Jewish family violence same as is non-Jewish

CLEVELAND — The 35-minute video, "To Save A Life: Ending Domestic Violence in Jewish Families" is reviewed in the Cleveland Jewish News by its editor Cynthia Dettelbach and goes to the heart of the situation with the conclusion that Jewish families experience violence "of the same proportion as the rest of society."

In its opening moments the 35-minute video seems as if it is nothing more than a summation of Jewish family life at its best. There are wedding photos, a bar mitzvah and a bat mitzvah and families smiling at the camera as Jewish music is played in the background.

But then three abused Jewish women, Jae, Marcia and Miriam, appear to speak briefly of the battering and emotional abuse they suffered from their spouses. Then a rabbi says it's a myth that Jewish men are always more faithful to their wives, that Jewish men are not alcoholic and that Jewish families are "always harmonious."

The truth is that Jewish families experience violence "of the same proportions as the rest of society."

"When the police showed up we would all lie, says Jae, because she was too embarrassed to admit violence had happened to her, a nice, Jewish woman. "I did not have Jewish battered woman in my vocabulary," she admits.

Marcia's story is not too different except it emphasizes pecuniary problems. Describing herself as the only woman in Bel Air with a husband whose income was "in the seven figures" who had to have her shoes resoled and resoled until they couldn't be resoled anymore. Yet she related that she "played the game" for the sake of trying to keep her controlling husband happy and the marriage together.

Later in the video a classic example of denial is portrayed when Marcia says "he was never violent with me. Just three or four times he shoved me against the wall." She also describes his pressing his finger against her jugular.

Of the three Miriam arguably had the most abusive husband. She worked, but turned her paychecks over to him and in turn was given a scant food allowance to feed her family of four. At one point, her husband decided her ulcer medicine was too costly and that she would have to take the money to pay for it out of her food budget. When she protested that was not possible, he said, "that will give you the incentive to get better." "When I got sick," she adds, "I was always afraid he'd let me die."

When Miriam fled from her husband to her mother's house, he called an hour later to say he had strangled the dog.

Rabbis and a female psychotherapist on the video talk about the importance of reporting abuse. Some women feel that they are bringing dishonor to the community and even to God but the experts say it is a greater desecration to let the battering go on.

Then there is a role of the rabbi. The video asserts that "if you're a rabbi, give a sermon on abuse and people will come out of the woodwork" to tell you about their experiences.

Finally, say the experts, teshuvah or repentance on the part of the abuser cannot be accomplished by words alone. Behavioral changes have to take place as well.

"To Save A Life" is designed to be shown in shelters for abused individuals or in synagogues. The guide warns that the topic Continued on page NAT 5
Seven young athletes will represent the Indianapolis JCC at the 16th annual Jewish Community Centers Maccabi games in Detroit from Aug. 16-23, the largest games ever, with 20,000 people expected to attend.

This year's games are part of the celebration of Israel's 50th anniversary. Along with competing in sports, the athletes in Charlotte will demonstrate tzedakah (charity) and tikun olam (repairing the world) by participating in projects to help the community.

The JCC Maccabi Games are governed by partner organizations, the Maccabi World Union, Maccabi USA/Sports for Israel, Maccabi Canada and JCC Association of North America, the managing partner.

Fire damages Simon home

A fire damaged the Melvin Simon home Sunday, Aug. 2, but caused no injuries, Carmel fire officials said.

Authorities said the preliminary investigation indicated a candle may have ignited fabric-covered walls in a bedroom. They said Max Simon, 25, alerted his parents, Melvin and Brien, to the 8 a.m. fire. Melvin Simon is a co-owner of the Indiana Pacers of the NBA, a co-founder of the nation's largest chain of shopping malls and a generous contributor to Jewish and other charities.

The blaze was confined to a second-floor bedroom in the east wing, but there was heavy smoke and heat damage throughout the home, officials said.

Firefighters doused the blaze within 40 minutes, but crews remained on the scene until about 4 p.m.

Damage to the structure was estimated at $100,000, but no estimate was available on damage to the contents. The total damage estimate could go much higher, once damage to the contents is established, authorities indicated.
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More Jewish giggles

Off the couch
Meyer has been going to the same shrink for 15 years. Finally the doctor tells him the analysis is finished; he’s resolved his problems or learned how to confront them, so he needn’t return.

Meyer is terrified at the loss of connection. “I depend on you. I can’t just quit,” he says.

The shrink gives Meyer his home phone number and tells him to call if he really must.

Nearly a month passes, when early one Sunday, the doctor gets a call from Meyer.

He tells the doctor, “I woke up this morning from a nightmare — dreaming you were my mother.”

“Then what?” the analyst says.

“I analyzed the dream like you taught me.”

“So, you’re OK?”

Well, I couldn’t get back to sleep, so I went downstairs and had some breakfast.”

“What did you have?”

“Just coffee.”

“You CALL THAT A BREAKFAST?”

Nachas and Vey of parent­hood
Two lady friends leave their teenagers at home with the husbands for a few days and check into a resort hotel. One of the women invites her friend to have a pre-dinner martini in the bar.

“No, I never drink,” says the friend.

“Never?”

“Look — in front of the children, it’s not right to drink. Away from them, who needs to?”

Lesson for the teacher
Aaron and Bernie are in religious school together. The rabbi is explaining the laws of kashrut with all sorts of detailed exegesis and commentary. Bernie has fallen asleep. The rabbi sees this and tells Aaron — “Wake Bernie up.”

“Why should I be the one to wake him?” Aaron says.

“You put him to sleep.”

You can run, but...
An elderly Jewish couple are sitting together on an airplane flying to the Far East. Over the public address system, the Captain announces: “Ladies and Gentlemen, I am afraid I have some very bad news. Our engines have ceased functioning, and this plane will be going down momentarily. Luckily, I see an island below us that should be able to accommodate our landing. Unluckily, this island appears to be uncharted; I am unable to find it on our maps. So the odds are that we will never be rescued and will have to live on the island for a very long time, if not for the rest of our lives.”

The husband turns to his Continued on next page

Siegell, Fielder families united
Karen Ellen Siegel of Indianapolis and Brandon Eric Fielder of Greenfield were wed on April 26 at the Ritz Charles.

The bride is the daughter of Rosie and Don Siegel and granddaughter of Pauline Siegel, all of Carmel.

The groom is the son of Bobbie and Jerry Fielder of Greenfield and grandson of Inez Fielder of Indianapolis.

The new Mrs. Fielder is a graduate of Indiana University who works for Banc One Financial as a loan originator. The groom is a 1991 graduate of AAS-ITT Technical Institute who works as a technician for Ameritech.

The newlyweds planned a honeymoon in Hawaii, and planned to make their home in Indianapolis.

Karen Ellen Siegel of Indianapolis and Brandon Eric Fielder of Greenfield were wed on April 26 at the Ritz Charles.
Exhibit to combine Shoah art, history

BLOOMINGTON — An event combining art and history Aug. 25 through Sept. 25 will help educate visitors to the School of Fine Arts Gallery at Indiana University about the Holocaust.

The event will include photographs by Jeffrey A. Wolin of Holocaust survivors. The pictures are accompanied by stories of the experiences of the survivors, including several from the Indianapolis area.

There will also be a show of works created by artists who were interned in the concentration camps. That show is titled "The Perished and the Saved: Four Holocaust Artists from the Hanus and Kirsten Grosz Collection."

There will also be lectures in connection with the exhibit, including a gallery talk at noon Friday, Sept. 25 by Mike Vogel of Indianapolis, a survivor of Auschwitz and other camps. Wolin will speak at noon Aug. 27.

Friday, Sept. 11 about his photo portraits.

Milton S. Katz, chair of the liberal arts department at the Kansas City Art Institute, will lecture at 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 17, about conserving the art of the Holocaust.

Rebecca Lencheck to be bat mitzvah

Rebecca Lencheck, daughter of Lori and Charles Lencheck, will become bat mitzvah in a service at Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation Saturday, Aug. 15.

Humor

Continued from prev. page

Charlie

Continued from page 20

Out of Sight provided me with many dilemmas, and not happy ones, either. So another supposed audience pleaser upset my disposition. Using the Epstein barometer, the audience agreed with me completely, having fled the theater before the end credits began. Because of this film's success I have to assume that the barometer was in error with other audiences.

