



Being

Jewish

CHANUKAH 2008

Relevant Judaism for Modern Life

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Our light shines
around the world

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Bright Lights Big Future



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Check out Young Leadership's
calendar of events
on the back page!





Light and Hope

Being Jewish

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By Michael Hanna-Fein
Editor

“Chanukah, oh Chanukah, come light the menorah....” These are the opening lyrics to a joyous song celebrating a miraculous holiday. Our theme in this issue is how a bright light is starting to shine on our future.

This year is especially bright, and exciting for so many of us, due to the election of a new administration in Washington, DC, as well as what appears to foretell the final chapter to the war in Iraq. A long-awaited spirit of optimism, and change, is permeating our society, but there are certain aspects of life today that are still somewhat challenging, and scary for many of us.

In general, there is the continually worsening economic outlook, which is costing so many people their jobs, pensions, savings, and even their homes. Even if none of these shadows are hanging over your personal life, you don't have to look far to find someone troubled by these issues. On a personal note, I am dealing with a major medical problem that has had me laid up in hospital for the past ten days, fearful of what might lay ahead. Fortunately, medical intervention appears to be heading in a very positive direction, for which I am, of course, enormously grateful.

Chanukah is a holiday of miracles and light. Jewish history is laden with testaments to the endurance and perseverance of our people over all these many thousands of years. On this



holiday, I believe, we must focus on the insights, and hope, that the candles on our menorahs represent.

We indeed have a multitude of opportunities over the eight days of Chanukah to reflect on our hopes, and dreams, for the future. Each day is an opportunity to focus on a particular facet of our lives, and to permit the daily light of our menorah to help bring clarity to our thoughts, and ambitions, as well as to see through our fears.

As for me, I am concentrating on all of the good will, and wonderful assistance, I am receiving, both professionally from those whose job it is to see me through my medical crisis, and the loving care, and embrace, of my family and friends, who extend themselves, in oh so many ways, to make this path back to good health as comfortable, and reassuring, as possible. All lights in my life are

focused on positive, and successful results, which appear to be occurring, little by little, each, and every day.

In this issue of Being Jewish, you will read of other people who have faced adversity, self-doubt, and fear, and how they, in their own way, found a path to securing the motivation, and creativity, to achieve their personal goals. You will meet a military chaplain, Jon Cutler, who brought faith, and hope, to Jewish service members in Iraq; a woman, Barbara Russek, who lived for years with doubts about her own worth, only to discover, from a most unlikely source, just how worthwhile a person she is; and a professor, Richard H. Schwartz, who has discovered the value of conservation, and vegetarianism, to the Jewish way of life. Each of these individuals is demonstrating tikkun olum, and is healing the world through personal acts.

We also have a wonderfully entertaining, and revealing, piece by Gil Mann, concerning the concept of the Chanukah bush. Some people consider this topic to be controversial, but Gil explains how simple, and spiritual a concept this really is, with his usual humour and insightful reflection. This year in particular presents a very special opportunity, what with Chanukah and Christmas occurring simultaneously. What a wonderful chance we have for both the Jewish, and Christian, communities to reach out, and renew our commitment to shared values and beliefs.

In addition, to bring brightness, and levity, into these short days, and long dark nights, we have included the rules for playing dreidel, as well as a small collection of alteh geferlekh Jewish jokes. It is important to remember to have a good time during this yearly celebration.

Chanukah is, above all, a family holiday. A time for us to surround ourselves with our loved-ones, and to play games, tell stories, and simply to revel in the togetherness, and closeness, we are blessed with during this bright, and happy season. I hope all of you have a joyous, and loving Chanukah. May the hope, and love, of these eight days continue for you through the entire year.

HAPPY CHANUKAH FROM ALL OF US AT BEING JEWISH, TO ALL OF YOU, AND YOUR LOVED ONES.

