and the girl suffers from various medical issues associated with her mother's addiction.

Though the case may be more complicated than that.

According to Jim Dyer, the Arthur B. Hanson professor of Law at the college of William and Mary, moving the boy may be a violation of the his constitutional rights.

"A child has a 14th amendment right against the state going into their existing homes and family and terminating their relationship," Dyer said. "There are reasonable policies behind the statutes, but now we have a different story. The child, by mistake or accident, has a relationship with caretakers and that relationship is likely very important to the child's welfare... It shouldn't matter to the child's constitutional rights to the state

how the relationship arose."

He said the court would look askance at Agudah's involvement.

"They're bystanders and they have no legal standing to protest the adoption," he said about Agudah. "The adoption mandate is to do what's in the best interest of the child."

Alan Kadzin, a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Yale University, said that a child adapting to a new home would be dependent on different factors.

"It depends on the temperament of the child," Kadzin said. "Is it possible to recover? Yes. It is possible to be traumatic? Yes. It depends on the environment they are placed into."

Kadzin also stressed the importance of placing the children together. "That sibling is going to be the buffer relationship for life," he said. "They may go through death and to have your main sibling plucked from you, I would go for that more than compatibility in beliefs."

David Mandel, the CEO of Ohel, the largest Jewish social service agency was not surprised by the case. "We're constantly disappointed when we hear such stories," he said.

While he said he couldn't offer a comment on this particular case, Mandel said that the case highlights the need for more Jewish foster families.

"That they may not be separated since

'They're bystanders and they have no legal standing to protest the adoption.. The adoption mandate is to do what's best for the child.'

they have a bond, only makes the story more compelling for all the rest of the time that a child is moved into foster care and needs a Jewish home," Mandel said. "And there will be a next time."

To Rabbi Biser, the case is a simple one.

"There were children in the Holocaust who were put in non-Jewish homes," Biser said. "Would anyone say that after the war that when the parents went to the family, the family could say 'Well the kids have bonded and we're raising them as Catholics.' What would we say? It's the same thing over here. There are Jewish children and they belong in Jewish homes."

New OU president takes office

Continued from page 1

the arm of the organization primarily responsible for funding all of its activities. Katz asked what would happen to his learning. Rabbi Genack had an answer.

"He told me the Torah world will survive," Katz said with a laugh.

After serving as the head of the Kashruth division for the past five years, Katz was elected as the president of the Orthodox Union on Jan. 16. He replaced Stephen Savitsky who completed his two-year term.

Katz was born in a Displaced Persons Camp in 1945 in Europe. His parents eventually made it to Boston where Katz's father worked in a factory cutting and knitting coats. It was piece work so Katz was used to his father bringing work home over the weekends and going into the factory.

"I went on Sundays to help him," Katz recalled. "It was a struggle but we never felt poor." Eventually, Katz's parents saved up enough to be comfortable and invest in real-estate. Katz attended

Maimonides High School in Boston and then went to Yeshiva Univeristy where he received smicha and then a Ph.D. in business from City University. He met his wife, Pesh Flom, through a friend, Stephen Dworkin.

"She was smarter than I and decided to marry me right away," Katz said.

After a brief stint at Bell Laboratories, Katz was offered a teaching position at the City University in 1972.

"I realized I didn't want to work for a living," Katz joked.

During the 30 years he taught, Katz was

also involved in a number of successful business endeavors, including launching a construction company in Israel and a bio-technology company, Ortec, that he took public in 1996. He began volunteering three days a week developing business strategies at the Orthodox Union's Kashruth Division.

"I leave the halacha to the rabbis, but the structure which makes for the most effective delivery is something I can be very helpful with," he said.

After volunteering for three years, Rabbi Genack asked Katz to run the division. During his tenure, Katz introduced several new programs, including the popular "Ask the OU" events and educational programs that run through the summer. Five years later he was again approached to have a guiding hand in the direction of the organization.

Katz said he sees the organization as a "communal manifestation of caring for one another."

"There are certain programs that have developed that are best handled on a national basis,"

he said. "The Jewish people needed an organized high standard kosher operation and the OU provides that."

Katz plans on continuing a number of the organization's goals like tuition affordability.

"It's an unsustainable, broken system," Katz said. "It's across the board. There are few families that can afford to pay." Katz also sees avenues for growth in the organization like working with the aging Jewish population and as an incubator for smaller Jewish organizations. Though the organization's main focus will be on Kashruth; it is currently in 90

'I leave the halacha to the rabbis, but the structure which makes for the most effective delivery is something I can be very helpful with,' Katz said.



Courtesy Orthodox Union

Rabbi Steven Weil, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union congratulated Simcha Katz at the OU Conference on Jan. 16.

countries and has hundreds of employees.

"In terms of Kashruth ... [the OU] has a much greater bench of professionals that deliver a better product," Katz said. "It outshines anything else. I know all the major hechshers and there's no comparison."

He says that he plans to keep the organization transparent.

"We're very open and I plan to keep it [that way]." Katz said. "We belong to the

Jewish community."

Katz spends three hours each morning learning with his sons. He said he isn't worried about becoming a figurehead in the organization.

"I don't have time for figureheads," he said. "If I end up as a figurehead, I've got a very easy exist strategy: I'm very comfortable not doing this."

New place for the Orthodox?

Panama Jews welcome NY visitors

By Sergey Kadinsky

Having climbed out of its past as a military dictatorship, Panama is revamping its image for the world as a hub for business, culture and tourism. As the country's famed canal expands and its capital city's skyline rises, its Jewish community is also growing, a rare statistic in a world of assimilation and demographic fears.

"Panama is one of the few communities outside of Israel that has experienced growth and there is very little assimilation," said David Mizrahi, president of the Central Jewish Community Council of Panama. "85 percent of our community keeps kosher. There is virtually no intermarriage."

The first Jews arrived secretly in Panama to escape the Spanish Inquisition, but established communal roots date to the 1850s, when California-bound travelers needed a synagogue to handle burials and shelter sick Jews. That synagogue, Kol Shearit Israel, is now a Reform congregation, and its roster includes two former Panamanian presidents, Max Delvalle and his nephew Eric Arturo Delvalle.

But the real success story is the Orthodox segment, which now boasts two kosher supermarkets, eight restaurants, and three integrated Jewish schools with 1,600 students between them.

"The Jewish community here is more united and religious, people invest here more in Shabbat," said Ofir Levy, 30, manager of the Deli K supermarket. "The dollar is accepted in Panama and we can match American prices on the food."

Among the attendees of the Orthodox Bet El congregation is Brooklyn-native Charles Rabinovich, 26, who moved to Panama last month to start a mortgage agency. As New Yorkers shivered in the January snow, Rabinovich hosted 30 Russian Jews from Brooklyn at his condominium's rooftop swimming pool.

"The Jews here are very business oriented, and Panama City is very international," said Rabinovich. There are many Russians here from Russia and more than 10 thousand Jews."

Prior to his big move, Rabinovich was active in the Russian American Jewish Experience (RAJE), a division of the Gateways educational organization that caters to the needs of young Russian Jews through lectures, shabbatons, and trips abroad. Its membership transcends religious observance levels, and its trips have included a synagogue visit and a nightclub on the same day.

"New York is so large that it's easy to fall through the cracks," said Rabbi Reuven Ibragimov, director of programs at RAJEon, which focuses on the alumni of RAJE events. Most of its participants are recent graduates, who seek to continue the Jewish community feeling established in their college years.

"We want them to maintain a Russian Jewish identity by getting a sense of the smaller communities outside of New York and how they function," he said.

Staying at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in

the middle-class Obarrio neighborhood, the participants met with local Jews, sampled Panamanian kosher cuisine, alongside the requisite canal and rainforest visits. The hotel is comfortably located next door to the Bel El synagogue. In its lobby, an ambitious future is exhibited, showing a dramatic \$10 million community center under construction.