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Zelmar Sax, 80, co-founded Yiddish Club

Zelmar Sax, 80, co-founder of the Yiddish Language Club at the Jewish Community Center, died Friday, July 31. Mr. Sax was retired vice president of finance for Cloverleaf Development Co.

A Navy veteran of World War II, Mr. Sax was a member of the Jewish War Veterans and of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck and its Men's Club. He was a former member of the board of directors of the congregation and was a member of the Zionist Organization of America and of B'nai B'rith Lodge #58. He was a docent at The Children's Museum.

Mr. Sax was a 1940 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh.

He was the widower of Gertrude Hiedovitz Sax. Survivors include two sons, Harvey D. and Steven R. Sax; a daughter, Nancy J. Daniel Sax and six grandchildren.

Services were Monday, Aug. 3, at Aaron-Ruben-Nelson Meridian Hills Mortuary, Rabbi Dennis and Sandy Sasso officiating. Burial was in Beth-El Zedeck Cemetery North. Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society or Congregation Beth-El Zedeck.

Constance B. Goldblatt, 83, was IHC member

Constance Berg Goldblatt, 83, of Franklin, a member of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, died Friday, July 31.

Mrs. Goldblatt was a homemaker most of her life. In her youth she worked in a potato chip factory after coming out of high school. She is survived by her husband, Meyer Goldblatt; sons, Steven, Michael and Irvin Goldblatt; a daughter, Arlene Goldblatt; brother, William Berg, and two grandchildren.

Services were Sunday at Aaron-Ruben-Nelson Mortuary, Rabbi Geoffrey Dennis officiating. Burial was at Indianapolis Hebrew Cemetery South. Memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Association.

Constance Goldblatt was a member of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation. She was also a member of the Jewish War Veterans, Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, and its Men's Club.

Samuel Lichtman, 95, owned repair shop

Samuel Lichtman, 95, of Richmond, who was an owner/operator of Sam's Auto Repair, died Friday, July 31.

Mr. Lichtman was born May 1, 1903, in Russia. He was a member of Beth Boruk Temple in Richmond and the Richmond Senior Center.

Survivors include his wife, Florence; a daughter, Suzanne Lichtman of Indianapolis; a son, Irv Lichtman of Houston, Texas; and four grandchildren.

The service was at graveside Tuesday, July 28, at Beth Abraham Cemetery in Kettering, Ohio, Rabbi Samuel Press officiating. A memorial service will be held at Beth Boruk Temple.

Marker & Heller Funeral Home, Dayton, Ohio, handled arrangements.

Memorial gifts may be made to Reid Hospital or Beth Boruk Temple.

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Critic's Corner

‘Out of Sight’ well-hyped

By CHARLES EPSTEIN

Once again I gobbled up the hype and “astonishing” reviews for a new film called Out of Sight. Starring the very popular actor George Clooney, it is no wonder this movie is doing so well. But I found this film marginal at best.

What was extremely disappointing was the way this piece was photographed and, especially, edited. If this story were told up front, chronologically, the viewer could have been caught up in a terrific film. But no, we had to get fancy by using flashbacks, flashups, and having dreams turn into reality. One wearies of all this unnecessary time movement which makes a straight tale confusing. I do not understand why this method of presentation was selected over having the time elements in order.

This film was adapted from an Elmore Leonard novel. It lauds a bank robber, George Clooney, making him a hero. To me he is still an obnoxious thief who takes other people’s money, a definite crime with total disregard for the wage earner who slaved so hard. Taking someone’s money that does not belong to him does not make him a hero and someone to envy. No sir, not to me.

Jennifer Lopez is an accomplished federal marshall who falls in love with her beautiful hunk of a captive. Now what does that make her? Is she one to be trusted? You have to look hard to find anyone who has good morals in this film. So whom do you root for, besides the editor to straighten the motion picture out?

The supporting cast is outstanding, beginning with balding Albert Brooks who at first was unrecognizable. Later with carpet on his head he looked the Albert Brooks of old. He portrayed quite an interesting character with unsuspected loyalty. Dennis Farina, Don Cheadle, and Ving Rhames added greatly to the violence paired with strong language.

But something runs hollow throughout this movie, which gives the viewer an eerie sensation. Love and sex control a federal marshall’s logic which makes for questionable actions from law enforcement officers. Her oath of service to the public was made of cotton candy and body talc. Should she be trusted, and possess a

Continued on page 5

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Jewish Post & Opinion

Not a proper choice

Almost no attention has been paid to the courageous remarks by Rabbi Norman Lamm calling for a resolution to the problem of recognition of conversions in Israel by Reform and Conservative Rabbis. While not advocating that these conversions be recognized directly, he spoke out clearly for action by either side, presumably, but what can be interpreted also as calling on the Orthodox in Israel to make possible under a halachic interpretation a move that would solve the situation.

Speaking in the keynote address at a dinner in New York the president of Yeshiva University asked: “do we want the wholeness of the Torah or do we want the unity of our people? To force us to choose between halacha and Ahavat Yisrael is cruel and inhuman. It is a choiceless choice. We must hold on to both elements for dear life. Utter Jewish unity is a part of Torah: it’s a requirement and a demand of the Torah.”

Now that can be interpreted either way — but the fundamental reasoning is that a solution to the problem must be found — in fact, one is ordered.

Those who read the center spread in our issue of two weeks ago by Rabbi Lamm learned again of the depth of his scholarship and his background of forging at his institution an arrangement which would accept diverse views without causing a confrontation among supporters of Yeshiva U., although in some quarters he was challenged for sacrificing some alleged principles of Orthodoxy.

Leadership means taking courageous stands, and confronting certain elements who, while not reactionary, do not comprehend that certain changes do not infringe on Orthodox standards.

The news release from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America about the speech relates as follows:

Speaking about pluralism and the barriers to Jewish unity in the keynote address delivered before a crowd of some 750 people, Dr. Lamm asked: “Do we want the wholeness of the Torah or do we want the unity of our people? To force us to choose between halacha and Ahavat Yisrael is cruel and inhuman. It is a choiceless choice. We must hold on to both elements for dear life. Utter Jewish unity is a part of Torah: it’s a requirement and a demand of the Torah.”

This message calls for the attention of the Jewish world and, if we may be forgiven, the Orthodox element of that world.

Max Fisher at 90

Much attention is being paid in Cleveland to the 90th birthday of Max Fisher and somewhere in the national Jewish community that high point in his career should be celebrated, for his leadership in every phase of Jewish activity nationally and worldwide deserves rewarding and a special birthday like this provides just such an opportunity.

That he’s probably is the largest contributor to Jewish causes when calculated over the years is the least of reasons for the Jewish community nationally to reward him in some kind of fitting manner. Brandeis University recently tendered him an honorary degree

Editor’s Chair

We’ve just received a telephone call from a reader to advise us that Rabbi Howard Siegel, who composed our center spread in last week’s issue, serves Temple Brit Shalom in Houston and not in Dallas as we noted. Sorry we didn’t take down our informant’s name, but thanks.

The letter in this week’s issue from Joe Stern of Congregation Beth Shalom in Clearwater, FL, reminds us of a similar but more involved program for bar and bat mitzvah candidates at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Tampa. We’re sorry to have forgotten the rabbi’s name at the time, but some of our readers will recall that he and his wife were killed in an automobile accident in the west maybe ten or so years ago.

At the Conservative congregation the upcoming bar and bat mitzvah candidates took on community projects of various kinds and at the service itself these were elaborated on by the president of the congregation. We attended one of them and were impressed.

We wrote it up at the time but no other congregation to our knowledge has adopted this project and it well could be that not even Rodeph Shalom has continued with it.

While referring to aspects of services, we’ve attended another on Sabbath morning where the rabbi opens up a discussion from the pulpit to the congregation as a whole and then involves

(incidentally, as The P-O recommended).

He served as president of the Council of Jewish Federations, an honor and activity that ranks among the top positions in American Jewish life, and is known for contributing $1M. annually to the Detroit federation campaign.

If you attend the annual conventions of the Council of Jewish Federations going back for year after year, Max will be found on the dais, participating actively in the heavy proceedings that classify the GA as one of the most important annual meetings of the American Jewish community.

And one personal remark, which we haven’t seen reported in his column of affairs that involve the kind of associations that he has. We all wish him a speedy and full recovery.