Michael has been publishing the Gantseh Megillah online since 1997. He is also the author of the Glossary of Yiddish Words and Expressions and he publishes Being Jewish magazine. You can visit his Web site at <http://www.gantsehmegillah.com>, where you will find links to the glossary, and the weekly newsletter. If you would like to communicate with Michael, you may email him at beingjewishmagazine@gmail.com.

note to our readers

We want you to love Being Jewish! We hope you will look forward to each issue, no matter your age, from teen to senior, because you find it relevant, user-friendly, enjoyable, and filled with valuable information and inspiration about the Jewish way of life.

Each article is carefully selected and edited so that every concept is easily understood, even by those of us who left the synagogue as teenagers, and did not return for 20 years or more.

Our goal for Being Jewish is to help you find meaning, and relevance in the Jewish way of life. In every issue we will try to show you ways to access the three components of Judaism: Ethics, Spirituality, and Peoplehood (ESP).

The articles we publish are designed to help you look at your modern life, and our ancient tradition, and answer one or all three of these questions:



E How can I be a more Ethical person?

S How can I have a richer Jewish Spiritual life?

P How can I enhance my sense of belonging to the Jewish People?

Being Jewish (the magazine and the Jewish way of life) is organized by the ESP circles, though as you can see by the diagram and also by reading the articles, there is much potential for overlap.

For example, under Ethics, you will find sections like Working and Being Jewish, Learning and Being Jewish, Giving and Being Jewish, and so on. But at the same time, you could easily find a Spiritual or Peoplehood dimension in each of these sections. We can also relate the Ethics and Peoplehood circles more directly by realizing that Jewish values are the building blocks of Jewish peoplehood.

We hope we can show you ways to access each of the ESP circles, and where they overlap, so that in your modern life, you can more fully enjoy the wisdom, and beauty of Being Jewish! - Gil Mann



Chanukah Bushes? What Next?

by: Gil Mann

Shalom Gil,

We are Jewish & LOVE our Chanukah Bush. It is white & tall & crowned with a Star of David. On it you will find blue & silver Chanukah ornaments that are beautiful. The kids look so much forward to this. As a young girl, I always felt Chanukah was bland & simple compared to Christmas. I feel our Bush brings Chanukah to a brighter light, if you will. Just wanted to share my thoughts about the Bush. (Not to get to political!!! LOL [laughing out loud] !!) HAPPY & HEALTHY CHANUKAH!

Warmest Regards,
A Jewish Family

Dear Jewish Family,

I have never liked the idea of a Christmas Tree in a Jewish home as I have written many times (those columns can be seen here: search Christmas Tree at www.beingjewish.org.)

In a sentence, I view the trees as a Christian symbol that doesn't belong in a Jewish home.

Many people view them as strictly secular. I counter that they are not called "Holiday Trees" and are traditionally topped with the Star of Bethlehem.

A Chanukah Bush on the other hand is a bit more complicated a ritual and a symbol. A symbol is often a sign expressing something about yourself to others. In the case of a Chanukah Bush, I would ask without judgement what are you expressing?

My first reaction to a Chanukah Bush is that I don't like them because to me they are a copy of a Christian symbol. Plus, I think Chanukah

has many beautiful symbols, and rituals, and we do not need to copy a Christmas Tree to have fun or make our kids, or us, feel good, or feel like we fit in. So I wouldn't want one in my home.

On the other hand, as you describe, your Chanukah Bush is very much a reminder of your being Jewish, and it sounds like proudly Jewish. I admire that. The additional argument is that Jews have always copied from the cultures around them. In fact, some argue that much of what we see in many synagogues today mimics our Christian neighbors' churches: organs, robes, choirs, and more. I should point out however that private religious practices are not the same as outward religious symbols -- but the line can blur.

The borrowing, or modifying practices, and symbols from the religions of others goes both ways. See below.
Gil

Dear Gil,

Is it wrong or offensive for a Gentile to wear the Star of David? We have many close Jewish family friends, and family by marriage. Funny - nobody was quite sure how to answer my question.

