

THE JEWISH STAR

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The world of
Frum-Satire

What's so funny about being frum?

By Sergey Kadinsky

Ask Heshy Fried, the 29-year-old blogger behind Frum Satire, one of the most interesting websites about Orthodoxy, and you'll get a complicated answer.

"I would venture to say that I didn't even know what satire really was when I started the blog," Fried explained. "I merely liked the ring of 'frum satire,' but the name has stuck."

Fried started his blog when he lived in Albany in 2006. His first posts were merely observations of Shabbat meals, synagogue services and weddings, but eventually the blog came to be reflections on living an Orthodox lifestyle, an ironic yet tender look at the way he and other Orthodox Jews make their lives. No topic is too sacred, and Fried reflects on shidduch dating, shomer negui, Kollel and his hatred of hockers — well-connected members of the community with Bluetooths in their ears.

Eventually, as the scope of his pieces expanded, Fried adopted the tagline "It ain't always frum and it ain't always satire."

"What's the deal with Staten Island?" Fried wonders in one post. In a later one, he declares that when his father moved to Far Rockaway, "G-d knew I would hate Far Rockaway," which he sums up in a line.

"Far Rockaway is like an affordable Brooklyn," he wrote, before coming around to the community's finer aspects.

And Fried doesn't shy away from more serious topics though. "But having dated a convert, why not keep an open mind towards divorcees?" He asked in another post. "A Jew is a Jew, and we all possess the potential to

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Photo by Claudio Papapietro

Protesters outside the Brooklyn house belonging to Aharon Friedman's uncle, Jay Horowitz, in August. Friedman has refused to give his ex-wife a get and his uncle has advocated on his behalf.

Not letting go

The anatomy of an Agunah case

By Michael Orbach

His name is Aharon Friedman, and he is refusing to give his ex-wife a get.

Activists blast Friedman, a high-profile lawyer for the House Ways and Means Committee, for withholding the religious document that would enable his ex-wife, Tamar Epstein, to remarry, making her an Agunah, or "chained woman." "But Friedman's supporters maintain that is the last resort of a man desperate

to maintain a relationship with his young daughter, and that the get is a so-called "nuclear" option in a messy divorce.

On Sunday, the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot, a group that works to facilitate the granting of gets from recalcitrant husbands, held a rally at Friedman's apartment in Silver Spring, MD. According to Rabbi Jeremy Stern, the director of ORA, 300 people attended.

"Despite offers by the wife, which she's put her name to and signed, rabbis

have vouched on her behalf, the husband has not been willing to agree to anything," Rabbi Stern said. The group has been working to persuade Friedman to give Epstein a get for several months but has been unsuccessful. The rally was the second one the group held for this case; the first took place in Brooklyn in August.

Among the attendees in Maryland was Rabbi Shmuly Herzfeld of Ohev Shalom, the National Synagogue in Wash-

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Shabbat Candlelighting: 4:14 p.m. Shabbat ends 5:19 p.m. 72 minute zman 5:46 p.m. Torah Reading Parshat Shemot

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Frum Satire

It aint always frum and it aint always satire

HOME ABOUT LINKS FORUM GLOSSARY

Tzedakah: The frum communities best attribute

by HESHY FRIED on DECEMBER 21, 2010 - 14 COMMENTS



I would like to retell a story that I heard from Rabbi Levine of San Jose's Congregation Am Echad:

An Israeli man had just finished collecting money in South Florida to marry off his daughter, he was on his way to Atlanta to continue collecting when he was pulled over for driving over the limit just north of the Florida-Georgia state line. Since he had an

Israeli license he would have to see the judge, upon hearing the case the judge fined the man \$175, he pulled out this thick wad of the money he had just collected and calmly counted out the money - when the judge saw that they had him arrested for drug trafficking. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

The world of Frum Satire

Continued from page 1

create a bais neeman Yisrael, no matter what our personal backgrounds may be, even if those backgrounds include horrible personal experiences."

The blog's popularity has also surprised Fried. "I never thought I would be where I am today," he said. "Believe it or not, I work as a professional cook due to blogging." A fan in California suggested a job for Fried in Mountain View, cooking at the Kitchen Table, the Silicon Valley's sole kosher establishment.

"I finally found what I want to do for a career," he said. "I've met hundreds of people through blogging. People want to host me for Shabbos. I hung out with a fan when I was in Turkey, of all places."

"I think it works because his satire doesn't stray too far from the actual truth," said Elimelech Yisroel Lubin, 21, a Forest Hills resident.

A self-described "minor Jewish celebrity," Fried says blogging makes the community more transparent. "Thieves, frauds, molesters, cheaters and so on can't just get away with anything anymore. You are likely to be caught on tape or written about on public, private and anonymous forums like blogs and social networks," he said.

Fried also believes he's on the receiving end of positive experiences from the Jewish community because of how he looks. "Why else would this beanie wearing hippie with tzitzis hanging out be at our black hat shul," he writes about his visit to a Monsey synagogue. "This is one of the best things that could happen, because it makes people so friendly," as congregants assume that Fried is newly observant.

His celebrity has been mostly positive, though family members now fear that he could blog about the food and decor of family simchas. Fried vows to respect his family's privacy.

"My whole premise for starting the blog was to say that wearing a white shirt won't get you into heaven," said Fried. "G-d probably couldn't care less if you wore a black hat or not, but if you were honest and a good person who treated others with respect - now that went a long way."

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Mainstreaming hate

Wiesenthal's top 10 anti-Semitic slurs

By Michael Orbach

As the year ends and everyone writes up their Top 10 list of best books, albums and movies of the year, there's one list no one wants to be on: the Simon Wiesenthal Center's 2010 Top 10 Anti-Semitic Slurs.

"There's a lot to choose from unfortunately," said Rabbi Marvin Heir, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

The idea for the list, he said, came out of how mainstream the slurs have become.

"We began with a nice few hundred of the typical suspects: Hamas, Hezbollah, the American Neo-Nazi party — the typical groups that always hate Jews, but then, in a wider search, we were startled that you didn't need to go near the lunatic fringe," he said. "There were 40 or 50 mainstream people that no one would suspect of harboring such feelings."

"We wanted to show that when you're looking for haters of Jews, they're right near you," Rabbi Hier explained. "They're advisors to prime ministers and in close proximity to the U.S. President ... What has previously been mouthed by Goebbels, Hitler and Stalin is now in the mouths of mainstream Americans and Europeans in power."