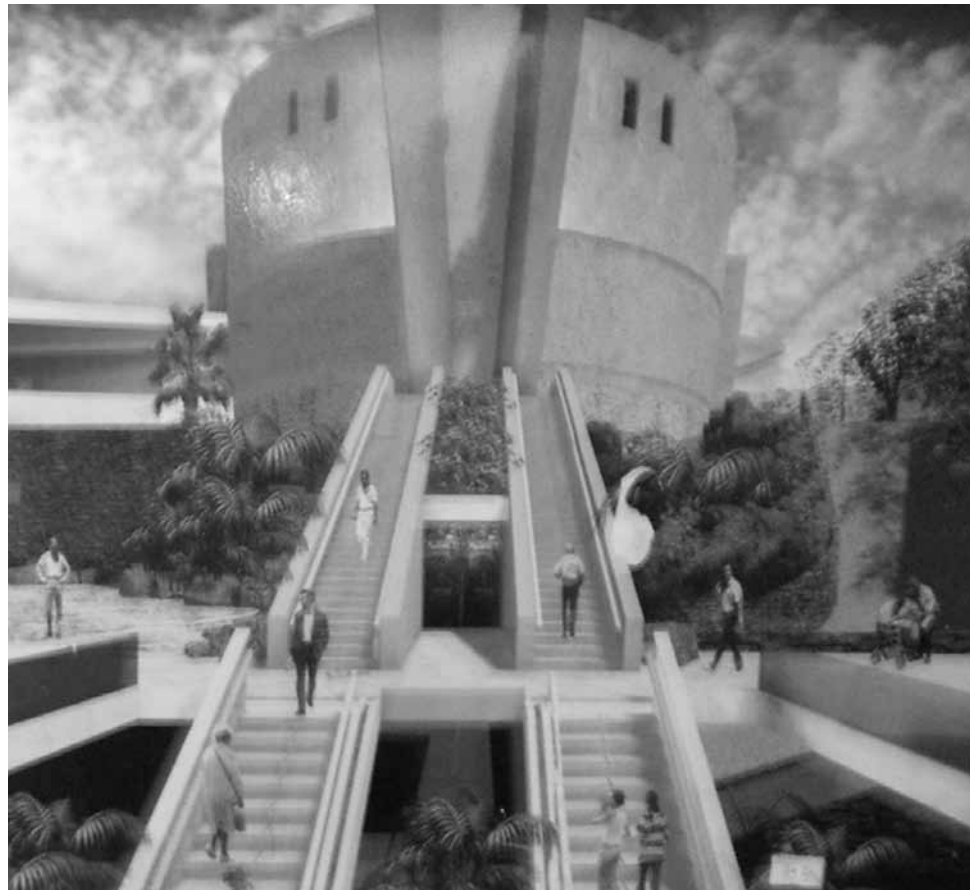
"See the long staircase? Jacob had his dream at Beth El, and the stairs represent the ladder from his dream," said Rabbi Aaron Laine of Bet El. "It's a monument atop a rock."

The symbolic rock stands amid the condo towers of Punta Paitilla, an upscale coastal neighborhood that has attracted retirees, business professionals, and property investors. Sharing a beer with Rabinovich, former Philadelphia resident Martin Lipsman, 25, toasted to his second year in the country.

"When I came here I knew nobody," Lipsman said. "I emailed every developer and built my connections, now I have my own company."

As president of Panama Mortgage Group, Lipsman rules out real estate comparisons with Florida. "The banks here are super strict, you have to put a minimum of 30 percent down. There are almost no foreclosures here."

While the Russian Jewish community in Panama is tiny, Lipsman expects it to be the next incoming wave, attracted by a warm climate and stable economy. "Unlike Florida, there are no hurricanes, and I've never been happier," said his father Jacob Lipsman, who



A rendering of the proposed community center in Panama.

runs an air conditioner installation firm after arriving in Panama a month after his son.

"I thought it was going to be jungles, but it's booming in construction. I was pleasantly surprised," said RAJEon participant Angelina Fridman, 26. "I didn't realize there were so many Jewish people here, and they've been here for decades."

Dubbing the trip a success, Rabbi Ibragi-

mov is mulling other exotic Jewish locations for his group, possibly including Cuba, Uganda and South Africa. "This trip was a test run, we make the itinerary, and we have our connections in these countries, and we reach out to them. It's like an extended family."

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A moniker of courage

School in Germany named after survivor

By Dan Klein

Marion Blumenthal Lazan never managed to finish her schooling in Germany. However she now has a school named after her in her hometown of Hoya, Germany. The Marion Blumenthal Hauptschule is the first school in Germany to be named after a living Holocaust survivor.

This past November, Lazan returned to the town that she fled the village when she was only four-years-old. Her family escaped to Holland but was then sent to Bergen-Belsen after the Nazi invasion. The family managed to survive the camp, but Lazan's father died six weeks after the camp's liberation. Lazan immigrated to Peoria, Illinois and then settled in Hewlett with her husband Nathaniel Lazan.

Lazan has traveled the world speaking to groups of adults and children about her experiences during the Shoah and spreading her message of tolerance to young people of all religions. She estimates that she has spoken to at least one million people on her travels, which ultimately led her to return to her birthplace in 1995. Four years later, she wrote her memoir, "Four Perfect Pebbles," which has since been published

in four languages (including Japanese) and is now in its 21st printing.

Frau Eike Reiche, the principal of the new school, has three criteria to decide the name of the school. She wanted to name the school after someone who was female, alive and making a difference in the lives of children.

Lazan's name was put forward and accepted unanimously.

The naming ceremony took place on Nov. 11 in order to coincide with Hoya's annual commemoration of Kristallnacht. The ceremony included Klezmer songs and a candle lighting in memory of the Jewish families of Hoya who had perished.

Reiche praised Lazar for her work and rapport with the students and added that the connection between her and the school "comes with responsibility." Reiche proclaimed,

"We are a school with courage; we look up and ahead, not away."

It is that courage that Lazan admires in the town she once fled, and the school that bears her name. "I truly feel that it is not so much about me," she explained. "It is about that little courageous town in Hoya. They deserve the credit for what they are doing to redress those crimes."

The Marion Blumenthal Hauptschule is the first school to be named after a living Holocaust survivor.



Left, Marion Blumenthal Lazan in a photograph taken when she was six in Holland. Right, Lazan, at present day. (Rabenko Photos)

Blumenthal's words were of remembrance and thanksgiving, "It can never be forgotten it can never be forgiven... But we're talking about this generation. The people carry a

huge burden, and it will be their burden for time to come. On the other hand, we have to appreciate what they are doing to put things right."



Photo: Getty Images

While Sarah takes care of her mother, who will take care of Sarah?

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Strangled by marriage

Dear Aviva,

I am a devoted and supportive husband. However, there are times when I feel like my wife makes too many demands on my life. In one recent instance, I had gone to hear a speaker on a Motzei Shabbos and from there had stopped off at a friend's birthday party. About four hours after I left the house, my wife called me frantically wondering where I was and telling me to come home, since she was anxious as there was police activity going on near our house and she was alone with our baby. I mumbled something about being on a tight leash and she blew up. I later apologized, but sometimes I do feel this way. Is it so wrong to admit that to her? And how to cope with feeling like I really am on a tight leash when my wife thinks otherwise?

— Unleash Me

Dear Unleash Me,

Okay, here we have a real issue (that is actually quite common) and we need to pick your situation apart in order to deal with this properly. Step one: Identify the problem. You feel like you are on a tight leash and you want to change that. The major obstacle in your way is that your wife doesn't seem to agree with you, so you are not comfortable opening up to her.