I keep it under my blouse/shirt when I'm out in public. It has meaning for me, not that I want to display it since I am a Gentile. I recently joined a recovery group & needed a Higher Power of my choice. I've always related to the Old Testament, and Moses & the Jews' struggle to get out of Egypt. So much of those stories really transcend time. And the stories of Jesus the Jew & how he treated everyone with kindness despite appearance, associa-

tions, etc. These prove to be a source of strength to me & the symbol is such a beautiful, powerful one. If I am discreet, is it okay to wear as a personal symbol of faith, strength & perseverance during struggle and challenging times?

Thank you,
Elizabeth
PS I love that my name comes from Hebrew.

Dear Elizabeth,

Wearing a Star of David may be misleading, but not offensive, in my opinion.

I was moved by your reasons for wanting to wear a Star of David. I don't think you need to be discreet. I would hope you never encounter anyone who raises a fuss. If anyone were to see the Star, and ask you if you were Jewish, you could say: "No, but this is why I wear this Star of David...."

You may find value in knowing that in Hebrew the star is called a Magain Daveed. Which means the Shield of David. May I send my prayer for your recovery with the wish that you are always shielded by love...human and divine.
Gil

Dear Readers,

So what do you think should be the response about these symbols to my writers? My responses reflect my thinking about America, and even the world today. The globe is small, and we are becoming more similar to each other. In many ways, this is wonderful. Then again, we have uniqueness about us, and that too is wonderful. For example, I would not feel comfortable hearing that Jews were wearing Crucifixes.

So what do you say? I welcome your comments. Perhaps they will appear in a future column (anonymously, of course!) Write to me at Gil@beingjewish.org.

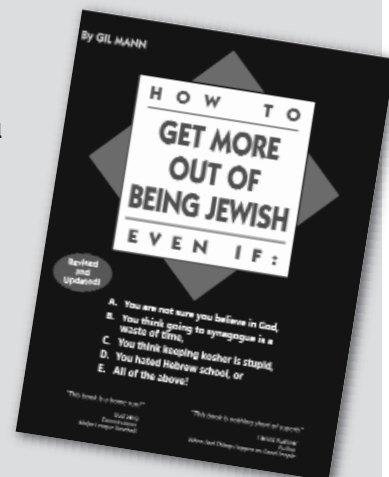
Happy Chanukah!
Gil

FREE for Internet Users!!!

If you like Being Jewish, formerly published by Gil Mann, then you will love Gil's book:

Now you can download Gil's entire book for free! Just go to www.beingjewish.org/freebook.

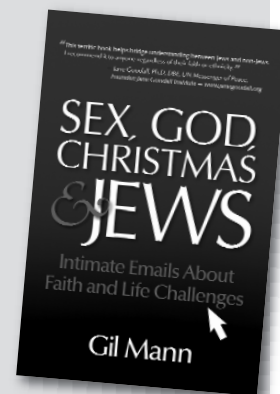
If you'd like to order a printed copy (\$10 + \$3 shipping) email leopublish@aol.com or call 800-304-9925.



Gil's Jewish Email columns began on his popular America Online feature called "Judaism Today: Where Do I Fit?". You can read more of his columns at www.beingjewish.org. Gil welcomes any additional questions or comments about this topic or any other Jewish issue. Email him at GilMann@beingjewish.org.

Gil Mann's new book Sex, God, Christmas & Jews was a finalist in the Jewish Life and Living category of the 2006 Koret International Jewish Book Awards.

The book features 18 of Gil's popular columns, in which he responds to readers' most perplexing emails, including: I am Very Angry with God!; Bizarre Jewish Sex; Body Piercing, Tattoos and More; I Will Not Circumcise My Son!; and Will Jews Burn in Hell? All names have been removed from the emails, of course!



The book (including shipping) is available at a discount to Being Jewish readers for just \$13. To order the book, call 800-304-9925 or go to www.BeingJewish.org.

Another Miracle of Chanukah

by: Richard H. Schwartz and Daniel Brook

Hope is an integral part of Jewish history, spirituality, and politics. Without hope, there would not be a Chanukah, and Jewish survival is a miracle of hope. Increasing light at the darkest time of the year to celebrate Chanukah, and Jewish survival is also a miracle.