The number one spot was easily taken by

longtime Hearst journalist Helen Thomas, who resigned when she was quoted as saying "Jews should get the hell out of Palestine." Not to be outdone, she made a second comment at an Arab event in Detroit.

"Congress, the White House, Hollywood and Wall Street are owned by Zionists," Thomas said. "They put their money where their mouth is."

Rabbi Hier said that Thomas was an easy choice for the number one slot.

"Who's in the position of more influence... A person that knew every president since JFK," Rabbi Hier said. "Who would have dreamed she harbored such ill will? Everyone kibbitzed with her at the White House,... She was treated as the queen in terms of the press. To be in proximity to power all these years is a long time to be harboring such feelings."

Second place went to the half-Jewish, Academy award-winning film director, Oliver Stone. In an interview, Stone said that Hitler was a "scapegoat" and did far worse things to the Russians than to the Jews, but the greater focus on Jewish plight was because of "the Jewish dominion of the media." Stone also added some choice words about what America's friendship to Israel has done for its foreign policy.

Half of the list was taken up by people

outside the United States, including Palestinian Minister of Information Al-Mutawakil Taha, who claimed that the Jews have no ties to the Western Wall. Also included was Thilo Sarrazin, the Central Bank executive for the German government, who made a largely positive comment about Jews in *Welt Am Sonntag*, a German magazine.

"All Jews have a certain gene... that makes them different than other people," he said.

Rabbi Hier said that they included Sarrazin since he implied that the "deck is fixed in some physical ways for Jews."

Aside from Thomas, two other journalists managed to make the list. Rick Sanchez, the CNN anchor, who was fired for making comments about Jews controlling the media, and Christina Patterson, a columnist for *The Independent*, who penned an article about how unfriendly Hasidic stores are in London that eventually turned into a condemnation of multiculturalism.

"I didn't realize that a purchase by a goy was a crime to be punished with monosyllabic terseness or that bus seats were a potential source of contamination or that road signs and parking restrictions were for people who hadn't been chosen by G-d," she wrote in July.

Patterson responded via email.

"I almost laughed when I heard that an organization named after a man who hunted down Nazis had named me for one of the 'Top Ten Anti-Semitic Smears' of 2010," she wrote. "The editor of the *Independent*, who is Jewish, actually did. There I was, sandwiched between a Lithuanian Holocaust denier who described the Nuremberg Trial as 'the biggest legal farce in history' and anonymous contributions on the Goldman Sachs message boards, which begged for the return of the Gestapo. An Orthodox Jew from New York emailed me to 'apologize' for the Simon Wiesenthal Centre's 'wrong.' Another said that he had written to them to complain. Another said that they had been 'irresponsible.' Another said that they were, 'quite simply, not serious.'"

"And that's the truth of it. They are, quite simply, not serious. I'm not sure that anyone can take any aspect of their work seriously again."

Almost in time for the release of "The Social Network" movie, 10th place was given to Facebook, Yahoo and Twitter for anti-Semitic comments that appeared on the sites.

"People used to say 'show me the section of town where the hate is from,'" Rabbi Hier said. "This list shows us that there isn't one street where you can say [hate] doesn't exist."

Anatomy of an Agunah case

Continued from page 1
ington, D.C.

"Aaron Friedman should give his wife a get immediately," Rabbi Herzfelt wrote in an email to *The Jewish Star*. "I call upon the other rabbis in the area to 'take a stand' in this matter and to strongly condemn Aaron's behavior."

Epstein and Friedman were married in 2006, when Epstein was 22 and Friedman was 29. According to Epstein, the marriage was "rocky from the start," but the couple had a daughter together in Maryland.

Friedman declined to speak to *The Star*. In 2008, Epstein moved back with her parents in Philadelphia. Friedman filed an emergency motion to get the couple's daughter back. No immediate action was taken on the motion, but the couple agreed to go to the Baltimore Bet Din. Months passed, but the Bet Din didn't come to a verdict and the case returned to a secular court where Epstein was granted custody.

Court documents provided to *The Jewish Star* show two parents engaged in a bitter custody dispute over their daughter.

"Defendant is a loving mother and has been the child's primary caregiver since birth..." the judge wrote in a memorandum in 2009. "Plaintiff is a caring father and actively participated in meeting the child's daily needs prior to the parties' separation."

When Epstein asked for her get after the civil divorce in April 2010, Friedman refused.

This is a particularly difficult case for ORA, since Friedman refuses to mediate in person and instead relies on intermediaries; so far, Rabbi Stern says, Friedman has not responded to proposed changes in the custody agreement. More shockingly, according to Rabbi Stern, Friedman's representative demanded \$1 million or 5 percent of Epstein's family's net worth to ensure that she keeps to any new custody conditions.

Friedman's brother, Menachem, called the claims about the escrow "false."

"Aharon has acted in good faith and al



Photo by Claudio Papapietro

Cheryl Epstein, Tamar's mother, center, attended the Brooklyn rally.

pi halacha," Menachem wrote. "Aharon has been seeking a fair, workable, and sustainable arrangement that will allow him to maintain a real relationship with their daughter, who needs both of her parents in her day-to-day life. Aharon is eager to reach such an agreement at which point — but not before which, as he has been advised by poskim — he would give Tamar a get."

Epstein said she believes that Friedman is holding on to the get since he's unable to let go of the marriage.

"It's very unclear what he's trying to get from me other than getting back at me," Epstein said. "I know he has a lot of anger at me for leaving him ... I don't understand what would justify him not giving a get other than getting back at me."

A Facebook group in support of Epstein has garnered more than 2,500 members.

Efforts have already begun to pressure Friedman into giving a get through his workplace. Rabbi Herzfelt sent a letter to Friedman's superior, Jon Traub, at the House

Ways and Means Committee.

"It is your ethical and professional responsibility to tell Aharon to give the Get immediately," Rabbi Herzfelt wrote. "If you do not do that you are indeed complicit in his behavior."

A number of prominent rabbinical figures have already weighed in on the case. Rabbi Hershel Schachter of Yeshiva University, ORA's rabbinical leader, and Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetzky of the Philadelphia Yeshiva, have both demanded that a get be given.

"I must there again urge anyone who has any connection to Aharon Friedman to attempt to convince him to end her suffering," Rabbi Kaminetzky wrote in a letter that was distributed by ORA.

Friedman's brother countered with letters from Rabbi Yisroel Belsky and Rabbi Ben Dahan, an Israeli court judge, saying that the custody issue should be resolved before the get happens.