May I recommend a couple of tips? First, let's make sure that you had told/asked

your wife that you were going to the party after the speaker. Because if she thought you were only going to a speaker and didn't hear from you for four hours, she does have reason to be upset. Make sure that you relay to her how long you will be out of the house for. And if you have a change of plans while you are away, try to text or call to let her know. I know it's not always easy, especially if you are anticipating her asking you to come home as soon as you hear her voice. But as long as you do your part, we can really figure out where the source of this problem is. My second and last recommendation to you is not to hold things in until they explode. Telling her that you feel like you are on a tight leash just at the moment when you are being yanked home is simply not wise. Firstly, the chokehold will make your words come out more harshly. Second, if you are telling her that you feel like you are on a tight leash at the exact moment when she is summoning you home, she may take it as resistance on your part from respecting her wishes and she will just tug that leash more forcefully. Bring up the issue when you are both breathing easy.

As long as your end is intact, we have to figure out what to do with your wife. I have noticed that women seem to get away with more controlling behaviors in our society than men. Actually, an informal study was done. A couple was having a dispute in a public park. The fight escalated and even got a little physical. When the man was the

It is typically the woman who bears more of the household weight. The woman usually complains that she never gets a break. Many women do not allow themselves to take the break they need.

aggressor, the bystanders were appalled. But when the woman was the perp, people were cheering her on. Can you believe this? Some even said, "Well, he probably deserves it." This, to me, is horrible.

I can understand how we ended up this way. It is typically the woman who bears more of the household/childrearing weight. The woman usually complains that she never gets a break. Additionally, many women do not allow themselves to take the break that they need. I cannot tell you how many times women come to me for therapy and all I work on with them is how to sit down in the middle of the day for a few minutes, do nothing and not feel guilty about it. I would imagine that these

overactive women are projecting this onto the men and feel like it is not fair that the men live a lower-octane sort of life.

This does not mean that you should be deprived of personal space and down time. I think you should sit down with her to talk. Tell her that you've noticed that she seems stressed and ask her what you can do to help alleviate some of that stress. Then implement it. Once she sees that you are on her team and supporting her, you can begin phase two of the talk. (And this should be about two weeks after really helping her). Tell her that you are under stress and need downtime. Try really hard not to say that you are on a short leash because that is accusing her of doing something wrong. Instead, paint it as a neutral, situational stress and ask her if she can help you find daily/weekly time to recharge. If she is not amenable to this and seems to wonder why you would need to recharge, I highly recommend you begin therapy together so that she can realize that she is married to a human being with legitimate human needs.

And do address this sooner than later. There's a reason those leash-free parks are so coveted by canines.

— Aviva

Aviva Rizel is a Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice who can be reached at AvivaRizel.MFT@gmail.com.

The Kosher Bookworm

In tribute to a man of truth

Two weeks ago a giant of Torah learning passed away. Rabbi Zechariah Fendel was, after Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, one of the most prolific and articulate Jewish writers of our time.

Each of the over dozen books and booklets that Rabbi Fendel authored reflected a deep passion for meticulous research into the vast world of Jewish study, from the beginnings of time until the end of the 20th century. His works encompassed every academic discipline. Sadly,

despite his great contributions, the tributes tendered to his memory were shockingly sparse. I hope and trust that by the time this essay appears that will no longer be the case.

I learned of his passing from a heartfelt essay written by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein in the blog, Cross-Currents. I contacted Rabbi Gil Student of Hirhurim, one

of the premier blogs serving our community. Rabbi Student suggested that I pen my own tribute to the memory and legacy of Rabbi Fendel and what follows is, in good measure, what I wrote. I hope that this will serve to keep Rabbi Fendel's literary legacy alive and prompt my readers to search out and read his many works.

Rabbi Fendel was a tough man. He was tough in his demeanor, in his stare, his glance and in his gait. He walked a tough and rough road in the field of Jewish education in an era when real quality Jewish

education was at a premium. He demanded quality and he delivered quality. Nothing less than the best was good enough for him.

While I never knew him personally, I was an early reader and fan of Rabbi Fendel's literary works. We both had a common passion for Jewish history and his early works were of high quality and accurate, which, for its time, was revolutionary. Each of his books reflected the hashkafah of what Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan would come to call normative Judaism.

I used Rabbi Fendel's text, "From Dusk to Dawn," to teach the Holocaust era to my students at FDR high school in Brooklyn in the 1990s. Just imagine: students in a major New York City public high school used a text written by a rabbi who related a tragic chapter of Jewish history from a God-centered perspective, unapologetic to a hostile world and possibly a hostile gentile student

body. Nevertheless, my students at FDR read the book with passion and heart. Despite their ethnic, religious and racial identification, each of my students found their place in Rabbi Fendel's narrative.

Each of my students, refugees from the Soviet Curtain and Asian nations were able to relate to the experiences of the Jews that Rabbi Fendel detailed.

I will never forget the impressions that Rabbi Fendel's work left with these students. To these young people, the words of the rabbi resonated like the word of G-d.

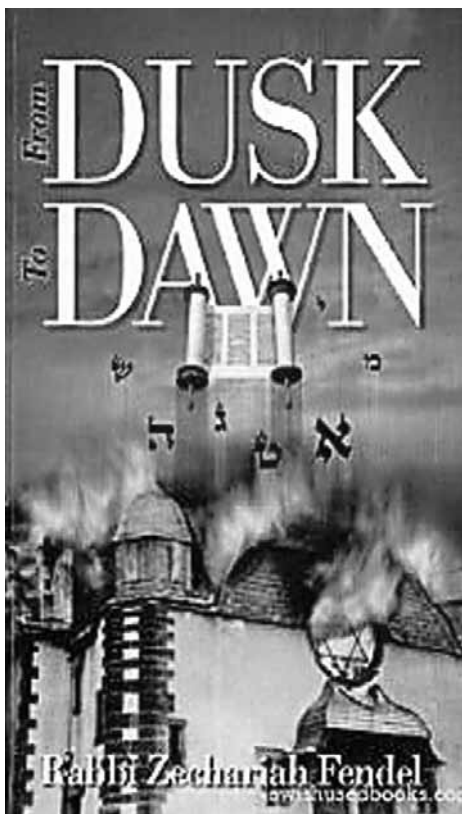
To my dear colleague at Yeshivat Derech HaTorah, Rabbi Dovid Fendel and to your mother and the rest of your family, please take heart in the knowledge that the leg-

acy of your father will forever serve as an example for many of his students, both in class and on the printed page. Rabbi Fendel's students will always find a sacred place for his word and work on the shelves of every Jewish bookstore and home.

As with Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsh and Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan before him, Rabbi Fendel's legacy is assured for all time in the



Alan Jay Gerber



pages of the Jewish history that he loved so much. In life, he was truly G-d's messenger and in his passing, he is at G-d's side, his loyal gabbai for eternity.

January 31

Talk about Israel

THE BRISTAL AT NORTH WOODMERE, located at 477 Hungry Harbor Road, will host Alan B. Katz, an outspoken voice on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, at 2 p.m. Long Island author and lawyer Alan B. Katz has been an outspoken voice on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He has documented the media's relentless anti-Israel bias for more than 25 years. He will return home to the Five Towns to speak about these topics as well as his latest book, "For the Record: Israel and the Palestinians, What the Media Aren't Telling You." Seating is limited. To RSVP, call Marilyn Catik, Director of Community Relations at The Bristol at North Woodmere, at (516) 336-2600. For any other information or media inquiries, please call (631) 367-8599.