We sincerely hope that Jews will enhance their celebrations of this ancient, beautiful, and spiritually-meaningful holiday of Chanukah, the first night of which falls on Sunday, December 21st this year, by making it a time to strive even harder to live up to Judaism's highest moral values, and teachings.

Chanukah commemorates the single small container of pure olive oil - expected to be enough for only one day which, according to the Talmud (Shabbat 21b), miraculously lasted for eight days in the rededicated Temple on the 25th of Kislev 165 BCE, exactly two years after it was defiled by the Syrian-Greeks, who were ruled by the tyrannical Antiochus IV. In Kabbalistic (Jewish mystical) thought, according to Avi Lazerson, "oil is symbolic of chochmah (wisdom,) the highest aspect of the intellect from which inspirational thought is derived."

A switch to vegetarianism would be using our wisdom, and compassion to help inspire another great miracle: the end of the tragedy of world hunger, therefore ensuring the survival of tens of millions of people annually. Currently, from one-third to one-half of the world's grain, and about three-quarters of major food crops in the U.S. (e.g., corn, wheat, soybeans, oats,) is fed to animals destined for slaughter, while about one billion poor people chronically suffer from malnutrition, and its debilitating effects, tens of thousands of them consequently dying each day, one every few seconds. Chanukah represents the victory of the idealis-

tic, and courageous few, over the seemingly invincible power, and dominant values of the surrounding society. We learn through both our religious studies, and history, that might does not make right, even if it sometimes rules the moment. Therefore, quality is more important than quantity; spirituality is more vital than materialism; though each is necessary. "Not by might and not by power, but by spirit," says Zechariah 4:6, part of the prophetic reading for Shabbat Chanukah.

Still believing in brute force, materialism, and greed, the world presently wastes a staggering, and nearly unimaginable \$1 trillion on total military might (over half of that amount is by the U.S. alone,) while half the world's population barely survives on \$2 a day, or less, and as noted, some don't even survive. Security does not come from superior physical forces or from authoritarian political conditions, as the Chanukah story, and contemporary events remind us. Collective security lies in a just and sustainable society, just as personal security lies in a healthy, and sustainable lifestyle.

The Jewish anti-imperialist insurgency, led by the Macabees, was sparked when a pig was killed, and Rabbi Eleazar, and other Jews, were ordered to eat it. Those who refused, including nonagenarian (between 90-99 years of age) Rabbi Eleazar, were summarily killed. According to the Book of Macabees, some Macabees lived on plant foods - to "avoid being polluted" - when they hid in caves, and in the mountains to escape capture. Further, the major foods associated with Chanukah, latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts), are vegetarian foods - as is chocolate gelt! - and the vegetable oils that are used in their preparation are a reminder of the pure vegetable oil (olive) used in the lighting of the Temple's Menorah.

The miracle of the oil brings the use of fuel, and other resources, into focus. One day's oil was able to last for eight days in the Temple. Conservation, and energy-efficiency, are sacred acts, and vegetarianism allows resources to go much further, since far less oil, water, land, topsoil, chemicals, labor, and other agricultural resources are required for plant-based diets than for animal-centered diets, while far less waste, pollution, and greenhouse gases are produced. For example, it can require up to 78 calories of non-renewable fossil fuel for each calorie of protein obtained from factory-farmed beef, whether kosher or otherwise, but only 2 calories of fossil fuel to produce a calorie of protein from soybeans.

Reducing our use of oil by shifting away from the mass production, and consumption of meat - thereby making supplies last longer, freeing us from our dangerous dependence on oil as well as oily authoritarian governments, and diminishing the availability of petro-dollar funds for terrorists - would surely be a fitting way to celebrate the miracles of Chanukah. By conserving oil, commemorating how one day's worth of oil lasted for eight, and by reducing our dependence on it, we can create what Rabbi Arthur Waskow, of the Shalom Center, calls a "green menorah," and a green Chanukah. In this way, we create ethical lifestyles, and holy communities.