Rabbi Stern said that rabbis had been "deceived." "He pulled the wool over the eyes of

Rabbi Ben Dahan and Rabbi Belsky," Rabbi Stern said. Efforts to reach Rabbi Belsky before *The Jewish Star's* deadline were unsuccessful.

Menachem Friedman maintains that the current custody would not enable his brother to see his daughter, given that the time with his daughter begins at 6 p.m. on Friday afternoon.

"If that was the only issue this entire case would have been settled six months ago," Rabbi Stern said. "Tamar doesn't violate Shabbos, Aaron doesn't violate Shabbos — there has never been a violation of Shabbos."

Epstein maintains that she has already made repeated offers and provided documentations to *The Jewish Star*.

"I don't see any evidence of him being genuine about negotiation process," she said. "I've put on the table three different proposals."

Menachem wrote that "Aharon is committed to giving a get after he and Tamar have agreed on a fair, workable, and sustainable custody arrangement that allows their daughter to have both of her parents involved in her day-to-day life."

Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz, a rabbi in the Baltimore Jewish community, said that he didn't support Friedman's not giving his get and was acting "totally improperly." However, he added that his behavior, is, "the pained and desperate response of a helpless and distraught father to the loss of his only child."

He also criticized ORA.

"Humiliation tactics are not necessarily the best way to break the impasse."

The Baltimore Beis Din that initially presided over the case has not given an order for Friedman to give a get. Miriam Colton, a staff member at ORA who is handling the case, says that regardless of the story, the case is a very simple one.

"There's a he-said and she-said," Colton explained. "The reality of the situation is that there is a civil divorce, custody went to the court and he's still refusing to give a get."

December 26

Project Inspire

CONGREGATION ANSHEI SHALOM AND THE WEST HEMPSTEAD JEWISH COMMUNITY will be hosting a two-part seminar on "What We All Need to Know to Strengthen Ourselves & to Reach Others Near and Far," given by Rabbi Chaim Sappson, director of Project Inspire. Lectures will take place at Anshei Shalom, 472 Hempstead Avenue at 8 p.m. The second part will take place on Jan. 1.

Project Inspire is a movement to unify Jewish people by providing easy and inspiring ways to share the beauty of Jewish heritage.

Kollel Yom Rishon

CONGREGATION BETH SHOLOM in connection with several local shuls will be hosting Yeshiva University's Kollel Yom Rishon. Rabbi Marc Penner, director of professional education at RIETS, will speak at 9:30 a.m. on "What the Avot [and the Yankees] can teach us about Tefillah." Mrs. Yael Leibowitz, part of the Judaic faculty at Stern College for Women, will speak about "Heroines, Victims and Tanakh's Deafening Silence." The event is open to men and women and will be held at Congregation Beth Sholom at 390 Broadway in Lawrence.

December 26-27

Local psychiatrist speaks at NEFESH International Conference

RABBI BARRY HOLZER, MD, a well-known child and adult psychiatrist who lives and practices in the 5 towns will be presenting a unique workshop entitled Living with Aspergers: Developmental and Clinical Aspects of Coping with Aspergers into Adulthood at the 14th Annual NEFESH International Conference in Great Neck, NY. Rabbi Dr. Holzer will co-present with Mr. Nathan Weissler, an eloquent young adult with Aspergers Disorder, who will provide workshop attendees with an up close and personal view of the struggles and triumphs of living with this syndrome.

In addition to hearing from Mr. Weissler about his personal experiences as a teen-ager with Aspergers Disorder, his mother will speak about the ups and downs of parenting a young adult with Aspergers Disorder in the Jewish world. The conference is open to all interested community members but is specifically geared towards mental health practitioners, rabbis, and educators. This year's conference is entitled Mental Health and the Community: Past Gains, Future

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.

Challenges and it will take place on December 26th and 27th from 9 AM to 6 PM at the Young Israel of Great Neck (236 Middle Neck Road, Great Neck, NY, 11021). The conference will feature talks on addictions, marital relations, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and sociopathy as they relate to the Jewish community and presented by prominent speakers including Dr. David Pelcovitz and Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski. Conference details including a workshop schedule and on-line registration are available at www.nefesh.org

December 27-30

Winter camp at the JCC

THE JCC OF THE GREATER FIVE TOWNS invites your children (grades K-6) to our Winter Camp fun-filled week of enjoyable activities, in a nurturing atmosphere with professional staff. The camp will take place at Temple Israel of Lawrence from Monday, December 27-Thursday, December 30th. Please contact Sharona Arbeit at 516-569-6733x218 or sharona.arbeit@fivetownsjcc for the schedule and further registration information.

January 8

Chinese Auction

THE YESHIVA OF FLATBUSH will hold a Cirque De La Vie Chinese Auction at Shaare Zion Congregation, located at 2030 Ocean Parkway in Brooklyn, at 8 p.m.. \$18 per person and free \$20 coupon with each paid admission. Place your order online at www.yofauction.org. For further information contact 718-377-4040 ext. 149

January 16

OU Conference

THE ORTHODOX UNION will be holding its "One Day Conference on Jewish Life" at The Hilton in Woodcliff, New Jersey, the Convention will be divided into three tracks and two plenaries from 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Participants will be able to choose five sessions with presentations by Rabbi



Courtesy Rambam

Rabbi Reichman Addresses Rambam Mesivta on Asarah B'tevet

Rabbi Tzvi Reichman, a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, spoke to the talmidim at Rambam Mesivtah on Asarah B'tevet. He cited three reasons why we commemorate the day by fasting: the siege that was placed on Jerusalem, the death of Ezra the scribe and the forced translation of the Torah into a foreign language by Ptolemy.

Moshe Elefant and Rav Hershel Schachter of the OU; Dr. Shira Weiss, Rebbetzin Yael Weil, Rebbetzin Rookie Billet, Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman, Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman, Rabbi Dovid Fohrman; OU Chairman of the Board Harvey Blitz with panelists Jerry Silverman and Rabbi Herschel Billet; and Rabbi Shaul Robinson.

The Convention will bring to a close the six-year OU presidency of Stephen J. Savitsky, with the installation of his successor. An announcement will be made prior to the Convention of who will follow Mr. Savitsky as the chief lay lead-

er of the OU. The entire slate of OU Officers and Board members will be elected at the Convention. It will also be the first Convention at which Rabbi Weil is Executive Vice President. Both he and Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, now Executive Vice President, Emeritus, will play leading roles in the programming and learning sessions.