Mandela asks rabbi’s blessing

JOHANNESBURG — Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris was asked by President Mandela to give a blessing to him and his new wife, Graca Machel, at a meeting of religious leaders in Cape Town. Mr. Mandela took Rabbi Harris aside and said, “Cyril, I am getting married on July 18 and would like you to give us a blessing.”

Rabbi Harris gave the priestly blessing to the couple the day before their wedding. “I wished them deep contentment for years and years ahead,” he said.

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6. Don’t advertise. Forget that you have competition trying to attract your customers away from you.
7. Don’t advertise. Tell yourself it costs too much to advertise and that you don’t get enough out of it.
8. Don’t advertise. Overlook the fact that advertising is an investment in selling — not an expense.
9. Don’t advertise. Be sure not provide an adequate advertising budget for your business.
10. Don’t advertise. Forget that you have to keep reminding your established customers that you appreciate their business.

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Life after death concept vital to Reform Judaism

NEW YORK — Reform Jews were told that they face a spiritual crisis because they have abandoned belief in the after-life by Rabbi Marc Gelman in the summer issue of Reform Judaism magazine.

The senior rabbi of Temple Beth Torah, Melville, N.Y. said that what spiritually enlightened Jews need now is to believe in life after death and to return to traditional Jewish concepts. “Many of us have forgotten that the afterlife is a fundamental tenet in Judaism. No major Jewish movement has ever denied belief in life after death, pointing out that the belief in life after death “is the only belief shared by all the religions in the world.”

He made his point by relating an incident at the funeral of Rabbi Joe Glaser, former executive vice president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. “Although six eulogies were given “the only speaker who said that Joe’s soul is now in the world to come was a Methodist minister.”

Pursuing his theme, Rabbi Gellman said that Reform Jews have closed themselves off from the most assuring of all Jewish beliefs “because most of us have absorbed the bias of the secular culture against anything transcendent.”

He said that the end result is a diminishing of Reform Jews as individuals and Reform Judaism as a movement. “We are deprived of a belief in an ultimate judgement of the wicked, thereby wilting our faith in God. And in the end we transform our great faith into a politicized ethnic group with a few holidays thrown in for decoration.”

Continuing Gellman said that although Reform Judaism has rejected the notion of tehiyat hameitim, resurrection of the dead, the belief in the soul’s immortality has always been a cornerstone of the faith. Yet “when was the last sermon you heard about life after death?” he asks.

Belief in olam habah, the world to come, and working for tikkun olam, repair of the world, are not in conflict as some today have argued, he stated. “There is a fear today in the Reform movement particularly, that the revival of Jewish spirituality will signal the death knell for Jewish social activism.” But the two

Tzedakah of a kind only a Jew might do

NEW YORK — The headline reads “NY businessman donates ‘Viagra for the Poor’ and then relates that Alan “Ace” Greenberg has created a $1 million fund to make the sexual potency wonder drug Viagra available to the poor.

The report is by J.J. Goldberg, who describes Greenberg as chairman of the investment bank Bear Stearns and Co. and a senior leader in the United Jewish Appeal and other Jewish causes.

Greenberg, 70, is quoted as saying, “Our goal is to improve one very important aspect of the quality of life for older people who should not be denied the drug because they cannot afford it.”

Goldberg then adds that Greenberg “is a legend on Wall Street for his bitterness and independence. A multi-million-dollar annual giver to Jewish causes, he is known for his office memos remind employees to reuse paper clips, etc.

Angel of Mostar is jailed month

LONDON — Jack Becker flew to Serbia to plead for the release of his daughter, imprisoned rescue worker Sally Becker who is serving a 30-day sentence. Nicknamed “the angel of Mostar” for her rescue work in the war-torn region, she had travelled to Albania to deliver medical supplies but had crossed into Serbia without a visa.

Israeli team to aid China

TEL AVIV — An Israeli advisory team is scheduled to aid China in its efforts to transfer water to arid areas. Water Commissioner Meir Ben Meir will head the team while a panel of Chinese experts will visit Israel to study methods already in operation.

There’s a far-away place where Jewish kids need your help...

it’s called Indiana.

Here, in America’s heartland, the award-winning Hasten Hebrew Academy of Indianapolis has been delivering Judaic values and academic excellence since 1971. Today, with an enrollment of 270 students (pre-school thru Gr. 8), it faces the biggest challenge in its history:

One of America’s largest charitable foundations, the Lilly Endowment, has agreed to provide $485,000 towards a $2 million renovation of the school’s aging facility. If a matching sum can be raised by the school by October, 1998.

To date, only $322,000 has been raised. If the Academy does not come up with the balance, the grant will be lost and the building project scrapped!

The renovations are desperately needed to prepare the Academy for the educational challenges of the 21st century. Your help is urgently needed in order to reach the goal before time runs out. Can you help us preserve Torah study and Jewish life here in middle America?

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Obituaries

Henry L. Zucker dies, of Cleveland Federation

CLEVELAND — Henry L. Zucker, who led the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland as associate director in 1946 and two years later became executive director and later executive vice president.

Following World War II he became a consultant for the JDC and surveyed and helped develop viable Jewish communal life of survivors of the Holocaust in 10 European countries.

After retiring from the Federation he joined the International Survey of Operations for the JDC.

He was widely honored. In 1978 he was one of two men chosen by United Way of America to receive the Outstanding Agency Professional Award and was the first professional to receive the federation's Charles Eisenman Award which is usually reserved for volunteers. Among his numerous other awards was the Community Service Award from Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Cleveland.

Harold Elberg, noted attorney

CLAYTON, Mo. — Harold I. Elbert, former alderman of the City of St. Louis, is being mourned. An attorney, he practiced his profession for 54 years and also taught at St. Louis University School of Law. He was instrumental in the enactment of the City of St. Louis Civil Rights Ordinance.

Harold Meltzer, a tennis star

NAPLES, Fla. — Harold Meltzer, nationally ranked senior tennis player, died at age 89. He was a member of the U.S. Senior Davis Cup Team.

He was a past president of Temple Emunah of Englewood, N.J., and was president of the Englewood United Jewish Appeal.

Abe Serenkin of Flushing

FLUSHING, N.Y. — Abraham Serenkin, former president of Flushing Jewish Center, is being mourned.

Jews live longer, but fewer births

The United Way honored him in 1993 with the Heart of Gold Volunteer Award. And the JUF honored him with a plaque on the fact that "I never smoked, never drank, have lived a normal life, worked hard, and take inventory of myself every day."

He was honored also by United Way with its Heart of Gold Volunteer Award in 1993.

Edward Singer dies, was widely mourned

CHICAGO — Edward Singer, a board member of the Jewish United Fund where he had been active for more than 75 years, died at the age of 98.

The United Way honored him in 1993 with the Heart of Gold Volunteer Award, and the JUF honored him with a plaque on his 90th birthday. On that occasion he attributed his long life to the fact that "I never smoked, never drank, have lived a normal life, worked hard, and take inventory of myself every day."

Rabbi Morris Hershman brought honor to city

JOLIET, Ill. — Rabbi Morris M. Hershman, 81, who represented Joliet in its successful bid to become Look Magazine's all-America city, died of cancer at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

A leader in the religious, educational and business sectors of the community, he served Joliet Jewish Congregation for 55 years. Because he was instrumental in the expansion of many health care services, Silver Cross Hospital honored him. The hospital now bears his name. St. Francis University and Lewis University conferred honorary degrees on him.

He is survived by his wife, Goldie, his son and daughter and two grand-children.

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Gays, lesbians acceptance is only a matter of time

LOS ANGELES — The view that it's "only a matter of time before the Jewish Theological Seminary ordains gay and lesbian rabbis" was expressed by AIDS activist and San Diego lawyer David Rephun at a panel discussion on Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist views on homosexuality and bisexuality at University Synagogue here.

Sponsored by Beth Chayim Chadashim the event was the second in a six-part series celebrating BCC's 25th anniversary as the world's oldest synagogue serving the gay, lesbian and bisexual Jewish community.