In addition to resource conservation, and economic efficiency, a switch toward vegetarianism would greatly benefit the health of individuals, the condition of our environment, and would sharply reduce the suffering, and death of billions of animals. Further, the social, psychological, and spiritual benefits should not be underestimated. Many people who switch to a vegetarian diet report feeling physically, emotionally, and spiritually better.

May we all have a happy, healthy, and miraculous Chanukah!

WHAT GOES INTO MAKING BEEF

It takes 6 tons of grain and hay (and at least 18 months) to turn a steer into beef.

NUTRITION PER STEER:

2.3 tons of corn
2.6 tons of alfalfa-brome hay
800 pounds of mid-grade hay
1.1 tons of modified distiller grain
210 pounds of supplements and minerals
53.2 tons of water

CHEMICAL INPUT AND MATERIAL

0.85 fluid ounce Ivomec (dewormer)
0.007 ounce Trenbolone Acetate
0.001 ounce Estradiol Benzoate
2.5 acres pasture space
150 pounds of pasture fertilizer
4 acres of corn stalks

ENERGY

3.5 gallons of diesel fuel
56.5 kWh of electricity
696 cubic feet of natural gas

source: Iowa Beef Industry Council



Richard H. Schwartz is a published author and a Professor Emeritus at the College of Staten Island. You can visit his Web site at <http://jewishveg.com/schwartz> - Daniel Brook, Ph.D., is the author of *Modern Revolution* (2005), *Understanding Sociology* (2007), and dozens of articles. He maintains The Vegetarian Mitzvah web site, is a member of the Advisory Committee of Jewish Vegetarians of North America, and can be contacted via Brook@california.com.

Eight Days of Fun



Marge's Modest Chanukah.

Anne Frank, who celebrated Chanukah in the attic of a house in Amsterdam, wrote in her diary for Dec. 7, 1942: "We just gave each other a few little presents, and then we lit the candles. Because of the shortage of candles, we only had them alight for ten minutes."

Carol Bell Ford ("Nice Jewish Girls Growing Up in Brownsville, 1930s - 1950s") wrote, "Chanukah was not yet competing with Christmas. It was celebrated modestly. I remember receiving Chanukah gelt, usually fifty cents, but sometimes a silver dollar, from my father. 'Here's a shekel,' he would say (long before the state of Israel re-appropriated the biblical term for its currency)."

According to Jane Ulman, the custom of giving Chanukah gelt can be traced to 18th century Eastern Europe, and maybe earlier. For many, gelt was traditionally distributed on the fifth night of Chanukah, and many sources claim it rewarded children for studying Torah.



Gift giving at Chanukah should not be about money. We should make every effort to stay within a "budzhet" (budget). Accumulating "Detsemer khoyv" (December debt) is a bad way to end "dos yor." It leads to "Yanuar boykhveytik" (January indigestion). And remember the expression, "Der rekhening iz do, ober dos gelt iz nito." (The bill is here but the money is not.)



Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe believes that the best holiday gift is the presence of a happy family all wrapped up with one another.

Her favorite Chanukah story:

Twelve-year-old Sidney labored for many days to build a chair for his father, and finally, on Chanukah, he presented it as a gift. But when the boy's father sat on the chair, he found that the seat was far too high. Sidney said, "Halevay volt es yo geven, vi mir hobn gehoft." (I wish it had turned out the way we had hoped.) I made the chair too high!" "No, you didn't," said his father gently. "It's just that the table is too low."

Most Jewish communities around the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah with communal gatherings, parties, songs, and games. Chanukah candles are often lit, Chanukah songs are sung, and these celebrations usually include eating traditional Chanukah foods such as latkes. Games of chance are played, while everyone tries their hand at spinning a dreidel (top) and Chanukah gelt is often distributed to children.

The synagogal liturgy of Chanukah has its specific features. In distinction to the major festivals, the standard weekday, or Shabbat service is recited, rather than a special holiday version. A special insert in the Amidah (standing or silent prayer) called Al Hanissim ("concerning the miracles") addresses the holiday of Chanukah and offers thanks for God's role during that event. Hallel (Psalms of praise) are also recited during the eight days of Chanukah while the penitential prayer is omitted during this holiday.