The Convention will conclude with a gala dinner at which the OU's new leadership will be installed.

For further information, including costs, and to register for the Convention, go to www.ou.org/convention or Frank Buchweitz, Convention Co-Director, at frank@ou.org, or 212-613-8188.

January 19

Job search

THE FRIEDBERG JCC, located at 15 Neil Court in Oceanside, will be holding a panel presentation on "Conducting a Successful Job Search in this Competitive Market" with four certified career coaches. The panel will begin at 10 a.m. and is free. For more information call 516-634-4010 or via email at plerner@friedbergjcc.org

January 23

Hatseller and the Monkeys

THE MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE - A LIVING MEMORIAL TO THE HOLOCAUST, located at 36 Battery Place in New York City, welcomes families for The Hatseller and the Monkeys, a special Tu B'Shevat program for families featuring storytelling, songs, and arts and crafts that celebrate the New Year of Trees.

Following the performance, children are invited for holiday-themed craft activities. This program is for children ages 3 to 10. Tickets are available online at www.mjhnyc.org or by calling the Museum box office at 646.437.4202.

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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The Kosher Critic

K.O. for Prime KO

In Western culture it is believed that there are a four basic flavors that make up the palate. They are bitter, salty, sour and sweet. In Eastern culture there is a fifth flavor added, umami, which means "good taste" in Japanese, and can best be described as the savory end of the palate. Thanks to the rise of foodies the use of the word umami has become a more regular occurrence in the West and has come to mean the ineffability of certain flavors. Personally, umami was never something I bought into, that was until I ate at Prime KO.

Prime KO, which is located on Manhattan's Upper West Side, is the latest restaurant from Prime Hospitality, the company that owns both Prime Grill and Solo. Upon walking into Prime KO, you immediately recognize that you are in a Japanese restaurant. The decor is muted and orderly, yet still feels warm and inviting. Usually I have a pretty good idea of what I want to try at any given restaurant, but after surveying the menu at Prime KO I was lost in a sea of foods. Luckily, the manager assured me that he would take care of me, and so I was brought a bounty of starters. My table was filled with amazing of-

ferings like Sashimi Tacos, Tartars, Wygu Beef Pizza, Lamb Sausage and much more. All appetizers were plated with a deft and artistic hand; flavors were so complex and delicious that I simply do not have enough space in this article to appropriately do justice to them.

The best of them, however, deserve special notice. The Gyu Kakuni, a sake braised short rib, is slow cooked for 12 hours and served on a bed of mashed potatoes. The dish is then covered in a sake and mushroom reduction, which was so good I considered going into the kitchen and hugging the chef. The meat was so tender that it felt like it melted in my mouth. The sauce gave the dish a buttery and mildly sweet flavor that played beautifully with the silky mashed potatoes. I also was very partial to the Crispy Rice with Spicy Tuna accompanied by a sweet jalapeno aioli. The rice patties were delicately fried into a triangular cracker and topped with a spicy tuna mousse. The spicy tuna is fresh with just enough spice to leave a pleasantly warm feeling in your mouth. But of all the appetizers I sampled I would have to say that the Seared Salmon Tataki was the abso-

Prime KO

What to eat: Seared Salmon Tataki (appetizer), Shabu Shabu (main)
Dessert: Orange and Chocolate mousse
What to drink: Creme d' Lychee cocktail



lute best. The Tataki is a sushi roll made with crispy rice, daikon cucumber, mango and sun-dried tomatoes topped with the most amazing seared wild salmon. What makes this dish so unique is the blending of so many unconventional ingredients to create a harmonious dish that is sweet, salty, earthy and spicy all at the same time. My notes on this dish read "unparalleled in the kosher world" and it's true. I have never encountered anything even remotely as complex and delightful as Prime KO's Tataki. For the main course I was brought one of Prime KO's specials the Shabu Shabu, which is Japanese for swish swish. The dish consists of a boiling pot of dashi broth along with slices of raw beef, sliced carpaccio-style. The way to eat Shabu Shabu, is to take the beef and swish it around in the dashi until it is cooked, then dip the meat in one of the sauces. What I really loved about this dish is not only is it delicious, it's also fun. The dashi was light and savory and the meat was of an amazing quality. Once dipped in the sauces, the Shabu Shabu had that same multi layered complexity that Prime KO is so amazing at.

After a decadent desert consisting of an orange and chocolate mousse and a creme d' lychee cocktail (that tasted like drinking lychee juice, but packed one heck of an alcoholic kick) I thought about the concept of umami. Umami is about foods rich in components that increase palatability. Philosophically, it's about creating an essence of taste that boosts overall enjoyment. Prime KO excels at merging the scientific with the philosophic, utilizing ingredients and food pairings to create harmony within the entire flavor palate. While nothing at Prime KO stands out as overly spicy, sweet, bitter or sour, everything they serve is marvelously balanced, creating a truly unique dining experience. Prime KO will succeed in making anyone who eats there a true believer in umami

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

Ask Aviva

Single and not unhappy about it

Dear Aviva,

I'm a 25-year-old male living in the Jewish community. I've got my own apartment and my own circle of friends and everything's going great. But everywhere I go, I'm having an adult conversation with people, until they find out I'm single and then suddenly they pop the question. "So are you seeing anyone these days?"

I just got out of a relationship and I don't mind being single for a little while. I like the freedom that being single affords me; the ability to travel and see the world and do things that I enjoy doing, things I can't do once I get married. It seems that no one can understand. Why can't we act like adults about this whole dating thing and respect people's choices?

—Staying Single

Dear Staying Single,

Wow, I wish you could bottle your attitude and sell it to the rest of your cohorts! Seriously, it is so refreshing to hear that a single actually enjoys his life. Well, okay, actually it's not so surprising, given your Y chromosome. I've come across many single guys who love their stage. I just wish that we can spread this across the gender divide. I recall a very young single

woman who was desperately bawling, "I just want to get M-M-MARRIED!" This weighted plea is echoed in the hearts of too many single women out there. A miserable single does not magically transform into an exuberant married person. While setting people up and being marriage minded are important steps to making a match, I would like to propose something novel and counter-intuitive, so listen up you singles:

Live your life as if you will never (gasp!) get married. Why? Because you don't know what the future holds. Perhaps you really never will get married. At least with this formula you are sure to lead a life of rich experiences and personal goals. You will not be imprisoned by the idea of "Well, if I am married by then, then I can't do that, but if I'm not, then I would do that." Because if you have the attitude of, "Cool, yeah, I'll do that," then at least you did something that you wouldn't have had the opportunity to do if you were married. And, not that this should be your motivating thought, but maybe if you are out there living life, then you will actually meet your match while traveling cross-country with your friends. (And if you're worried that your match is waiting at home, you'll be back from your trip in 2 weeks anyway, right?)