Representing the Conservative movement was Rabbi Elliot Dorf of the University of Judaism who characterized his position on homosexuality as more liberal than his movement's. He described dilemmas he faced in applying Conservative laws that go against his personal beliefs. The article in the Jewish Journal here by Ruth Stroud noted that the Conservative movement has passed resolutions that prohibit discrimination against homosexuals but hasn't sanctioned commitment ceremonies and doesn't permit openly gay men and lesbians to enter rabbinical school or to be ordained.

He said that he didn't want to know if someone was gay or lesbian "because I didn't want to enforce the policy." Still there is hope for change in the future, he added. The Torah only spoke of homosexual relations that were oppressive, cult-based or licentious, not about long-term committed relationships between people of the same sex. He estimated that about 14 or 15 of the 400 U.S. Conservative rabbis have performed commitment ceremonies, which aren't recognized by law. Asked from the audience if he would perform one, he looked surprised but said, "I haven't been asked, but I don't see why not." In a later conversation with Stroud he added that he has some hesitation about performing them without the backing of his community.

Rabbi Leila Gil Berner, spiritual leader of Congregation Bet Haverim in Atlanta which describes itself as a Reconstructionist synagogue formed for lesbians and gay men and "embracing all Jews and loved ones" and is now about 30 percent heterosexual said "I think we're one of the few temples where bisexuals, lesbians and gays were welcoming the straight folks." The Reconstruction movement was one of the first to admit lesbians and gay men into its rabbinical college. In 1992 it formed its support for full acceptance of gays and lesbians as rabbis, lay leaders and parents and sanctioned same-sex marriage.

Rabbi Allen Frehling, senior rabbi of University Synagogue who represented the Reform point of view pointed out that like Reconstructionism has accepted homosexuals into the rabbinical and cantorial schools, and last year the Central Conference of American Rabbis endorsed the civil right.

He expressed the hope that he would live long enough that congregations such as BBC might not need to exist because gays and lesbians would find a home in mainstream synagogues as his own.

Berner, however, has a different view. She politely disagreed pointing out that there is a specific gay, lesbian and bisexual culture that the straight community doesn't recognize but which is worth preserving. "We have a lot in common with the heterosexual Jewish American community, but there are specific elements of gay and lesbian culture, music, liturgy and poetry that are distinct." Moderator Mark Levine said that Orthodox rabbis he had approached to appear on the program had declined.

Rephun pointed out that even in Orthodox communities there is change.

"We have a lot in common with the heterosexual Jewish American community, but there are specific elements of gay and lesbian culture, music, liturgy and poetry that are distinct," she said. She pointed out that despite the fact that there are individual Orthodox rabbis who are sympathetic to the plight of gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, Orthodoxy maintains that it's wrong to be or act homosexual.

Continuing she referred to the 11th-century scholar Rashi who interpreted the passage saying "anal intercourse is wrong but what about being homosexual?" But he maintained that it did not exist as a concept until the 19th century, so those who say that the Torah forbids it must have some other agenda." She added that there are ordinations for Orthodox gay and lesbian Jews in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, New York and here in Los Angeles. Such developments spell progress, she said — slow, to be sure, but progress nonetheless.
The film does exploit some of the current popular interest in Kabbalah, but with a refreshing sense of reverence for Jewish tradition that one rarely finds in movies and even in the rhetoric of some of the gurus of pop Kabbalah. There is an assertion here, and an authentic one, that Hasidim and other Jewish mystics do not regard Kabbalah as a spiritual energy to be tapped, but as a method for better utilizing the mitzvot or commandments to assist the Divine in the process of cosmic redemption.

There are two themes that emerge from this film that I find particularly intriguing and insightful. The first is the need to make a distinction between mathematics and numerology.

Max’s distinguished professor, Sol Robeson (nicely played by Mark Margolis) warns him that as soon as he disregards scientific rigor, he becomes a numerologist and not a mathematician. Max seems to obsess over the number “216,” both because his computer, in a possible moment of “near consciousness,” printed out 216 numbers as a key to the stock market, and because some Hasidim whom he meets tells him that that number is the key to the Infamous Name, a knowledge and pronouncement which could bring (induce?) the messianic era sooner. His professor warns him that if a particular number becomes the focus or mantra for any reason, whether out of computer patterns or out of religious traditions, then it becomes the object of obsession (or meditation?) and not of investigation. Anonofsky shows a certain reverence by utilizing a number which is not particularly significant in Kabbalah for the Name of God. Yet lurking behind Max’s discovery of the number and mathematics, he points effectively to the question of mathematics versus numerology, but he does not sufficiently state and develop these distinctions and the fallacies of simplistic parallels and comparisons. That is too bad. But I do give him much credit for even stating the problem, which most exploiters of New Age preoccupations either will not do or cannot.

The second insightful and intriguing theme here is that of purity. This is a word which is rarely used nowadays, particularly in film, yet it remains an important word in Judaism. If one is not worthy, not pure, then one is not worthy of revelation. Yet Max reminds them, “I’ve got it. It’s not for you. Rabbi, I was chosen.”

Life after death

Continued from page NAT 3

must work together, fixing the world demands fixing our souls, and vice versa. Some things “are true at the edge of the grave that do not seem to be true anywhere else,” he said he has learned. And when Gellman’s friend and congregant cried out at the tombstone of his wife, Thelma, “Honey, I am coming. I will be with you soon,” Harry was speaking the truth, said Gellman.

“The meaning of life as given to us by Judaism is holy life in this world, followed by eternal life in the world to come,” Gellman concludes. “I choose to accept this meaning. And I choose Harry at the edge of Thelma’s grave.”

Violence

Continued from page NAT 1

may provoke strong emotions among the members of the audience and that information on community resources to help the abused must be made readily available. I believe that domestic abuse happens because society allows it to happen,” writes J. Elaine Weiss. “I believe that it will end when we all send a resonant message to abusers that their actions will not be tolerated. And I believe that we will be moved to send this message when we look into the faces of the abused women and realize that their faces are our own, if not now, when?”
Me no paleface or redman

By STEVE KRAMER

Is Israel's government unrealistic about its security?

Doesn't the whole world recognize that Israel is a legitimate state that deserves peace?

Not exactly.

Following on the heels of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Indonesian President Suharto proclaimed: "The IMF consists of a lot of Jews, and that's how Israel influences the IMF." (Business Week, June 1, 1998)

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is still a potent force in the Muslim world, as well as in the less likely region of Israelis and Jews are perceived as a devious group intent on conquering the world through their money and influence. The Islamic strategy and results in the need for protection, like the "Islamic Bomb," just parallels Arab strategy and results in the need for protection, like the "Islamic Bomb," just parallels Arab strategy and results in the need for protection. The Israelis are afraid of the Jews, of course. The Jews are not afraid of the Israelis. The Palestinians have not been on the land since time immemorial, and the Jews are not hordes of interlopers, with no connection to the land. Nor are Israelis trying to transfer or ethnically cleanse the Palestinians, which is exactly what happened to the North American Indians.

What Israel needs to be sure of is that lands where Israeli soldiers leave their stations will not become a staging base for another Arab war against Israel. Of course, there are no guarantees in any negotiations, but at least each side has to have a basic feeling that the other is negotiating in good faith.

A fundamental stumbling block to Israeli redeploying from 9 percent to 13 percent to 15 percent of territory beyond the 1949 Armistice Line is that the current Israeli government has not made it appear that we are redeploying, even if some of the land is given up. The Palestinians are not asking for the land, only for the recognition of their right to self-determination. Israel's government has not made it appear that the Palestinians are being treated fairly or that there is a fair chance of a lasting peace.

In the end, Israel is asking the world to recognize its inherent right to self-determination, but the world is not interested in recognizing that right. Israel is asking the world to recognize that it is a legitimate state, but the world is not interested in recognizing that fact.

So the majority of Israelis feel that it is by right in demanding that the Palestinians reject the fundamental clauses of the Oslo Accords before our soldiers withdraw from more of the territories than the 27 percent already given up. A minority of Israelis feel that we should give up much more based on good faith.

I don't want to be a settler or an Indian. I'm willing to live by the same rules as everyone else and to pay taxes. I don't want to see the Palestinian refugees return to the land they were driven from in 1948. I want to see a realistic and just solution to the Palestinian problem.

If we don't work together, there is no chance of a lasting peace. It is time to stop fighting and start talking.
L'dor V'dor: Generations

Hometown politics

By SUSAN RUBIN WEINTROB

A week or so ago, I gathered items for a garage sale. I detest having these sales. Putting a 25 cent sticker on a toy that my children enjoyed or on a book that taught me something is actually painful.