February 2

Soviet Jewry

THE 92ND STREET Y will be hosting a panel, "The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry: Pivotal Figures from a Heroic Era" at 8:00 p.m. Join pre-eminent Israeli politician Natan Sharansky, political advisor Richard Perle, actress Margarita Levieva and journalist Gal Beckerman to discuss the dramatic Cold War period when American Jewry first became politicized as Jews, and Jews behind Russia's Iron Curtain took grave risks in order to win their freedom and emigrate to Israel or the United States.

February 4

Maccabeats at YILC

THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF LAWRENCE-CEDARHURST, located at 8 Spruce Street in Cedarhurst, will host internet-sensation The Maccabeats for the Shabbos of Rosh Chodesh Adar. The group will be participating in the davening and will be having an oneg on Friday night.

Shabbat to Remember

THE SUBURBAN PARK JEWISH CENTER, located at 400 Old Westbury Road in East Meadow, invites the entire Jewish community to experience, "A Shabbat to Remember" and to be inspired by the voice of Cantor David Krasner. Friday davening begins at 5:45 p.m. and Shabbos morning davening begins at 9:00 a.m. Please join the shul for a hot Shabbat kiddush and luncheon which follows the services. For more info call 516-796-8833 or 516-520-5733

ON THE Calendar

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



Photos by Claudio Papapietro

Mayor Mike visits Darchei

Mayor Michael Bloomberg visited Yeshiva Darchei Torah on Jan. 24. It was the second visit for the New York City mayor. Bloomberg and police commissioner Ray Kelly toured the yeshiva's new facilities including their state-of-the-art science laboratories and classrooms. The two also visited the school's vocational program and ended the tour in the yeshiva dining room where Bloomberg delivered a speech to the yeshiva's high school and kollel students.



February 6-20

Seforim sale

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY will be holding their annual seforim sale at Belfer Hall, 2495 Amsterdam Ave. on YU's Wilf Campus in Manhattan. The sale, North America's largest Jewish book sale, is organized entirely by YU students. Proceeds

support a myriad of initiatives, including student activities on campus and student-lead outreach programs in the Jewish community. Last year's sale drew over 15,000 people and raised more than \$1 million in sales.

February 7

Change your life

CHABAD OF THE FIVE TOWN'S WOMEN'S CIRCLE will be holding a "Change your Attitude, Empower your Life" class. The two-hour workshop that will help you transform challenges into opportunities

for success with Mrs. Chana Ginsberg, marriage therapist and life coach. It will take place At the home of Mrs. Ali Bhatia, 832 King Street in Woodmere at 8:00 p.m. For more information call 516-295-2478.

Dinner and comedy for singles

THE ORTHODOX UNION SINGLES CONNECTION will present "An Evening of Dinner and Comedy" featuring actor/singer/comedian Stuart Rappaport, a past recipient of kudos as the "Best Jewish Comedian of New York." He will perform on Monday, February 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Traditions Restaurant & Deli, 302 Central Avenue, Lawrence.

The event is directed to singles 40 and above. Tickets are \$25 in advance and \$36 at the door. RSVP to 212-613-8188.

February 10

Robots in Great Neck

TEMPLE ISRAEL OF GREAT NECK, located at 108 Old Mill Road, will be hosting Dr. Amir Shapiro, the director of the Robotics Labs at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev who will be showing off the robots developed in his laboratory. Dr. Shapiro currently has funding from a U.S. donor to commercialize a robot that will help people with balance impairments learn to walk better and more safely. He has also received funding from the Israel Defense Forces and scientific organizations to develop robotic solutions for agriculture and medicine. The program begins at 8:00 p.m. RSVP to Dana Ben at 212-687-7721 or dbenjamin@aabgu.org.

Ongoing

Support group

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS will sponsor a new support group for the economically challenged as a result of the economic downturn. Key themes will include unemployment, financial issues, empowerment and support. Please join us on Thursday mornings at 10:15am at Temple Israel, 140 Central Ave, Lawrence until January 20th. This group is part of Connect to Care, an initiative funded by UJA-Federation of NY. For further information and to pre-register, please contact Talia Rapps, L.M.S.W. at (516) 569-6733 x213.

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Opinion

Brain dead about brain death

There has been a running controversy in circles that are committed to Jewish Law over "brain death." Traditional sources require the heart and lungs to stop functioning. In olden days a mirror or a feather to the nose was the best they could do. Times have changed. Medical science has advanced and "brain death" has now been added to the halachic as well as the medical lexicon. It is of particular significance when it comes to transplants. Waiting until the heart finally runs down can be too late for some organs to be useful to others.

IN MY VIEW



Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

A great deal of halachic discussion has gone on ever since Rav Moshe Tendler, son-in-law of the late Rav Moshe Feinstein, and a qualified doctor as well as a halachic scholar, first suggested accepting brain death in principle. The fact that he affirmed he had his father-in-law's agreement added weight to his position. There was a furor at the time, as there always is when anything new crops up in traditional circles; but over time more and more experts joined him.

Indeed the whole issue of transplants and organ or skin banks has been dealt with extensively in halacha, and given that new issues and refinements are emerging all the time, there is a massive amount of material readily available on the subject. But equally, opinion is still divided, largely because of the fear that doctors might rush to declare death prematurely when they want to get organs to recipients as quickly as possible. And there is still controversy over definitions. Still, the fact that there might be rogue doctors should not detract from the fact that brain death in principle is approved of by more real halachic authorities nowadays than not.

You might recall the tragic case of Yoni Jesner, a highly gifted young man cut down by a suicide terrorist in Israel some years ago. His courageous and religious family took advice from halachic experts and donated his organs, one of which saved the life of an Arab child. Around the Jewish world the issue of organ donation suddenly became a popular topic. More and more rabbanim encouraged Jews to carry donor cards, and specifically religious organizations sprouted to cover all religious reservations.

In Israel, provisions were added to the national donor card system to encourage religious Jews to participate. But sadly, Jewish religious life being what it is nowadays, there has been a reaction against change and progress. It is really political, not spiritual. And

strict halachic positions are often taken to be used as a bargaining tool, particularly in Israel, for political or financial gain.

Cadres of new wonder, miracle, mystical rabbis make money out of the pain and helplessness of the sick and dying and their families, promising cures and hocus pocus in exchange for reward. They too have joined a trend against organ donation and accepting brain death, citing irrational and superstitious reasons.

A year ago a very good friend of mine, Rabbi Yossi Raichik, died in Tel Aviv when a transplant would have saved him. An organ was ready at hand, but whereas his rav approved the exchange, another one objected. The family buckled, and Rav Yossi died.

To make matters worse, the world shortage of organs has led to an unsavory black market in human organs. Too often it's one-way traffic in which the rich benefit at the expense of the poor and too many people are more willing to take from others than contribute themselves. This is the main reason why so much effort has been put into encouraging Jews to donate or carry cards.