Actually, one of the mate-selection theories would back up what I'm saying in your favor. There are varying schools of thought as to how we pick a mate. One that comes to mind here is the common GPA. This theory parallels how we are graded in school. One person might pull a 95 average in Algebra, but only an 80 in World History. So the GPA of that person would be 87.5. Another classmate may have a GPA of 87.5, but is allergic to Algebra, and is at the top of the class in World History. They average out to be the same. So in the dating world, instead of looking into our academic subjects, we grade each other on other subjects like Social Skills, Intelligence, Wealth, Humor, Looks, Accomplishments, Drive, Organizational Skills and Life Experience, to name a few. A man and woman would be a good match if they have a similar grade overall, but complement each other where the other is lacking. So if you are building your portfolio of experiences, you are likely boosting your overall GPA and have a better chance at selecting someone with a higher GPA as well.

But back to you, Staying Single. First, kudos on the launch. (That's the actual term in the literature for moving out of your parent's home. No joke.) Living with Mom and Pop may be

more convenient for singles, but it is the biggest hindrance one can have when moving on with his/her life. Adult children tend to be stuck in adolescence when they are in close proximity to a parent. So living elsewhere is great for cultivating independence and self-growth. What I recommend for you when you don't want to be bugged by inquirers is to have a canned line that you can say automatically to those who ask about your relationship status. Keep in mind that these people are usually well-meaning, so don't let your answer be biting. Something like, "Let's not go there," (with a smile) or "I'm not looking to date now." Regarding people "acting like adults...and respecting people's choices," — this is what an adult does. They try to help each other out. Generally, a Jewish single is looking to get married, so it seems like a logical step to find out more about a single. If it really bothers you, preempt the person and say something like, "I'm single, but I'm not looking now." And just keep yourself in check over time — your kind does tend to have a rash of commitment allergies.

— Aviva

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

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The Kosher Bookworm

Three legacies that live on

There are some personalities whose legacies pass on from generation to generation. Among those who are in this category are three luminaries whose yahrzeits occur within the next two weeks and whose works represent a substantial percentage of the Jewish theological literature in our time.

This coming Monday is the yahrzeit of Maimonides; Friday is that of the Baal HaTanya, and next Monday is that of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Just go into any Jewish bookstore and you will immediately note their literary presence in the categories of halachah, hashkafah and kabbalah. Each in his own time and in his respective fields of study proved to have a longevity that defies time itself. Many of their contemporaries may have been somewhat more dominant in their time, but over the long run, these three gentlemen were to have the last word.

Among the major interpreters of the Maimonides legacy today are two unique individuals whose works reflect their diverse interests and intellectual talents. Dr. Menachem Kellner's resume runs close to 13 pages and includes just about every major facet of Jewish intellectual discipline. His focus upon Maimonides is predominant and many of his works about Maimonides have a place of honor in my personal library. Kellner's daring take on Maimonides' position on mysticism, reflected most sharply in

two works, "Maimonides' Confrontation With Mysticism" [Littman Library 2006] and "Must A Jew Believe Anything?" [Littman Library, second edition, 2008], cut into Rambam's theological differences with his contemporaries as he challenged those aspects of Jewish religious thought that he deemed to be antithetical to Torah-centered Judaism. I cite these two works in particular, because to the average layperson, these works will represent a good introduction. Kellner, a professor of Jewish Thought at Haifa University, has a very engaging and user-friendly style rarely seen among academics today. He has the unique ability to parse the most complicated ideas and concepts to enable the reader to comprehend his point of view.

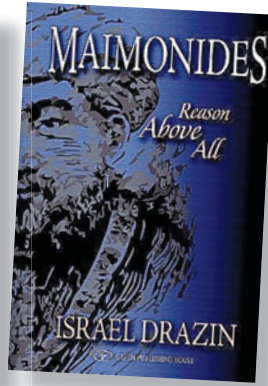
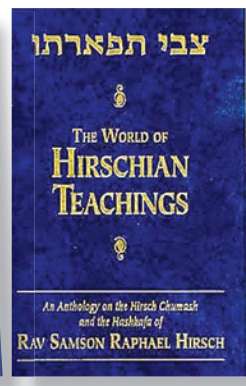
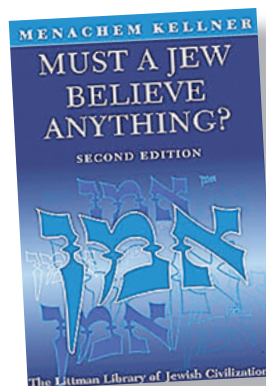
The other writer on Maimonides' legacy is a non-academic whose background and life's work would in and of itself be a cause for study and analysis. Rabbi Dr. Israel Drazin received his semicha from Yeshiva Ner Yisrael in Baltimore and has a PH.D., a J.D. and he is also a retired U.S. Army Brigadier General. Among his literary accomplishments are works that include the study of Aramaic, the translation of the Targum and a series of four books on Maimonides, the latest being "Maimonides: Reason Above All" [Gefen Publishing House 2009].

Both Drazin's style and approach is in marked contrast to Kellner's. However, both share in common the anti-mystical view that they apply to the Rambam's teachings. Drazin is straightforward in his writings, playing up his firm conviction that the Rambam had a strong rationalistic theological approach to Jewish religious belief that was in marked contrast to other Jewish thinkers of his day.

His writings are easy to read and blunt in



Alan Jay Gerber



both style and content. They are a refreshing challenge to other more staid and boring works of those who claim to cover the same subject matter from a fundamentalist point of view.

The 24th of Teves, Dec. 31, is the yahrzeit of the Baal HaTanya, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad Chasidism and the author of the Tanya and the Shulchan Aruch of the Rav, both major classics in kabbalah and halachah. This past year witnessed the publication of an expanded and revised edition of the classic "The Tanya: Its Story and History" by Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon. First published 20 years ago, this 112-page study has seen three revised editions. This work is a true labor of love for it not only deals with the biography of the Baal HaTanya, but it also serves as a biography of the Tanya itself. To those who appreciate and cherish the value of Tanya study, this book deserves their attention as well as the attention of all students who would cherish this high quality work in Jewish history.