So why do it, you ask? The garage sale forced me to realize what I enjoyed or perhaps I am comfortable with this type of life. We had once lived in communities that excluded Jews as leaders. So, you might ask, are Muncie's leaders the same? And if they aren't, what is it that makes this small town life different from the big city life?

I grew up in a small town and so perhaps I am comfortable with this type of life. We have idyllic concepts of what a small town brings — the white picket fence that seems to envelop the community. "We are small," some people say, "that we just have to include everyone." We picture carry-in dinners, Fourth of July fireworks by the high school and everyone coming together in times of trouble.

But I am not the only one that this small town community excludes. There are intermarried couples who thought they would be welcomed at a liberal congregation but were criticized for celebrating Christmas or taking their children to services at a church. If it is acceptable for Jews and Christians to belong to a Reform congregation, why isn't it acceptable for the so-called Jewish child to have "both" in her life? This is a confusing message that is being sent.

Others excluded are those who are totally assimilated, yet call themselves Jewish. The link is tenuous. Unfortunately, they have never received a phone call or an invitation from the congregational leaders. I have heard too often, "The Jews know where to find us." Perhaps not.

I have seen those who were looking for spirituality and found nasty board meetings and insensitive leaders who wanted little more than power. They could have been seekers of control within any community. — one rarely heard anything that was Jewish, certainly little that was sacred.

I remember talking with a friend who is a Protestant minister. "I stopped going to board meetings," he confided to me. "They just weren't Christian." He looked embarrassed. "I can understand how you wouldn't know what I mean."

I knew exactly what he meant. I have heard these comments regarding many boards — religious, educational or business. The urge for power and control overwhelms much else, including the reasons the organization was founded in the first place.

Many individuals with whom I speak assume that small town living excludes politics and dishonesty. "You wouldn't know anything about this," I have been told so often.

It was in many ways my introduction to the political arena that motivated me to look for a new congregation, yet ironically, the history of Judaism, like most religions, includes terrible conflicts that have caused splits and even disasters. What has kept Judaism together is the incredible will of its people to remain connected to the Torah and the way of life it demands. The connection was never to its politics.

Muncie is simply a microcosm of that tears elsewhere. When I see elaborate political devices to split Jews — a separate Israeli fund drive for Reform Judaism, misleading statements in the press, a mission to destroy democratically elected Israeli political leaders — I wonder where it will all lead.

When we realize that politics drives many people away, we need to control that urge for power which destroys the camaraderie that congregational life should strive for, if not always achieve. Complicity is not what is called for at this time.

During my early years on the board of directors at Muncie's congregation, I was unaware that some community leaders so wanted to keep the control in their own hands that they would work to not have a permanent rabbi, Jewish scholars at the university or committed religious Jews in the community. It seems that much in human nature has not changed over the millennia. We are warned against accepting false prophets and false messias who encourage us to stray from teaching the Torah, from honesty and from morality. The political arena has many false prophets. Individuals need to strengthen their communities against this divisiveness by following what will unify and sanctify the Jewish community.

Muncie may not be like Muncie. But I know that in Muncie, the politics of the Jewish community has done much to destroy the good that does exist. It drives those out who had good intentions and twists and distorts many relationships that were strong and positive.

This is not to pick on Muncie alone — Muncie is just like every other place. That is what concerns me. The need for reform is everywhere.

SUSAN RUBIN WEINTROB can be reached at the Yeshiva of Manhattan Beach, 60 West End Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11235

About Books

By JACK FISCHEL

From time to time I recommend a recent publication that has already been listed in this column. Such a book is Explaining Hitler by Ron Rosenbaum.

I have just finished this important tome and can enthusiastically recommend it to this readership. Rosenbaum has interviewed all of the important scholars who have written about Hitler and has found that there is little about him that can be agreed upon. The book in some ways tells us more about the scholars and others, such as Claude Lanzmann, who Rosenbaum writes about, than his subject.

Random House $30.

New books from Syracuse University Press include: The American Life of Ernestine L. Rose by Carol A. Kolmerten. This almost forgotten 19th century reformer was born in Poland and was active in the women's rights movement as well as an outspoken opponent of slavery. Her blunt appeal to reason made her a kind of boomerang for the era's reformers, registering their anti-Semitism and their anti-immigrant sentiments. (Nov., $34.95); Jews in the American Academy, 1900-1940: The Dynamics of Intellectual Assimilation by Susanne Klingenstein. Originally published in 1991, this book appears for the first time in paperback. (Sept., $19.95); Enlarging America: The Cultural Work of Jewish Literary Scholars 1930-1990 by Susanne Klingenstein. The book examines the gradual opening of literary academia to Jewish faculty and analyzes their critical work. (Nov., $34.95); Franz Rosenzweig's The New Thinking, edited and translated from the German by Alan Udoff and Barbara E. Galli. (Nov., $34.95); God, Man, and the World: Lectures and Essays by Franz Rosenzweig, edited and translated from the German by Barbara E. Galli with an introduction by Michael Oppenheim. (Dec., $34.95).

Looking for a novel that will both interest and inform you? Read The Last Kabbalist of Lisbon by Richard Zimler. The novel is set in 16th century Lisbon when Jews were on the run from the Inquisition. Murder, treachery and revenge are all part of the story that unfolds in this brilliantly written book. Overlook (this month, $24.95).

August 5, 1998

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Silence is deadly: Judaism confronts wifebeating

The Jewish Book News Interview

with Naomi Graetz

By PAMELA ROTH

Naomi Graetz, born in 1943 in New York City, is a Jewish feminist who is grounded both in Jewish tradition and feminist thought. She teaches critical reading skills to students at Ben Gurion University of the Negev and lectures widely on Women and Judaism. She is the author of S/He Created Them: Feminist Retellings of Biblical Stories, and her scholarly articles on women in the Bible and Midrash have appeared in numerous journals and edited books. Naomi Graetz is a volunteer lecturer for The Women's Support Center of the Negev, which operates a shelter for battered women in Beersheba, and runs a Rosh Hodesh Group for the women of Congregation Magen Avraham, of which she is a member. She resides in Omer, Israel with her husband, Michael, is the mother of Ariella, Tzvi Yehuda, and Avigal, and she is the proud grandmother of Itamar Yehezkel.

JBN: What have we learned about wife beating within the Jewish community today? Can you give us a status report?

Graetz: The topic of wife beating, couched in the euphemistic terms of "spousal abuse" and "family violence," continues to be a timely one. In academic journals which deal with social work, family issues, feminism, and psychology, articles are constantly being published that deal with the phenomenon. Headlines, movies, and popular literature have made topics such as wife beating, incest, and child abuse seem almost ordinary. The Jewish community is finally facing these problems in our community.

The evidence that Jewish wife beating exists is strong. Statistics and headlines assail us with facts. It is incontrovertible today, something which was not the case in the mid-70s, that Jewish awareness of the problem is on the rise — though not enough.

Pick up the Denver newspaper, the Boston Jewish Advocate, The New York Times and you will read about rabbis' wives who are beaten by their husbands, Jewish surgeons' wives who stay in abusive marriages for 12-16 years, kosher shelters and kitchens for Jewish victims of domestic violence in New York City and Boston. The numbers being bandied about in the media vary from 19-25 percent of all Jewish families. "One out of six" or "one out of seven" Israeli women is regularly beaten at home. The estimated minimum figure is 100,000 battered women in Israel (of whom 40,000 end up hospitalized); the maximum number if 200,000 (which includes the Arab population). The conspiracy of silence is breaking, but not fast enough.

JBN: What would you say is the biggest obstacle to progress in this area?

Graetz: I would say that there are two major obstacles: One is the attitude of denial and apologists that Jewish leaders often take to protect the good name of the Jewish community. The other culprit is Jewish law with its assumption of the "way of the gentiles" to beat their wives — not Jews. Before alcoholism was recognized to be a Jewish problem, the commonplace was that "shicker is a goy." When I was on sabbatical in 1992 as a research associate at Mt. Holyoke, my colleagues and acquaintances asked rhetorically "Isn't Jewish wife beating an oxymoron?" I hear that much less today.