The increasingly hard line Rabbinical Council of America recently published a position paper in which it gave both points of view — those in favor of brain death and those against. It decided not to take a definitive position. Many people regretted this act of moral cowardice, but one could at least

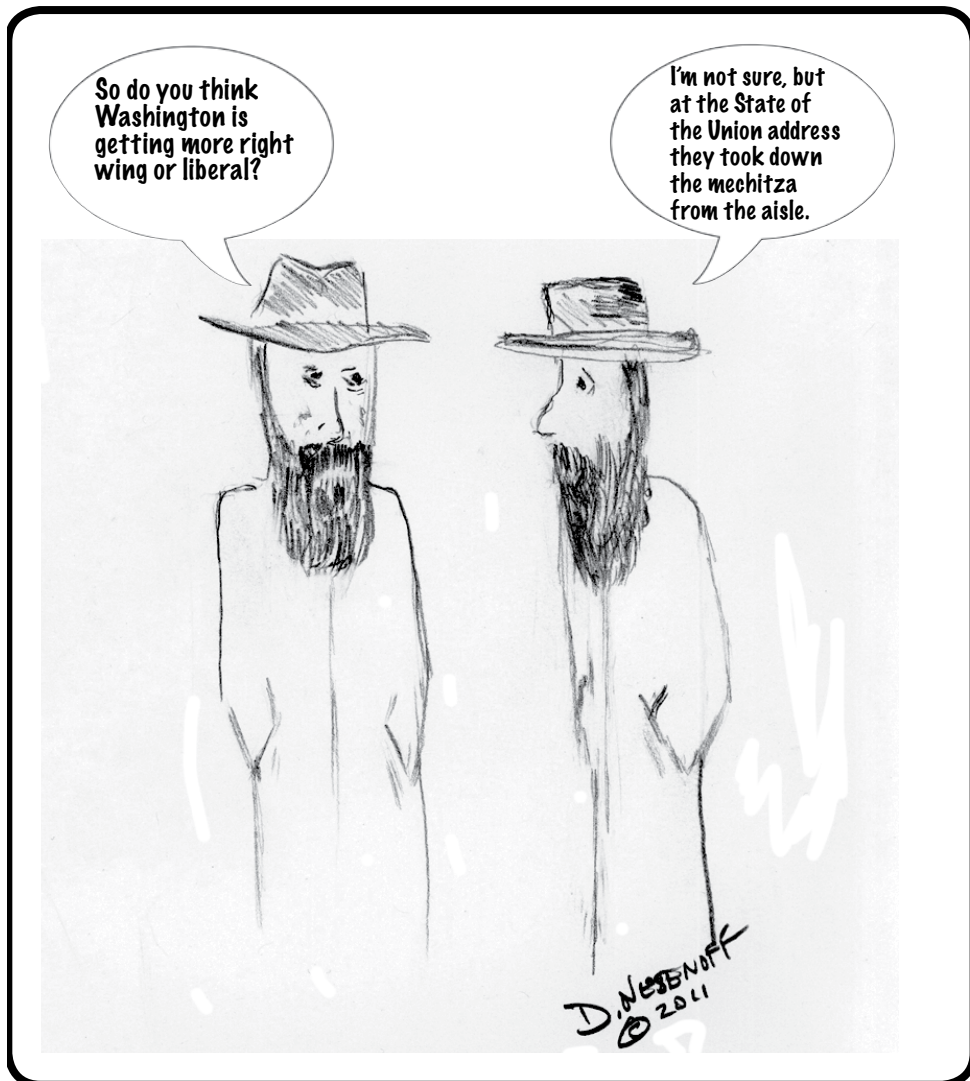
understand that in a case of differing opinions it is only fair to give both. Still, a recommendation would have been in order. But fear now stalks the rabbinic world and it is hard to judge those who are frightened.

By way of contrast the London Bet Din, the authority for the majority of British Jews, took a definite stand with the extremists. It declared, simply, that brain death is not acceptable. No mention of different views, no qualification. The Anglo Chief Rabbi, who one expects to have a better sense of moderation, chickened out yet again. In typical Anglo fashion, you say "no" first, then back-track. And in equally British fashion, express outrage that you are "misquoted."

All the Beth Din needed to do was to state clearly and simply that Jews can donate organs but that they also need to take steps to ensure that the halachic parameters for brain death are adhered to. Brain death is a halachic option but there need to be safeguards and expert halachic advice in each case. But in effect they did it the wrong way round. Another public relations disaster, and once again thinking, moderate Orthodoxy has been failed by its leadership and has shot itself in the foot.

Rabbi Jeremy Rosen, a graduate of Cambridge University and Mir Yeshivah in Jerusalem, has been an Orthodox Rabbi in the U.K., Principal of Carmel College and Director of YAKAR U.K.. He lives, teaches and writes in Manhattan.

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'In the Valley of the Shadow'

Q & A with James Kugel

By Michael Orbach

James Kugel is the author of "In the Valley of the Shadow" and "How to Read the Bible." A former chair of Near Eastern Languages at Harvard, Kugel is now the chair of the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at Bar Ilan University.

Michael Orbach: As one of the foremost Biblical critics, you're also an Orthodox Jew. Don't these two things contradict each other?

James Kugel: I certainly think there's a conflict between modern Biblical scholarship and Orthodox Judaism, and I really don't think it can ever be resolved. But I also don't believe that most people are comfortable just ignoring it, hiding their heads in the sand. They want to know how to confront modern scholarship head-on and still come out an Orthodox Jew. That's why I got into this field, and it's what I tried to write about in the last chapter of "How to Read the Bible." But that's not all that I have to say about Judaism. Most of my readers probably don't know this, but I also wrote a book about 20 years ago called, "On Being a Jew." That book is really what I think about Orthodox Judaism.

MO: I find that the more you know the harder it is to believe.

JK: I couldn't disagree with you more. It's true that most of us slide into a kind of routine Orthodoxy. There are all those mitzvot to do every day, and there's Shabbat. So some people don't ever go beyond the routine, in fact, some people are afraid of going beyond the routine. But there is this other thing to do, trying to understand the whole basis of Judaism. It's a challenge, but in the end I don't think it makes it harder to believe. Quite the opposite, really.

MO: Do you think Orthodox Judaism has gotten more extreme in recent years?

JK: I live in Israel and there that's very much a political question. The fact is that there used to be a kind of powerful centrist Orthodoxy, and I think that the center has gotten much weaker. There certainly has been a very strong move to the right — but "to the right," doesn't necessarily mean people have become more strict in their observance. In Israel at least, it seems to have a lot more to do with external things. Men who used to wear a kippah now go around in black hats and black suits. More and more neighborhoods are becoming strictly Haredi, and people have started to close themselves off mentally as well as physically. This is certainly a phenomenon in Jerusalem, and I think it's too bad.

MO: What do you think is causing the slide to the right?

JK: One answer I've heard, but I'm not sure I believe it, is that this is part of a more general phenomena across the world. Muslims are becoming much more right-wing, and there has certainly been a growth in Christian fundamentalism. Of course, we Jews like to believe that we have nothing to do with what's going on in other religions, so maybe it's just that the world has tilted on its axis. If not, well, I know that some things go in cycles: anyone who knows about the state of Orthodoxy eighty or ninety years ago knows that it was moving in the other direction. There were plenty of synagogues then that became nominally Conservative because that was just what was in the wind. Now it's different, but maybe, in 20 or 30 years from now, the winds will shift again and people will start to move in the opposite direction.

MO: I know that when I began learning about how halacha was decided it troubled me.

JK: I think there is a natural tendency — everyone has it, and I would include myself in this — everyone would prefer to think that halacha is altogether divinely determined, descending straight from heaven. I certainly think that was the beginning of halacha, but inevitably there is a kind of hand-off from the divine to the human, from prophets to the elders to rabbis and codifiers and poskim. That's what our tradition says, and I think this aspect of Judaism is dyed in the wool.

MO: What is "In the Valley of the Shadow" about?

JK: It's really a kind of prolonged meditation on a certain state of mind. This might seem like an impossible task: to write a book about a state of mind, but that's what I tried to do. It started with a personal experience. About ten years ago, I was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer. When you hear something like that, it certainly changes your outlook on life: the doctors tell you you've got two or three years to live, and it's of course very disturbing. But for me, there was also something fascinating about it. You enter into a different mode of thinking. I'm sure anyone who has experienced it will know what I'm talking about...