Another, more academic treatment of the Baal HaTanya's spiritual legacy can be found in an essay in "Rabbinic and Lay Communal Authority" [Yeshiva University Press / Ktav 2006]. Titled, "Charismatic Leader, Charismatic Books: Rabbi Shneur Zalman's Tanya and His Leadership," Rabbi Nehemia Polen, the biographer

of the Aish Kodesh, brings together the Chasidic flavor of the Baal HaTanya with academic analysis. Twenty footnotes help to enhance the historic background and role that the Baal HaTanya and his literary works played in the European rabbinic leadership of his time.

The legacy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch lives on in the recently revised publication of his chumash commentary and in the continued study of his work implied by the high sales of his English translated works. Among those works was the republication of a tribute volume titled, "The World of Hirschian Teachings" [Feldheim 2008]. This book of essays goes into great detail highlighting Hirsch's life's work. Among those essays is one by Dr. Yitzchok Levine, formerly of Stevens Tech, whose essay, "Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and America: An Historical View" is perhaps the best analysis written to date on the impact that Hirsch has had upon American Judaism. While space does not permit a detailed analysis of this essay, let me state for the record that Dr. Levine has opened up a field of that should be followed up.

Rabbi Hirsch's dynamic leadership helped to foster the Modern Orthodox movement of today here in America, and Levine's essay, while not intending to do so, proves this.

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Thinking irrationally

Q & A with Dan Ariely

Dan Ariely is the author of "The Upside of Irrationality."

Michael Orbach: So what exactly do you study?

Dan Ariely: I study something called behavior economics, which is a mixture of psychology and economics. It's a study about how people make economic decisions, not how people play the stock market or buy homes, but all the small decisions we make in our life. All decisions have financial and economic consequences, and we look at those empirically. What do people do? If you just ask the question, you find that often people don't behave rationally. We try to create a catalog of things that influence why we pay so much for coffee and why we buy expensive vodka and how we fell into this financial crisis and why people get bonuses.

MO: So more often than not, people behave irrationally?

DA: Yes. There are many ways people behave irrationally. Sometimes it's good, sometimes not so good. It's very hard to think of the financial decision making every time you buy a cup of coffee you should ask yourself, "What am I giving up to buy this cup of coffee?" It's very hard to think about it. We go to the auto dealership and ask people what

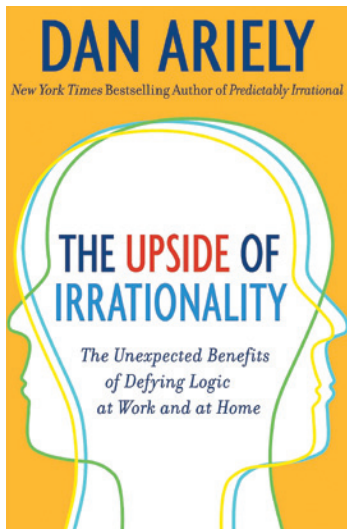
they will not be able to do if they buy this Toyota. No one gives us an answer. No one thinks of what they'll have to give up in the future: three weeks of vacation, 700 lattes and 15 books. That's really the trade you're making: what you're getting and what you're giving up. But it's very hard to think about

things this way, so people don't. Because money is so hard to think about we make shortcuts and one of the shortcuts we make is to compare similar things in relative ways.

Have you ever renovated your home? A contractor comes and asks about installing a triple-paned windows. The same people could be spending time in the supermarket looking at the price of tomatoes. Their whole life of counting tomatoes could not equal the amount they're spending on the windows, but since they're already spending the big amount, they don't think about it. The key is

that when we make decisions we don't consider how much money we're spending and how much pleasure we're getting. So when people make decisions it's very hard to compare the cost we have directly, instead people do these relative comparisons: you're sitting

Continued on page 8



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Opinion

Thinking Irrationally

Continued from page 7

in a restaurant and look at the wine list, you don't ask yourself "Well, the difference in price of these two bottles, I can buy four gallons of milk." We don't make comparisons even though they're substitutable. The problem is we created money, which is an artificial medium of exchange, it's very useful, but it allows us to make lots of mistakes. People sometimes say it's like comparing apples to oranges. Turns out, that it's really easy to compare. No one gets baffled by apples or oranges. The difficult decision is whether an apple is worth 50 cents, \$1.50 or \$2.00.

An example of good irrationality is charity. If you were perfectly rational you would not give money to charity that wouldn't directly benefit you. You would not support things across the world. Imagine if we lived in a place where people were only doing things calculated in their self-interest. It would be an awful place to live.

MO: Is thinking irrationally dangerous?

DA: It's kind of hard to answer that question. Have you ever texted while you're driving? Let's say you do it only five percent of the time, this five percent can kill you. How do you want to count it? Do you want to count it as five percent or an incredible stupidity that could kill you? I think that it's a lot, but you don't actually need a lot of irrationality to make stupid decisions and die. There was an analysis made years ago that speaks about how much percent of deaths were caused by bad decisions. It was about 10 percent. Today, it's slightly more than 50 percent, and this is taking into account obesity and smoking which we do to ourselves. The fact is, we create situations

in which small mistakes we make can be incredibly dangerous

MO: How would you apply your ideas to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

DA: We do an experiment with beer and vinegar. We give people beer and vinegar and plain beer. The people who don't know that one has vinegar like that beer better, and those that do know like the plain beer better. What is reality? Is vinegar better or worse? It depends. If you didn't know it was there, you would like it, if you did you would think it's terrible. It's about preconceptions and how they influence our experience, even if something is as basic as taste. Both Israelis and Palestinians have preconceptions; we have this incredible history through which we interpret everything we see. You can ask the question of whether we agree on the facts and I think the answer is basically, no. We have our own version and they have theirs. This is actually causing me to believe that we need a strong third-party to help us. The rift between the sides is so deep that everything going on in the middle is going to be interpreted in a different way and there is no way to see reality in the same way. Once you understand how deep our experience and history shape us, you would understand that you can't have two people from opposing life views come together and agree.

MO: Isn't that bleak?

DA: Is it? It suggests a direction for progression. Lots of behavior economics is bleak, we realize how limited and incapable we are, but it also proposes directions for moving forward.