The defining act of Chanukah is to kindle the lights of the Chanukiyah, the eight-branched candelabrum. These lights, which can either be candles, or tiny oil cups with floating wicks, grow in strength during the eight days of Chanukah, with the addition of one candle or lighted wick each night. One light is added each night to fulfill the concept of *lo moridim ba-kodesh* (one does not decrease in holiness.) Because the purpose of these Chanukah lights is the public proclamation of the Chanukah miracle, the Chanukiyah is traditionally lit in a place where the candles can be seen from out of doors, near a window, or a doorway.

Jewish law prohibits work for one hour after candle lighting. This time period is traditionally used for "family learning," specifically to teach children about Chanukah through study, and discussion. Families also use the period after candle lighting for games, singing, and gift-giving.

Another reminder of the miracle of the legendary cruse of oil comes through the smells, and tastes of oil that permeate special Chanukah foods—potato latkes (pancakes) for the Ashkenazim, and *sufganiyot* (jelly donuts) for the Sephardim.

THIS & THAT

Molly Katz ("Jewish As A Second Language") wrote about Wrapping Paper:

"Gifts are opened carefully, using a pencil to lift the tape, so the paper can be saved. It isn't reused; that would be cheap. But it's a crime to throw away such lovely paper."

Joshua Halberstam ("Schmoozing") wrote about the elevation of Chanukah from the relatively minor holiday it was in Europe, to the major Jewish holiday it is in the U.S. today. "The Talmud devoted a scant two pages to Chanukah, while dedicating an entire volume to Purim," said Halberstam.



Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books: "Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order: Contact her at Wolfeny@webtv.net.



The Anatomy of a Dreidle

Dreidels have four Hebrew letters on them, and they stand for the saying, "Nes Gadol Haya Sham," meaning "a great miracle occurred there." In Israel, instead of the fourth letter "shin," there is a "peh," which means the saying is "Nes Gadol Haya Po"—"a great miracle occurred here."

Any number of people can play, and each player begins with an equal number of game pieces (about 10-15)

To start, everybody puts a game piece into the center "pot." We used chocolate coins so you could eat your winnings. If the pot is empty, or has only one game piece

left, every player should put one in the pot. Every time it's your turn, spin the dreidel once.

Depending on the outcome, you give, or get game pieces from the pot:

- a) Nun means "nisht" or "nothing" [in Yiddish]. The player does nothing.
- b) Gimmel means "gantz" or "everything" [in Yiddish]. The player gets everything in the pot.
- c) Hey means "halb" or "half" [in Yiddish]. The player gets half of the pot. (If there is an odd number of pieces in the pot, the player takes half of the total plus one.)
- d) Shin (outside of Israel) means "shtetl" or "put in" [in Yiddish]. Peh (in Israel) means "pay." The player adds a game piece to the pot.

If you find that you have no game pieces left, you are either "out" or may ask a fellow player for a "loan."

. When one person has won everything, that round of the game is over!



Phone Call Puts Thirty Years of Family History Into Focus



photo by: Marcia Gold

By: Barbara Russek

Hearing the voice of my cousin Susie* after more than 30 years of silence caused me to tense up in a fight or flight kind of way. It was as though time had stood still, and we were teenagers again. Children often get branded with a role to play in the family. Susie was the “popular” one. The very word “popular” causes a stirring in my “kishkas” to this day, signifying all the things she was, and I wasn’t in high school: self assured, maybe even going steady with the captain of the football team, knowing what to say, especially to other popular kids; she was the petite busty cheerleader with the winning smile; the center of attention.

Susie had zero interest in me: her tall, awkward, first cousin. Stretching my memory back to those family get togethers in St. Louis, I cannot recall a single conversation we had. As we grew older, I pressed my mother for details gleaned from the family grapevine on what guy Susie was dating, where she was attending college. She got married in her twenties to a nice, Jewish doctor; of course. My own personal life was going nowhere fast. I could live vicariously through each adventure of what I considered her charmed life.