It is still difficult for Jews to see that wife beating is a phenomenon they cannot ignore. Even when forced to confront the fact that it exists, they often marginalize the phenomenon and state that those Jews who do engage in wife beating do so less frequently and less violently than do non-Jewish batters. Or, they will sometimes try to justify it by claiming that those Jews who actually engage in such behavior don't really hurt their wives, and if they do, perhaps it's for a good reason.

Finally, they will displace the blame, by shifting it to others: It is not our fault if Jewish men batter, it is only because of environmental influences. But apologists rarely get this far. Not only do they rely heavily on denial, they usually romanticize Judaism, by depicting a rosy picture of the traditional Jewish family. Jews often quote from those apologists who perpetuate the myth of the happy Jewish family in order to reconfirm their own positive self-image.

The reason that an apologetic attitude is often used by our leaders is to defend our collective Jewish name from adverse criticism. If we speak badly of ourselves we are called self-hating Jews. Those who engage in apologetics assume that questioning certain aspects of Judaism threatens the integrity of Judaism. However, apologists, a form of whitewash, often ends up perpetuating abuse and stifling healthy self-criticism. Worse, perhaps, is that Judaism is denigrated by this misguided attempt to "guard the law from humiliation" and causes modern people, who do not accept the halakhic system, to question the validity of halakhic analysis for themselves.

The second obstacle to progress in this area is the law: The law of the State of Israel gives jurisdiction in matters of personal status to Orthodox rabbinical courts. That means that all matters of marriage and divorce are adjudicated according to halakha (Jewish law) and that the judges are all male, Orthodox rabbis. The Israeli rabbinate has the power to decide whether or not a man can be ordered to give his wife a get if he has refused to do so. And, though they can order him to, they prefer to wait for the husband's consent. The problem outside of Israel is less serious, since there is separation of religion and state. Divorce can be obtained through civil and religious law.

The Conservative and Reform movements have largely solved the problem of the husband who refuses to give a get by invoking a halakhic tool akin to annulment. The Reform movement recognizes civil divorce as equivalent to Jewish divorce. However, it is still a very serious problem among the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox. With the exception of some very brave Orthodox rabbis, Rabbis Moses Morgenstem and Emanuel Rackman, who also use the tool of annulment, Orthodox rabbis are unwilling to annul the marriages of agunot, whose husbands refuse to grant them religious divorces.

In Israel, where there is no civil marriage or divorce, the problem of the agunah is even more real and painful. Some estimates reach over 10,000. It is also a political problem, since the Orthodox rabbinate has a monopoly on providing religious services and other competing religious approaches are not recognized by the State of Israel. Thus rabbis who sit in state recognized rabbinic courts do not have to listed to vox populi and have no incentive to interpret halakha in a...
way that might favor women. It is a commonplace in Israel that rabbinic courts are sympathetic to men in contrast to civil courts which favor women—but the latter have no jurisdiction in divorce.

Those sages, past and present, who choose to ignore the distress of battered women, rate the community's interest in family stability and obedience to rabbinic law as being more important than the suffering of the private individual. Thus it is Jewish law which, without malice, empowers the man who may be beating his wife in an effort to keep her under his control. [JBN: Did Maimonides really permit hitting one's wife with a stick? Is it possible to have a Jewish law that permits a woman to be beaten?] Does Jewish law permit wife beating? In what context did he say this? Has it been taken literally?

Thus it is Jewish law which, without malice, empowers the man who may be beating his wife in an effort to keep her under his control.

The communal unit is perceived to be more important than the individual. There have been many examples of acceptance of wife beating in the Jewish community throughout the ages. One of our great sages who allowed a husband to beat his wife was Maimonides. If we look at the historical context, we see that there were some precedents among the sages.

One example was R. Yehudai Gaon (an 8th century scholar to whom are attributed many anonymous Gaonic opinions) who wrote that: "A wife's duty is to honor her husband, raise her children, and feed her husband (even from her own hand). She has to wash, cook, and grind in accord with what the rabbis have decreed. And when her husband enters the house, she must rise and cannot sit down until he sits, and she should never raise her voice against her husband. Even if he beats her she has to remain silent, because that is how chaste women behave."

Another was the medieval Jewish courtier, R. Shmuel Hanagid (936-1056), an intellectual and military leader who was the son of a rabbi and a member of the royal family. He advised the husband to beat his dominating wife to put her in her place: "Hit your wife, without hesitation, if she attempts to dominate you like a man and raises her head [too high]. Don't my son, don't you be your wife's wife. While your wife will be her husband's husband."

Thus there is a precedent for Maimonides' view in the Mishneh Torah, that beating a bad wife is an acceptable form of discipline: "A wife who refuses to perform any kind of work that she is obligated to do, may be compelled to perform it, even by scourging her with a rod." The context in which he said this is of the list in the Mishnah of the required household duties a wife does for her husband: she grinds, bakes, and washes; she cooks and nurses her child; she makes his bed and spins wool."

Maimonides explains the reasoning behind the ruling: "Thus [the scholars] commanded that the wife should honor her husband beyond any limit, and his fear should be over her, and everything she does should be according to his demands. He should be, in her eyes, like a prince or a king who behoves in accordance with his heart's desires. She should remove everything that is hateful to him, etc."

Then, when Maimonides rules that if the wife refuses to do this work, she "may be compelled" it is possible to understand, according to the simplest meaning of the text, that it is the husband who does the compelling. Although some commentators would prefer to understand that the intention was that the beit din (the Jewish court) is the one who compels her, most commentators on this passage, understood it to mean her husband.

[JBN: Does Jewish law permit wife beating?]

Graetz: The purpose of Silence is Deadly: Judaism Confronts Wifebeating is to uncover the different attitudes to wife beating found in Jewish texts. The premise of my book is that women are regarded as property in patriarchal societies and as such a potential victims of physical and psychological abuse. The texts we study in the Bible and the Midrash do not talk about actual battering of women; however, they do create a metaphor for viewing women as objects of violence and use the battering of women as part of a larger metaphor describing relationships. I hope to show, by my reading of these texts, that the values that are implicit in them can lead to a climate of social convention that tolerates real battering.

I look at selected episodes in the Bible and see how they are interpreted, commented on, and understood by midrash, which is a principal form of rabbinic literature consisting of pieces of creative expository writing based upon Continued on page 14
Rebbe's yahrzeit observed

By RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

On the fourth yahrzeit of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Scheerson, the Algemeiner Journal printed a special section about the rebbe. The front piece of the section was a full page photo of the rebbe. A cluster of articles contained essays about the chief teachings of the rebbe, reminiscences of encounters at the Brooklyn headquarters of Lubavitch and a lot of photographs, including one of his grave site. Joseph Jacobson’s piece dealt with the differences between Scheerson and other chasidic rabbis. Weinberg states: Many of the others dealt in mysticism, but the Lubavitcher was pragmatic. He was concerned with the moral status of mankind. He refused to identify himself with any political party or any of the Orthodox organizations other than Chabad. Therefore he created hundreds of centers, and had thousands of “messengers” and preached and wrote about holiness. His writings comprise hundreds of essays and responsa (answers to questions). The special section makes no reference to the claims of the “messianists.”

By YAA Kov LURIA

Although the cream-colored brick of the Springvale Jewish Center still retains its factory-fresh sheen, its annual spring tryout for a new rabbi is already an entrenched tradition. The congregation uses up rabbi the way marathon runners wear out shoes.

The congregants of Springvale J.C. insist on the best rabbinical talent, available, but no sooner have they signed up a rabbi — only for one year, of course — than they begin to find fault with him. He is either too dominating, or he isn’t dynamic enough. He is either too narrow-minded, or too avant garde. Sometimes it’s not the rabbi but the rebbitzin who doesn’t measure up. She is either too attractive, in which case the women resent her, or the men are unhappy because she’s too plain.

Once the tryouts have been in progress a few sabbaths, it is hard to sort one candidate out from the other; almost invariably they are clean cut, pleasant and articulate, indistinguishable from other Jews except for being of the rabbinic persuasion. This year, Springvale had a candidate who broke the stereotype.

He came to the synagogue on the Sabbath when Sedra Jethro in the Book of Exodus was due to be read, weeks before the other candidates. The outside bulletin board announced him as Rabbi Mario Nadoff, who had fought in the North African campaign. That was. Nadoff recalled that the candidate had been ordained at Lemala Yeshivah and wondered where on earth that was. Nadoff recalled that the resume listed a book or two on Jewish law which the rabbi had written. On top of

More by the movement has.”