Letter to the editor

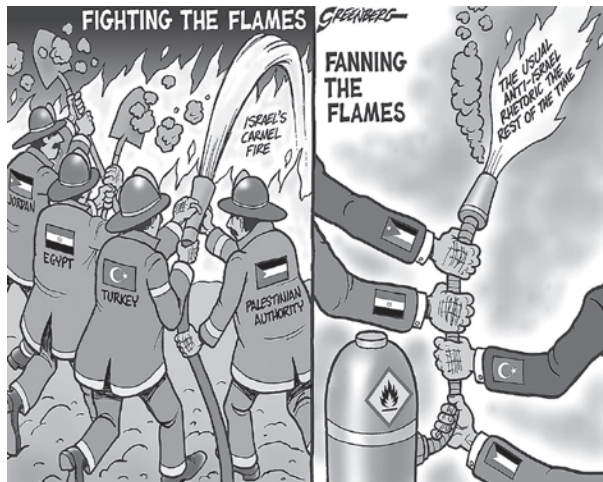
Kissinger and the Jews

To the Editor:

Two years ago we had a guest, Dr. Sholom Wald, who had written many learned papers and books as an official at the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development and a Fellow at the Jewish Policy Institute in Israel. He had a meeting with Henry Kissinger who had read his work. He told us that after the formal greetings Mr. Kissinger asked, "Dr. Wald, what do the Jews think of me?" After all that transpired when Kissinger was a "Court Jew," this was the first question he asked.

After the article in last week's New York Times I wonder, what do we think of him now?

Ricky Holder Adler
Cedarhurst



Parshat Shemot Looking like an Egyptian

From his first introduction to us, most of the Torah depicts Moshe as the quintessential leader par excellence. The ultimate Jewish figure, he continues to hold that enigmatic quality that Jewish mothers dream about for their children — "Maybe one day you can be as great as Moses."

And yet, there is one description of him that is so out of character, we wonder how it came to pass that he would be called such. After Moshe saves the daughters of Yitro from the shepherds who were mistreating them, they tell their father that an "Ish Mitzri," an Egyptian man, saved them from the shepherds (2:19).

Oddly enough, only two other people in the Torah are described as "Ish Mitzri." The first is Potiphar, Yosef's first Egyptian master (Bereshit 39:1). The second is the man Moshe killed earlier in our chapter, for striking the Hebrew slave (2:11). The term appears in Vayikra 24:10 as well, but most people identify the Ish Mitzri there (the father of the blasphemer) as the same Egyptian man that Moshe killed in 2:11.

Certainly Moshe has little, if anything, in common with Potiphar and the violent Egyptian. How could the Torah give him the same title as these other Egyptian men?

I do not yet have an explanation as to whether a comparison to Potiphar is valid, unless in his case, as in Moshe's, it refers to a member of Egyptian aristocracy.

Regardless, Rabbenu Bachaye records a beautiful interpretation that appears in a number of places in the Midrash. Yitro's daughters were thanking their lucky stars that Moshe was present at the well. It was his flight on account of killing the "Ish Mitzri" of 2:11 that brought him to Midian. In this light, they were saying that the circumstances that brought Moshe to be at that well to save them was on account of an Ish Mitzri whom Moshe killed. In this interpretation, the last three times the term appears in the Torah all refer to the same Ish Mitzri.

Of course, the simple explanation is that Moshe, who grew up in the palace of the king, was dressed like and spoke the language of an Egyptian.

I think that his being an Ish Mitzri here is just another challenge for him to overcome in the pursuit of his identity. Different Midrashim paint his time period in Midian to between 40 and 60 years, meaning he'll have much time to contemplate who he is and what his mission in life will ultimately be.

The story is told that when the Russian Tzar decreed the Jews could no longer wear "Jewish" clothing, many rabbis felt the need to oppose the legislation and to wear Jewish clothing at all costs. The Kotzker rebbe, on the other hand, was against such an approach, as he felt the only real "Jewish clothing" are the tallis and techelet, both of which can always be worn, either when praying, or underneath one's outer garments.

Moshe was dressed like a Mitzri, even though he was a Hebrew, says the Midrash.

For us, the question becomes one of how much our dressing like the "mitzri" affects who we are. I recall fondly one of the musser talks I heard from one of my high school rebbeim about how "the clothes make the man." I wonder if I remain a more conservative dresser, to this day, on account of that 20 minute monologue.

I still marvel over how many of us fall into the trap of "needing" to be up-to-date in terms of styles and accessories. While the Kotzker rebbe was right that "Jewish clothing" are a tallis and techelet, there is also a "Jewish dress code" that the Kotzker rebbe felt no need to refer to because he lived in a time when everyone dressed more conservatively.

The Jewish dress code of modesty is not just one of how much skin or form is exposed to onlookers. That element, one would hope, is more obvious. Modesty is also about how much attention we draw to ourselves on account of what we are wearing. There is nothing wrong with receiving a compliment from those we know, but if even those we don't know are turning heads and gaping at our chosen form of attire, it is time to reconsider our priorities and whether we are looking too much like a "mitzri."

Whether Yitro's daughters referred to the Egyptian Moshe killed or thought he himself was an Egyptian, it did not take long for Moshe to set the record straight and eventually become Moshe Rabbenu. We must take the bull by the horns, swallow our need to be a walking showcase for the latest design and designers and focus on promoting the Jewish dress code of modesty and furthering our own spiritual pursuits.

It's not just about what part of us people see. It is more about how people see us. And unlike Moshe who soon joined the family who may have viewed him otherwise, we don't always get to set the record straight.



Rabbi Avi Billet

THE JEWISH STAR

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Raise your voice, stare at the stars

Before we went to sleep on Monday night, the night of the winter solstice, my family and I all decided that we would wake up at 2 a.m. to witness the first lunar eclipse in some 372 years. We all made it except one bleary-eyed 8-year-old who, as I tried to stir her from her sleep, mumbled that she would catch it "next time." I don't envision being around in another 372 years, so she might have to wake herself.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BENCH



David Seidemann

I encouraged my children to get up to see the eclipse for a variety of reasons. It was, as they said, "cool." More importantly, you'll excuse the pun, but I wanted them to broaden their horizons. As much attention as they're giving their Jewish studies and the traditional math and science and English courses, I have always been mesmerized by astronomy — the stars and the universe — and I want my children to explore those vistas as well.

But there was another reason I wanted them to wake up in the middle of their dreams and gaze heavenward. I want them

to appreciate that life and its experiences do not end at our front door or even in their classrooms. I want them to know that there is a complete world that exists beyond their immediate grasp. There are worlds of knowledge, experience and people that seemingly don't affect them, but in reality, touch them all the same. If my children can get up to witness beauty millions of miles away, then they need to be just as interested in what's going on here on our block, our village, our country, and our world — a few blocks away or a few thousand miles away.