You start to think about yourself very differently. This is what I tried to talk about in the book, a certain sense of our own smallness, and a different way of fitting into the world. It was important to me because it seemed to have an awful lot to do with religion, with something that a lot of religions share. I've spent a good deal of time studying various religions, but nobody ever seemed to talk about this religious "sense of self." That state of mind is still very much the mind-set of much of the world. For me, it was very

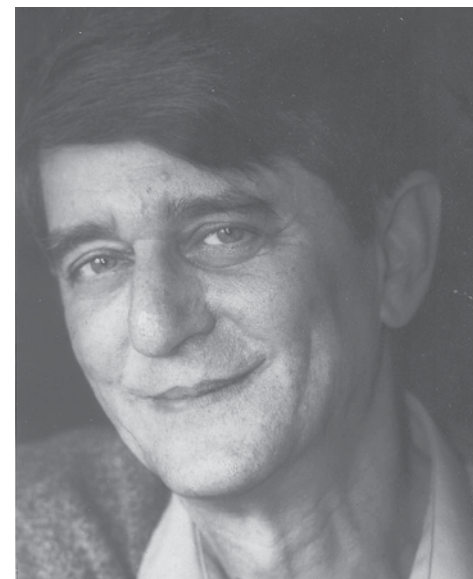
much connected to this state of mind and thinking about oneself that used to exist, even though it is slipping away from us in the modern West.

MO: What does it have to do with fitting into the world?

JK: I use the expression 'fitting into the world' because not too long ago, people still had a strong sense that the world belongs to G-d, so that we fit into His world. I think that's the main thing that has changed for people in our modern, Western way of thinking. We ourselves have expanded, until we now fill the whole sky, each individual does. Lots of theologians today, as well as the enemies of religion, try to address the reality of G-d in terms of His sovereignty over the world. But what I said at the end of the book is that what's really at issue is not so much the divine sovereignty over the world, but the divine sovereignty over the cubic centimeter of space that starts just at the tip of our noses. That's where G-d's sovereignty used to begin, but what we've succeeded in doing in our modern Western state of mind is taking over that cubic centimeter, and the rest of the sky along with it, the whole universe in fact. That's how we fit in — until, of course, someone says, "You've got cancer."

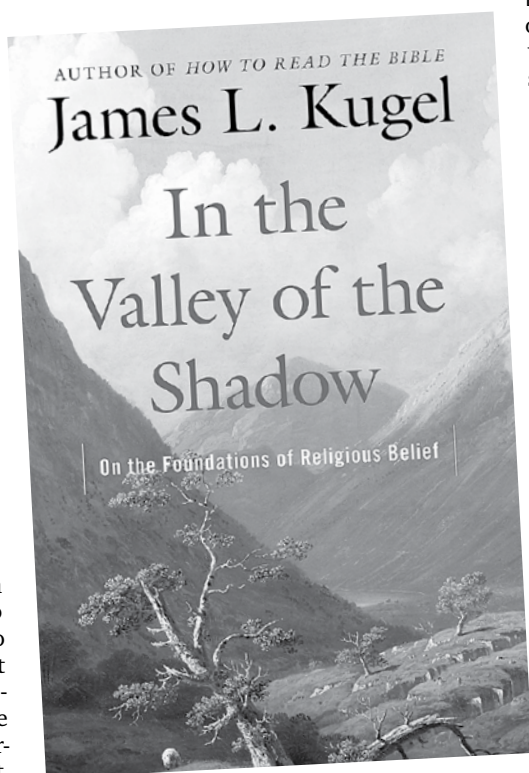
MO: How do you think Judaism deals with this matter of "fitting in"?

JK: I think the whole basis of Judaism is what we call Avodat Hashem. Serving G-d. There are lots of religions, but what seems so



James Kugel

great and unique about Judaism is it gives you a prepared path of things to do, so that in a hundred ways every day, you are reminded that it's not your world, and the way is always open to allow G-d, as it were, to step in. So we get up in the morning and we say these prayers and put on tefillin, and that opens the conversation. Studying the Gemara, keeping kashrut, Shabbat, tzedakah — all the things we do that make up the life of Orthodox Jews are a way of fitting into G-d's world, filling our lives with the divine presence.



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Italy on the streets of New York

As I walked through the doors of Noi Due I was immediately struck by how wonderful the restaurant smells. The aroma, a combination of dark Italian coffee and freshly baked bread, permeates the small Upper West Side restaurant, adding to the overall ambience already set by the exposed brick and dark wood interior. As I sat drinking a rich espresso with Noi Due's owner Golan Chetrit I learned that these two scents represent the cornerstones of Noi Due's offerings: a proprietary blend of coffee from Napoli and pizza/focaccia from their brick oven. As I tried both the coffee and the pizza I realized that these are not just the cornerstones of Noi Due because of how amazingly they're made; they're the cornerstones because they represent the true spirit of the restaurant's Italian cuisine.

Italian cuisine is very much based around the concept of a shared culinary experience and Noi Due, which means "We Two" in Italian, does an excellent job of acclimating this philosophy into their menu. They offer a wide range of appetizers meant to be shared by diners. I was especially fond of the Melanzane Imbotiti which is a baked eggplant filled with creamy ricotta, covered

in a marinara sauce and mozzarella which are both made daily at Noi Due. The eggplant was tender and perfectly cooked; the ricotta blended with the fresh marinara and mozzarella perfectly.

For the main I had the Margherita Pizza made with their fresh mozzarella and basil. I also tried the Aglio e Olio, a simple pasta with complex flavors. The Aglio e Olio is made with olive oil, garlic, and red and black pepper. Its flavor carries so much depth that it's hard to believe how few ingredients go into it. The garlic was expertly caramelized, giving the dish a hint of sweetness as you first bite into it, followed by a pleasant heat from the pepper. This might be on my list of favorite pasta dishes.

Despite how much I enjoyed the dishes listed above, what I loved most about Noi Due is Chetrit's willingness to dabble with food and ingredients from other cultures and still keep them distinctly Italian. Two truly amazing examples of this are the Sigari and the Mozzarella Basket. The Sigari are made like classical Moroccan cigars filled with spinach and ricotta and then dipped in marinara. The result is a flavor reminiscent of both Israel and Italy. The Mozzarella Basket is Noi Due's nod to Asian cuisine. Mozzarella is fried tempura style and served with sautéed tomatoes, onions and mushrooms, all covered in a light teriyaki sauce. All of this is then presented in an edible bowl surrounded by a balsamic reduction. The mozzarella takes to frying beautifully and I was shocked at how well teriyaki and balsamic go together.

As I ate at Noi Due I was brought back to my time in Italy. Back then I remember thinking that only in Italy would I be able to eat this magnificently. Thanks to Noi Due a little

piece of that Italy now resides within reach on 69th and Amsterdam.

Zechariah Mehler is a widely published food writer and expert in social marketing. Follow him on Twitter @thekoshercritic



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Opinion

Parshat Mishpatim

Unstigmatizing the convert

During one of the classes I teach on weeknights, our topic turned to the different kinds of love mentioned in the Torah. One insightful participant commented that if G-d tells us to look out for different kinds of people on account of His own personal feelings of love for them, we have an obligation to go above and beyond where our normal emotions take us.

In our efforts to emulate G-d, we are meant to copy His ways in our treatment of the orphan, the widow, the poor and the ger.

Shmot 22:20 states “Do not hurt the feelings of a foreigner or oppress him for you were foreigners in Egypt.” Later on in the parsha, we hear (23:9), “

Do not oppress a foreigner. You know how it feels to be a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

The Sefer Hachinukh counts the instruction in 22:20 as two commandments — not to oppress the ger with words and not to oppress him with money.

Whether a ger refers to a convert or someone who is literally a foreigner who has come to live among you (Rashi) is a subject of debate. Regardless, the Torah’s point is minimally commanding us to respect persons of all differ-

ent nationalities who want to live peaceably with the Jewish people.

This is a sentiment we can all appreciate.

The Or Hachaim warns Jews not to feel superior to converts on account of their not being direct descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. Isn’t it true that the direct descendants of the forefathers reached the lowest spiritual levels in the depravity of Egypt? No one can point fingers at the past without revealing skeletons in their own closets.