Another man confided, “You know, he looks too much like a rabbi. He frightens me a little.”

In the vestry room Nadoff and Aviver were holding court as usual. Another tradition at Springvale: You got music from the cantor, religion from the rabbi, and news from Nadoff and Aviver in the vestry. Partners in an electrical appliance business on weekdays, they take turns on Saturdays broadcasting sensational tidbits of gossip and commentary thereon.

Nadoff said that he had seen the resume which Rabbi Amram had sent and it was a yard long. Aviver reported that the candidate had been ordained at Lemala Yeshivah and wondered where on earth that was. Nadoff recalled that the resume listed a book or two on Jewish law which the rabbi had written. On top of

By RABBI REUVEN BULKA

Mischpation: A woman after childbirth, or during menstruation, is unclean.

“Unclean” is a terrible word to describe a woman at any other time, but it is the usual English translation of the biblical word tamay. The Hebrew word tamay relates to ritual distancing, to a check against becoming involved in certain ritual expressions.

An individual who has come in contact with a corpse is tamay and may not enter into the Temple area. This ritual distancing is a way of conveying to the individual that he or she should be af

fected and sobered by the experience of coming in contact with a corpse, and should therefore contemplate life in its full significance and with greater intensity.

There is a sense of loss of life involved in the childbirth process, since the life that was within the womb is now born. In the case of menstruation, it is the loss of potential life that is involved.

In both these instances, the woman experiencing these physiological changes is asked to go through a period of ritual distancing from active involvement in matters that require religious intensity, in order to fully appreciate the implications of what is happening.

In the instance of menstruation or childbirth, there is also a suspension of marital relations. But the woman is not unclean; she is rather in a state of ritual distance, which is more accurate, but perhaps awkward translation of tamay.
An appeal for American intervention is obviously contrary to our position all along. It gives Arafat an excuse to sit back (as he is doing now with Mubarak backing) and let the U.S. carry the ball for him. It would appear that the issue of "to be or not to be" on the so-called peace process has reached a very critical point. There are many elements exerting pressures on Netanyahu to "call Oslo a dead issue" and once and for all attempt to arrive at an agreement that is in accordance with Israel's defense and security interests with Israel being the sole judge of boundaries and troop deployments, as provided in the Hebron Agreement and confirmed by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

An American coalition is a fact, and in the schools.

A further discouraging step was an urgent appeal by Mordechai to have U.S. Deputy Dennis Ross rush to Israel to "help negotiations." Secretary of State Madeleine Albright had already announced that the parties must meet and work out an agreement in direct negotiations face to face.

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Jews By Choice

So Whaddaya do?

By MARY HOFMANN

So whaddya do to give your kids a sense of Jewish pride when they live in a gentile world?

If you’re Mary Hofmann and you live in a tiny Jewish community, you do a lot of Jewish reading at home with your kids, you make sure the tiny congregation survives, you collaborate with the other Jews in your community to make sure there is training and education available so kids can become bar and bat mitzva, and you teach what you appropriately can about Judaism and religious tolerance in the schools. And you celebrate holidays, Jewish holidays, and try to make them meaningful antidotes to the ubiquitous Christian commercial chaos whirling around you, especially in December and April.

If you’re Benita Melnikoff and you live in a tiny Jewish community, you do a lot of Jewish reading at home with your kids, you raise your kids to school there the day after public school, that’s where they make all their friends, and that’s where they develop a sense of who they are. In December, so many things are happening in the shul that children, though certainly a commercial blitz nationally, does not really have to be an intrinsic part of your month.

If you’re Avital Mendel and live in Israel, being Jewish is an almost self-evident matter of identity and your decisions are more about whether or not you want your kids to be Jewish (as in practicing the religion — in any of its forms) or if you merely want them to be Jewish (as in personal identity), Jewish culture permeates every part of your life, so while surviving (economically, politically, and even physically) are the major life issues, surviving as a Jew is not. In December, the Hanukkah lights are lit nationally and everyone celebrates their ongoing survival.

If you’re Steven Spielberg, on the other hand, and you want your kids to feel a burning sense of Jewish pride, you have options unique to who you are. If you’re Steven Spielberg, you get together with your friends and you produce an inspirational, animated, full-length movie on Moses and you release it on December 18. If you are one of Steven Spielberg’s children, how can you not feel like your religion, your tradition, your heritage is at the center of something important?

And if you are, like me, one of the many Jewish people who is NOT Steven Spielberg, you want to thank him for giving us something wonderful.

If you’re Steven Spielberg and you live in a Jewish community, you do a lot of Jewish reading at home with your kids, you make sure the tiny congregation survives, you collaborate with the other Jews in your community to make sure there is training and education available so kids can become bar and bat mitzva, and you teach what you appropriately can about Judaism and religious tolerance in the schools. And you celebrate holidays, Jewish holidays, and try to make them meaningful antidotes to the ubiquitous Christian commercial chaos whirling around you, especially in December and April.

Silver

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Cured. At that point St. John resolved he would dedicate himself to atone for what non-Jews have done to Jews. For that he has been kudosed by Yad Va-Shem in Israel, which he’s visited over 40 times. He’s also been a popular speaker at fundraising gatherings for every Jewish organization.

War of words

The Talmud is a compendium of statements by hundreds of people and their views are not the same. For example, one individual stated that if you teach your daughter Torah it’s like teaching her to become a prostitute.

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What I Have To Say

Where men love women

By ARLENE PECK

Italy is the last bastion of countries where men love women. I mean, they really love them! Older women, we are a national treasure there.

And, if they only learn three words, it's "You beautiful woman."

Now, saving that, I suppose you'd like to hear about the rest of my trip.

It was the beginning of the summer and, after the winter I had, folks, I needed a little TLC. So, keeping that in mind, I left for a few weeks in Italy with my friend, Cynthia Siloey. Cynthia speaks Italian and I flirt Italian. Actually, if the need be, I flirt in several languages. However, I digress.

The trip into that marvelous country was almost ruined because of Air France and their stupid strike. The French have got to be the most self-serving people in the world. Who else but they would decide to have a strike during the World Cup soccer tournament in their country? Anyway, after five days of stress, I drove over to the Air France desk and told them the woman I knew where she lived and would kill her if I wasn't on the next flight. It worked.

Because I wasn't sure where to go first and how to go about it, I contacted the Appian Way people in Rome and let them take me around on their various day tours. I've traveled with them before and their track record was good. The manager, Phillip George, was a doll and made arrangements that took us to the best places for the cheapest prices. I thank them.

One of their day tours in Rome gave me a synopsis of all the places we wanted to visit without the hassle of trying to find an honest cab driver, which doesn't exist in Rome. It's true. They are all thieves. It was kind of funny really. The cab drivers were the only men who didn't show any interest in communicating with us at all. I figured it out, though. They knew as you were getting into their cab that they were going to rip you off and didn't want to have any kind of personal contact. So, the Appian Way people made my life a whole lot easier.

I had heard several comments before leaving that Rome was dangerous. That was not my experience at all. The only ones to watch out for are the occasional Gypsies who hang around as beggars. Interestingly enough though, on one of my Appian Way side trips to Florence I sat next to a woman from Norway who told me that the previous day she had been jolted and knocked down. Her credit cards, passport and money were stolen. It was by two Gypsy boys around 10 or 11 years old. The day before this incident happened, the same group had approached me.

A very handsome man sitting near us began a conversation. When he mentioned that he is out every night to the clubs I commented, "Doesn't your wife get angry?" He replied, "Oh, I never take her to the clubs. I don't want her to get jealous. So, I take my wife to the cinema." Later in the conversation, he said, "What more could she want? I buy her a big house. She has her garden. I buy her big television and she can cook for me. What more could she need?"

That, dear readers, is the general attitude I believe of the Italian males. But, they do it with such finesse. One of the women actually told me "Italian men may run around, and, of course it doesn't make us happy. We might even get mad and throw things and scream. But, they know how to keep a woman happy. They know what you want before you do. They can make love to you with their eyes, a smile even a flower." So, the consensus is they can get away with murder because they are wonderful lovers.