In that regard, the buzz around town has been the Rubashkin rally. The issue is not millions of miles away in some other distant galaxy. It is right here at our doorstep and we must get up, even in the middle of the night, and protest injustice and, I dare say, anti-Semitism. I will never condone illegal actions but that's not what this rally is about. It's about fairness and proportionality. It's about the equal application of the law and transparency. It's about preventing the truth from being eclipsed, from hiding behind another celestial body.

As much as we need to teach our children right from wrong, we need to teach them how to react to a wrong deed in a fair, just, equitable and proportional fashion. This apparently is a lesson not absorbed well enough by the sentencing judge.

How ironic that this gathering is being held some 22 years after the Lockerbie bomb-

ing took place. The animal who took 270 lives and ruined the lives of hundreds, if not thousands more, is free today after doctors submitted false documents about his physical condition. This murderer was set free while Pollard and Rubashkin languish.

Where is the compassion for them? Where is the concern for their health and for the health of their immediate families? Explain it to me. Explain why the Lockerbie Pan Am Bomber is free on false humanitarian concerns while Pollard and Rubashkin are serving what will be life-sentences?

If you are silent, you are complicit. If you don't show up at the rally and have no other commitment, you are complicit. If they take our taxes, they need to listen to our voices. But if we are silent, they can't be faulted for not listening. Mimes are rarely heard.

I've heard all the excuses. We are too busy. School, work, board meetings and shul functions. And then there are weddings, bar mitzvahs, sheva brochos, shiva homes and weekly parlor meetings. We are never home for our families. Guess what? Neither is Rubashkin or Pollard.

Raising a voice makes a difference. It makes a difference to Pollard. It makes a difference to Rubashkin even if no one in Washington listens. It makes a difference in your life and defines you as someone who won't go silently as another Jew is singled out for punishment. The voice you raise can impact generations.

Almost 70 years ago, a woman, her husband and their two sons were escaping Germany and the persecution of the Nazis. As they arrived at the checkpoint the woman's purse was searched. Every pocket was opened and every zipper was unzipped. By German law, the family was allowed the equivalent of \$5 to carry with them as they left the country. The Nazis found the equivalent of \$5.42 and refused to allow the family to leave. Forced labor and death were before them. For a measly 42 cents their lives would end. The sons would never marry, never have children, never emigrate, never learn in yeshiva and never see another eclipse on a moonlit night.


But that woman raised her voice that day in 1940 and screamed so loud that the German soldiers wanted no part of it. They figured a loud, crazy, out of control Jewish woman would become America's problem. So the Germans let the woman, her husband and their two sons leave Germany that September night.

And thank G-d they did. That woman with 42 cents too much in her pocket was my grandmother. With her was my grandfather, my father and my uncle.

So raise your voice at every opportunity. An entire world is counting on you.

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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territorial limits of the City of Glen Cove, New York. Unless such unpaid taxes with interest and additional fees are paid on or before the 21st day of December 2010, the tax lien on the property against which such taxes are levied will be advertised and on the 15th day of February 2011 thereafter sold. Any taxpayer interested may send a brief description of his property to the County Treasurer, and a statement of the amount of unpaid tax, if any, will be forwarded to him. The complete lists will be open for examination and

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Upon request, information can be made available in Braille, large print, audiotape or other alternative formats. For additional information, please call (516) 571-3715 (VOICE) or (516) 571-3723. JOHN A. MASTROMARINO Nassau County Treasurer #21461E

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READ THEM



That's life

Edited by Miriam L. Wallach

Dear That's Life,

I have never felt so wanted in my entire life. People waiting for me — even people I do not know, have never met before and probably will never meet again. But when you have a parking space in the Roosevelt Field Mall four days before the biggest gift giving day of the year, you may suddenly find yourself being the most wanted person on earth — with dozens of cars waiting for you to leave. I know nothing about real estate, but I do know that those are primo locations. Of course, for those of us who have tried jockey for a parking space on or around Central Avenue on Erev Shabbos without losing a bumper or an eye, this kind of occurrence is just another day for you and me in paradise. (80s reference — check it out.)

Ever drive around and then see someone whose arms are filled with shopping bags and so you follow him, like a stalker, to his car in order to get that parking spot before anyone else does? Yeah — me, too. Sometimes you have to go to do what you've got to do — it's a dog-eat-dog world. But as the stalker, you also do not want to freak out the person whose spot you are taking. Seem too impatient for them to load their bags or too ambitious about taking the spot, it will backfire. He may load his bags ever so slowly, let the car idle while he makes a phone call or simply just stall all in an effort to teach you a lesson. Then there are the times when you follow someone and after following him around the lot and waiting patiently as the bags are loaded, the driver turns around to you and says, "Oh, sorry — we're not leaving." That hurts. Time to go stalk someone else.

Picking up my daughter from Central Ave. on Friday afternoon, she called to tell me there was a parking space right outside the store to which I was heading. "Should I save it for you?" she asked. Reminiscent of that "Cheers" episode when Woody saves a spot

for Sam's Corvette by actually lying down in the street, I asked her how she planned on doing that. Well, she had not thought that part out and I told her that lying down on the asphalt or even standing on the curb, hovering over the spot, was both unnecessary and seriously dangerous.

Following people to their parking spots is culturally acceptable — at least I think so. It's not weird but rather what needs to be done. There should be some etiquette, however, surrounding such an act like passing a potential spot if another car is already waiting or making sure the car that presently occupies the space has fully vacated before trying to pull in. Clearly, the second rule seems like common sense but as has already been established in this column, not everyone has some.

Case in point: as I was pulling out of my spot on the upper deck of the mall, a stalker woman was positioning to pull in after me — but I mean right after me. I could not finish moving my car out because she had pulled her car so closely to mine that there was no way for me to complete the maneuver. Summoning my inner Israeli, I did what I needed to do: I picked my left hand up in front of the window and forcefully shoved all of my fingertips together in one swift motion. While I did not "tsk" at the same time, the hand motion implies a need by the other person to chill out and be patient. It is not a gentle motion but rather an abrupt and forceful one, and it gets the point across, assuming you and the other person are speaking the same language. In this case, we were not. By the look on her face I am pretty sure she thought I was using another hand gesture, one that is more universally known, to demonstrate my annoyance with her impatience, even though I really was not.

Oops.

MLW



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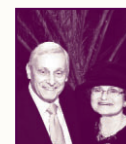
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