On the other side of the equation is the mitzvah to love the ger (Number 431 in Sefer HaChinukh), a concept that is repeated a few times in the Torah (Vayikra 19:34, Devarim 10:19).

One of the reasons the Sefer Hachinukh advances a tighter restriction against pursuing the ger’s money is because he, as a foreigner, has no close relatives to bail him out. Furthermore, we do not want him treated in a way that will cause him to return to his former ways.

A number of years ago I was present at the conversion of an adult male. One of the rabbis said something to the man that has stuck in my memory.

I know many converts – in many cases I can’t even tell they were not Jews from birth. Each one has a beautiful soul, and understands far better than I do how special it is to be a Jew.

“You realize that in accepting to convert in this manner, you are committing to be in the top 10 percent of observance,” the rabbi explained. “Most Jews are born into this and might choose how they want to go about expressing their Jewishness. But you are asking to join our ranks, and in turn we’re asking of you to commit to the highest level of observance.”

I know many converts — in many cases, I can’t even tell they were not Jews from birth. Each one has a beautiful soul, and understands far better than I do how special it is to be a Jew.

Many years ago, I was the gabbai for a minyan where a Hispanic convert prayed. When he was asked his name for an aliyah, he always said his name, proudly concluding with “ben Avraham Avinu” — son of Abraham our forefather. His natural father is not Jewish, but through converting, he is now the son of Abraham.

I can’t speak from personal experience about whether being a convert has a stigma.

Yes, there is a rule that a kohen may not marry a female convert — but this has nothing to do with the convert personally, as much as it has to do with how we view kohanim, and a reality check of the convert’s past. But beyond this restriction, converts are considered complete Jews in every way, in the same manner of every Jew who is not a kohen or levi.

We should admire gerim — individuals who have left their former lives behind to embrace Judaism. The Torah, after all, tells us we are to love them.

I like to think that the righteous converts should be put on a pedestal and pointed at for all to see that “This is how a Jew is supposed to live.”

May we merit to overcome our inhibitions and stigmas; may we truly fulfill the mitzvot of treating converts properly. They are the best of us, and we ought to learn from them.



Rabbi Avi Billet

Letters to the editor

Misrepresenting the RCA

To the Editor:

The Jewish Star’s article on the brain death controversy in the Orthodox community (“Is Brain Death Enough? The RCA Says Maybe”; January 21, 2011) was a good overall summary of the major issues of a very complex topic. However, we think it was misleading to suggest that the Rabbinical Council of America has no position on the issue.

In fact, the RCA took a very admirable position in its clarification statement. It stressed that there are two legitimate and equally valid opinions on what constitutes halachic death — brain stem death and irreversible cessation of heartbeat — and individuals rabbis are free to choose the position they feel most comfortable with.

In addition, the statement emphasized three other important points:

- The debate is about how one defines halachic death, and does not involve the question of whether or not organ donation is permissible in Jewish law.

- Organ donation saves lives, which is of paramount importance in Jewish law. If one defines halachic death as brain stem death, the opportunity to donate organs is greater, but even if one defines halachic death as the irreversible cessation of heartbeat, there are still limited opportunities to donate organs.

- Live organ donation is permit-

ted by all halachic decisors.

We applaud Rabbi Moshe Kletenick, Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, and the RCA for stressing the importance of organ donation in Jewish law, while recognizing the very serious and complex debate on how to define death in halacha.

Harold Perl, MD

Teaneck, NJ

Michael Feldstein

Stamford, CT

Members of the Board, Halachic

Organ Donor Society

Ghettos are ghettos

To the Editor:

Mr. Gerber is embarrassing himself with his ignorance of history (“The Kosher Bookworm: What’s so Jewish about blood libels and ghettos”; January 21, 2010) The Frankfurt and Rome ghettos are in fact quite similar to the urban ghettos in which many African Americans found themselves in the 20th century, as both the Jews and the African Americans were legally prohibited from living in other sections of the cities.

Real Jews died in both the blood libels and in the Warsaw Ghetto. Sarah Palin did not. But she has defenders like Mr. Gerber singing her praises all over the internet. Would that the Jewish victims of blood libels had such an amen chorus!

Charles B. Hall

Bronx

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A devastating computer virus may have set Iran’s nuclear development back by years.

— news item



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Independent and original reporting from the Orthodox communities of Long Island and New York City
All opinions expressed are solely those of The Jewish Star’s editorial staff or contributing writers

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The Jewish Star is published weekly by The Jewish Star LLC, 2 Endo Boulevard, Garden City, NY 11530.

Subscription rates: \$9 per quarter on a credit card in Nassau and Far Rockaway, or \$48 a year. Elsewhere in the US, \$15 per quarter or \$72 a year.

Newsstand Price: \$1.

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The case of the missing hat

Not that anyone is counting, but this is my 180th article for this fine newspaper. In article 88, I described a wedding I attended in Williamsburg. When I went out to make a phone call, I observed a stranger driving away in my silver Acura.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH



David Seidemann

The valet had erred as the stranger and I owned similar cars. At any rate, I was reunited with my car, but upon arriving home, I found the man's hat in my front seat. Through the good graces of the Nachum Segal radio show, the stranger and his hat were reunited a few days later. All seemed well in the hat world.

That is, until article 180.

A few weeks back, someone in my shul accidentally left the premises with my hat, a love-

ly black fedora with a sporty feather. A week later, the hat did not reappear. I pulled out my back-up hat from the closet. It was not as fancy as my primary hat and did not fit quite as well. The back-up is gray while my first love is

black. For good reason, it had been relegated to back-up duty. Now, I do not mean to insult hat number two, but simply wish to point out that it is a back-up hat for a reason.

I do have an emotional attachment to that grey fedora, having sort of inherited it from a relative. My great uncle Seymour passed away and his family held a memorial tribute for him. As the proceedings concluded, Seymour's son approached me and asked what my hat size was. I've been asked some weird questions in my lifetime but given where we were, I couldn't imagine the relevance of such a question. Long story short, Seymour had purchased the gray hat two weeks before his passing and never wore it. Of all the relatives present, we seemed shared a hat size. So after a moving tribute to my dead relative, I had a new hat.

I felt a bit funny, not only by acquiring it at a memorial, but also because the hat did not really fit that well. By the same token, I didn't want to look a gift horse in the, well, head. I overcame all my doubts and proudly donned the gray hat and drove home.

Now, my neighbor is one of the finest neighbors one could ever hope for and we get along swimmingly.

He has a wonderful sense of humor and impeccable timing in the delivery of his witty and pithy lines. His timing was never on better display than that Sunday evening when

we both pulled into our respective driveways. We exited our vehicles, he, in a well fitting baseball cap, and me with my great uncle Seymour's hat bobbing up and down on my head. My neighbor quipped "Who died and left you that hat?"

"If you must know," I replied, "My great uncle Seymour."

My neighbor then informed me that he knew Seymour and was terribly saddened by the news of his passing. For a moment, we both stared at each other, not knowing who made the other one more uncomfortable. Of course he was joking. And of course if he knew I had actually inherited my hat from Seymour, he would probably not have said what he said. Or would he? Of course, if I knew he knew Seymour, I would not have made him feel bad by telling him I received the hat — the hat he just made fun of — from Seymour. Or would I?

Not wanting to make either of us feel uncomfortable in the future, I put the gray hat away and didn't think about it again until a few weeks ago, when my black hat disappeared.

Now, I'm not a great fan of conspiracy theories. I still believe that Oswald acted alone. But part of me, the sinister part, believes that my neighbor had something to do with the disappearance of my black hat the other week. It was all part of his plot to force me to revive the gray hat from retirement so that

he could have the last laugh.