Now, so you won't think my entire trip was frivolous and without social redemption, let me tell you a few of the facts of Rome. The Jewish community of Rome is the most ancient in Europe because the Jews arrived there in the year 161 BCE as ambassadors of Jeuda Maccaibi in order to ask for Roman protection against Antiochus IV. Their track record didn't seem too wonderful, as Emperor Titus had their temple destroyed in 70 CE. And, that dear readers, is how the Jews ended up in Spain, Germany and Eastern Europe. In 1215 the Church forced the Jews to wear a distinctive device on their clothes. In 1555 Pope Paul IV established the Ghetto in the unhealthy part of the city, which was constantly flooded by the day. They Jews were allowed to have just two professions: selling clothes and moneylending. They also had to be recognized as Jews outside of the Ghetto. Anyway, during World War II Rome had been an "Open City" because the Pope lived in Rome. However, the Nazis invaded Rome in September 1943 and they stayed until June 1944. During that period, 2,091 Jews were deported to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen and just 16 survived.

What I found interesting was the amount of security around the synagogue in Rome. I was told the reason was that in 1982, after "Simchat Torah" there was a terrorist attack outside of the synagogue where 45 people were injured and a 2-year-old child was killed. The city has been providing protection ever since.

It was with much reluctance I was, after too short a time, pulled out of Italy kicking and screaming, and caught the El Al plane to Tel Aviv. The plane was filled with Italian young men and Israelis. While speaking with one of the Italians I told him he was in for a treat when he saw how beautiful the young Israeli girls were. He was the wrong one to tell, as they were a group of priests in training. I could never understand why they do that. The Catholics take their brightest and best and keep them celibate. At least our rabbis are allowed to marry and have children. I promise you that for the entire flight, not one person sat in their seat. Except when they served meals, which was pretty often. Only flights to Israel on El Al are noisy, fun and totally different than any other airline. Come to think of it, so is Israel. Next column:

Postmark

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fired the aerial bombings and did nothing, in the face of dire American threats that we must remain neutral.

We continue to hear the sweet, reassuring promises of support from the U.S., but the record of the past makes them sound hollow and insincere. C.A.
Luria

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to the UN or maybe Golda Meir’s successor. Nadoff reminded him that the rabbi did not claim that he had ever been to Israel. So let’s send him there for his sabbatical year, suggested Aviver. Here you’re sending him off to Israel and we haven’t even hired him, scoffed Nadoff. Let’s hear what kind of sermon he comes up with.

But the sermon was a great disappointment. The rabbi had no pulpit manner at all, no humor or wit, no jokes or anecdotes. Not only did he lapse and stutter, but his diction was so strange that the congregants could hardly hold back from giggling. Imagine a rabbi in this day and age who led off with phrases like “Give ear and I will speak,” and let the earth hear the words of my mouth… ” Then with his eyes shut tightly he repeated each of the Ten Commandments word for word. After which he told the congregation, “Do as you have heard!” and he was through.

His performance at the men’s club the next morning was even worse. Apparently he had sensed that he had not been a hit with his Sabbath sermon, so for that occasion he had come prepared with about ten pages of notes. Nadoff and Aviver, who felt personally involved after the terrific build up they had given the rabbi in the vestry room, sat beside him and offered some good advice while the audience was gathering.

“Please don’t let us down today,” pleaded Nadoff. He pointed to a portly man chewing lox and bagel at a table nearby. “That’s the man you have to impress. If you do, you’re in.”

“Why must I impress him?” asked the rabbi.

“That’s Mr. Goldkauf, our wealthiest member,” explained Aviver.

“Not the most learned. Or the most pious. Or the kindest,” the rabbi observed sarcastically.

“Look, rabbi, you’ve got to know on which side your bread is buttered,” said Nadoff. “Without Mr. Goldkauf we would still be having our services in a rented hall. You know how much he gave to the building fund? You won’t believe it. A cool quarter of a million!”

“You seem to worship Mr. Goldkauf,” said the rabbi. “You’ve got to admit he deserves it.” Aviver retorted.

Without another word the rabbi tore up his sheaf of notes and stalked out of the room.

The men’s club breakfast having been left with no speaker, Nadoff and Aviver did a dialogue on selling electrical appliances. It was very funny, so nobody minded the rabbi’s absence.

In the cleft of a rock he waited until he sensed the presence.

“I must report another failure. They didn’t want me,” he said.

“They haven’t changed much since those days at Sinai, have they?” he observed.

“Still stiff-necked and perverse,” he agreed.


“I didn’t feel I got through to them at all.”

“How long since you first began trying?”

“Almost 4,000 years!”

“The way I reckon time, that’s less than four days. Be patient.”

“With all my credentials, it was still hopeless.”

“Take heart. There are plenty of places that won’t let Me in either. But I’m not giving up.”

“Then tell me, O Lord, if we are so imperfect, why do you expect perfection in rab­bis?”

Since there was no reply, he could only assume that He had no answer either.

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Silver

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the Orthodox have so much clout because of their Knesset strength that they can bring the Netanyahu government down if Bibi were to offer more concessions to the Reformers and the Conserva­tives.

Rabbi Sam Silver may be reached at 2309 NW 66 Dr., Boca Raton, FL 33496.

Wifebeating

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Do you suggest any solu­tions to the problem of Jewish divorce in your book?

JBN: In what way do Jewish divorce laws exacerbate this problem?

Graetz: Women cannot initiate divorce, they depend on their husband’s will to issue a get, they bear sole responsibility for the stigma of having mamzerim (illegitimate children). Until recently, women were not rabbis, and did not have access to learning and thus could not be part of the halakhic process. There is a mockery of justice in the Israeli rabbinical court system. The courts cynically argue that women in the State of Israel are finding themselves in more difficul­ty than Jewish women in the past, because rab­binic judges are unable to impose legal sanc­tions upon community members and to impose pun­ishments when a member of the community behaves in an un­acceptable fashion. Rather than accept the blame, they argue it is the fault of civil legislators who have not authorized rab­binic judges to impose sanc­tions upon violent husbands or on husbands who refuse to divorce their wives.

JBN: Do you suggest any solu­tions to the problem of Jewish divorce in your book?

Silver: I refer to the proposals of The International Coalition For Agunah Rights, ICAR, who suggest the follow­ing major proposals:

1) To force a get upon refrac­tory husbands.
2) To recommend to couples that they sign prenuptial agree­ments.
3) To use the solution of the annulment of marriage by rab­binic court when the husband’s actions prove to be recalcitrant.
4) To give the dayyanim (rabbinic judges) the authority to invoke civil sanctions against a refractory husband.
5) To prohibit receipt of rec­ognition for granting a divorce, thus precluding both ex­ploitation and blackmail which is often associ­ated with the refusal of the husband to grant a divorce.

This means that I would like to influence decision makers to consider changing Jewish law to forbid battering in an un­ambiguous way. I claim, along with others, that the rabbis have created a hillul hashem (a des­ecration of God’s name) be­cause of the way they treat agunot. Therefore, at the end of my book, after discussing all the possible solutions to allevi­ate the difficulties inherent in Jewish divorce, I propose a takkanah as a model to be for­mulated by religious leaders which could alleviate the seri­ous problems of trapped women and redress the power imbalance found in traditional Jewish marriages.

(reprinted from Jewish Book News).

Russian parents see son’s burial

TEL AVIV — The Russian parents of a wounded Israeli soldier were flown here to his bedside. Cpl Igor Pergamentchik was wounded on June 25 by a roadside bomb in south Lebanon. Two other Israeli soldiers were also killed in the explosion.

Mystery Person

Do you know who’s who?

• The Mystery Person has taken 90 trips to Israel.
• The Mystery Person is active in scouting.
• The Mystery Person serves with the Jewish Agency, Hebrew University, Israel Bonds, the Jewish Community Council of New York and the New York Board of Rabbis, and is a member of the National Jewish Committee on Scouting as well as having been president of a congregation.
• The Mystery Person is president of a national Jewish organization.
• The Mystery Person’s organization is the largest in North America.

All Mystery Persons are limited to North American Jews. Winners of the Mystery Person contest will receive a two-month subscription, the equivalent of $8 if not a subscriber, or, if a subscriber, a two-month extension of their subscription. Once appearing in the contest, that same individual will not be repeated as a Mystery Person. All correct answers are considered winners, not only the first received.