I don't know for sure, but he had been acting very suspiciously lately, even going so far as to ask my daughters which Saturday morning services I attend and if I still wear a hat to shul.

But I was the one who had the last laugh. My neighbor invited me for dessert last Friday night. He was having some company for the meal and he wanted them to meet my family and vice versa. I marched in with the gray hat and thanked him for letting me borrow it for my kids school play.

"I told you I would bring it back in time for you to wear it to shul on Shabbos morning," I said.

I placed the hat on his head, but he got the real last laugh as the hat fit absolutely perfectly.

My neighbor and dear uncle Seymour were never closer. One man's folly is another man's fashion. It is definitely something to remember as I write this article one hour before President Obama's State of the Union address when he will undoubtedly intone that the state of the union is strong, whether it fits or not.

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

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nue, Mineola, New York, sell at public auction the tax liens on certain real estate, unless the owner, mortgagee, occupant of or any other party in interest in such real estate shall have paid to the County Treasurer by February 11, 2011 the total amount of such unpaid taxes or assessments with the interest, penalties and other expenses and charges against the property. Such tax liens will be sold at the lowest rate of interest, not exceeding 10 percent per six month's period, for which any person or persons shall offer to take the

total amount of such unpaid taxes as defined in section 5-37.0 of the Nassau County Administrative Code. As required by Section 5-44.0 of the Nassau County Administrative Code, the County Treasurer shall charge a registration fee of \$100.00 per day to each person who shall seek to bid at the public auction as defined above. A list of all real estate in Nassau County on which tax liens are to be sold is available at the website of the Nassau County Treasurer at http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/Treasurer/Annual_Tax_Lien_Sale/tax_sale_listing.html.

A partial listing of the real estate located in school district number(s) 14, 15 in the Town of Hempstead and in school district number(s) 7 in the Town of North Hempstead only upon which tax liens are to be sold will be printed in this newspaper during the week of February 7, 2011. THE NASSAU COUNTY TREASURER MINEOLA, NEW YORK Dated: January 14, 2011 #21611E

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That's life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

Dear That's Life,

There is a distinct difference between a vacation and a family trip. A vacation is when you go somewhere, wile away your cares, skip the laundry and sit on a beach drinking a mai tai. Okay — maybe I'm projecting. It does not have to be exactly like that, but a vacation is something that simply allows you to decompress.

On the other hand, there is the family trip. Also enjoyable but for other reasons. The packing/repacking, the diapers, juice boxes and laundry... None of it ends when you reach your destination. Whether you flew, drove or took the train, travelling as a family requires different preparations and expectations. There will, however, be memories to last a lifetime, including pictures and souvenirs that will serve as reminders of wonderful moments and quality family time.

Flying with children can also be a challenge and often an adventure. Having read an article many years ago on flying as a family, I make it a point to thank the people around us for their patience and understanding. It is difficult for kids to stay seated and quiet for hours, regardless of how many toys and distractions you bring along. While we are all in this together and no one is getting off mid-flight to catch a better ride, it is still appropriate to show your appreciation to your fellow passengers.

You also hope that even if other passengers are not as understanding as you would hope when your baby cries or your small child screams that he has to go to the bathroom *now*, you will at least have support from your fellow tribe members on the plane. Yes, the people located in front of us looked to change their seats. They did it, however, by politely asking the flight attendants and not by shooting us nasty glances. I might have asked to have my seat changed as well if I was flying alone. Other people on board,

including some of the flight attendants, actually commented that my kids were behaving very nicely.

When a woman wearing a sheitel gave me dirty looks, I didn't take her seriously.

Maybe it was because she was travelling with her son who kept on checking out what my kids were watching because there was no video on the flight. Maybe it was because I figured that, as a parent, she could appreciate that children on a flight to Florida with friends might be excited and maybe she should just cut us some slack. Or maybe, just maybe, it was because she kept switching back and forth between saying tehillim and reading Cosmo. (I am sure she was reading it for its very informative articles with their even more interesting titles.)

I could, if space allowed, go into detail as to the words that she and I exchanged. I can tell you that she said that the entire plane was staring at me. I corrected her and explained that the other passengers were, in fact, staring at her.

There were empty seats available in the rear of the plane, I said, and if she wanted to, she should feel free to move. Given the size of my group I was in no position to move anywhere. I wanted her to know, however, that while I thanked the passengers around us for their patience, I could not thank her because she had no patience at all.

Having already given a pretty good synopsis of the event, the best moment was when she jumped up to get something from her overhead bin and her son asked her what she was doing. As she grabbed her iPod from her bag, she exclaimed, "I cannot stand this noise!" Looking around him and slightly perplexed, he looked at his mother and said, "What noise?"

MLW

Yeshiva of Flatbush visits Aleh

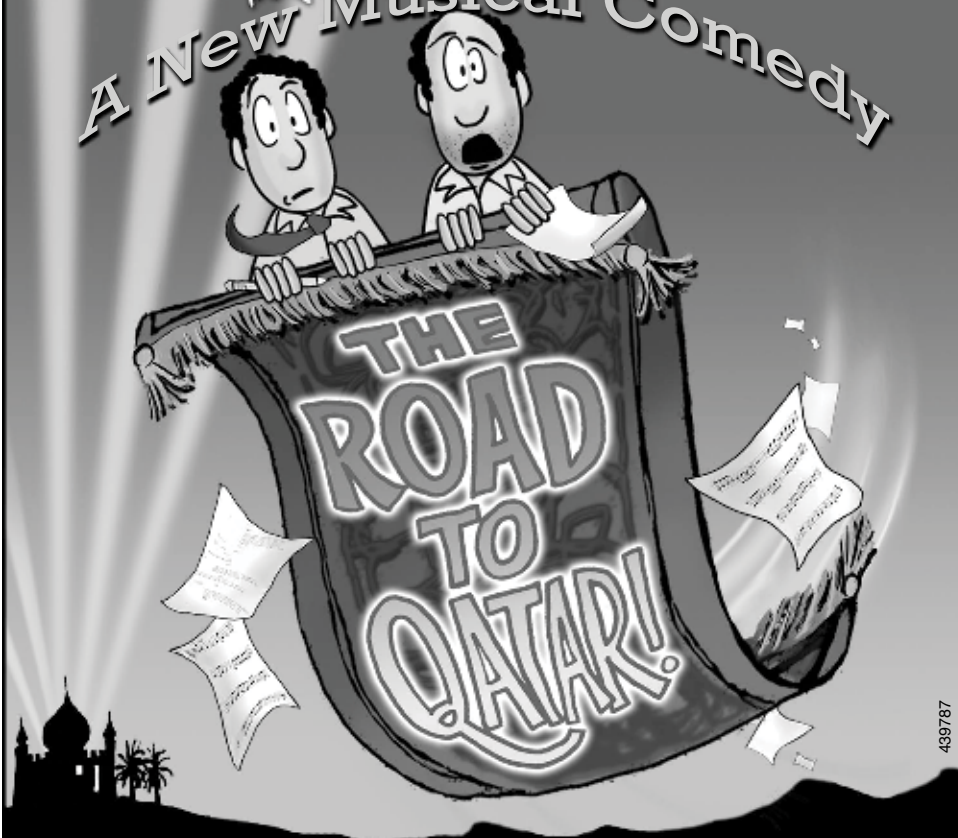
In what has become a tradition, a group of 50 students from The Yeshiva of Flatbush Joel Braverman High School visited Aleh's Jerusalem facility last week. Aleh (www.aleh.org) is Israel's largest network of residential facilities for children with severe physical and cognitive disabilities. The group joined the Aleh children to take part in creative activities relating to the season, including planting flowers, simulating wind and rain and using art supplies to create beautiful clouds.



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