Time passed. By the age of 38, unmarried, I had already lost both my parents. Susie’s father, my Uncle Joel, took a great interest in my welfare. I fondly recall his frequent phone calls to me, asking for specifics about how my car was behaving, was I getting enough exercise, and watching my diet, and were there new guys on the horizon?. For all the Jewish holidays, a cheery, encouraging letter was sent, with a check for a couple hundred dollars often slipped in. I was always grateful for his attentions. He was one of the few family members who genuinely cared. I was also grateful that his wife, my Aunt Ethel, never had any objections to those little checks when they had two daughters who could always use the extra cash.

After Uncle Joel died, about eight years ago, I received a surprise phone call from my Aunt Ethel. She wanted me to know that he had left me \$5000 in his will, the down payment on a badly needed car. I drive that car to this day.

I have continued to keep in touch with my Aunt Ethel; now the matriarch of our family. She has always shown interest in the vignettes I write, and is very prompt in thanking me for the literary pieces I send her.

So I was more than a little concerned when there was no response to the latest ones I had mailed a few months back. The High Holidays were fast approaching. It was time to call and see how things were going. After dialing the number, I heard an unfamiliar voice say, “Goldman’s.” Something just told me it was the voice of a caretaker; indeed it was. In a weak voice, almost a whisper, Aunt Ethel told me that about six weeks ago, a cancerous tumor had been found in her stomach. As the conversation ended, she expressed appreciation, several times, for my call. I, in turn, promised to help in any way I could. I hung up with the good feeling people get when they are able to be of service to those generous folks who are now in need.

About twenty minutes later the phone rang; it was my cousin Susie. She had stopped by to see her mother right after our short conversation. She wanted to tell me that my Aunt Ethel had been crying tears of happiness at my reaching out to her. This was the first time we ever had a real conversation, and I was able to respond to her, not as an awkward adolescent, but as an adult. I’m sure Susie had the best of intentions, but I was not overly impressed.

Although Susie was under a lot of stress, there was not even a “How are you?” for me.

When I told her my life has not been an easy one, and I always appreciated the interest her parents, especially her father, had shown in me over the years, she responded with: “Yes, but I haven’t had an easy life either, you know; the divorce and all.”

I was then given gratuitous information about having power of attorney for her mother; how she has to hire, and then fire, the incompetent caretakers. She even went so far to complain about the inedible sandwich one of the



helpers had given her that day for lunch. There was no thought as to how I would receive this information. Susie simply needed to vent.

And then it was over. As I recovered from that call, which had drained me much more than talking to my aunt, I realized that Susie was no longer the cheerleader on a pedestal who had all the answers. Actually, she had very few. She was a frightened woman, caught up in the anxieties of the unknowns we all must face in life.

As a late bloomer, my feelings of self esteem developed gradually over the years from sources more substantial than achieving the “right” status within the “right” circle of friends. Thanks to my meaningful work as a teacher, and writer, I’ve been able to connect with others, including my relationship with Ben, my late fiancé. He knew my weaknesses, as well as my strengths, and he loved me anyway.

Today, with the perspective of an adult, I find myself attracted to people who communicate warmth, and interest in others, even when dealing with the challenges of their own lives. Somehow I don’t think Susie is my type.

*All family names have been changed

Barbara Russek is a French teacher and freelance writer in Tucson. She welcomes comments at Babette2@comcast.net

ALTEH GEFERLEKH JEWISH JOKES

Actual Personal Ads From Israeli Papers

Divorced Jewish man, seeks partner to attend shul with, light Shabbos candles, celebrate holidays, build Sukkah together, attend brisses, bar mitzvahs. Religion not important.

Jewish businessman, 49, manufactures Sabbath candles, Chanukah candles, havdalah candles, Yahrzeit candles. Seeks non-smoker.

I am a sensitive Jewish prince whom you can open your heart to. Share your innermost thoughts and deepest secrets. Confide in me. I'll understand your insecurities. No fatties, please.



Our Faith in Iraq

By: CDR Jon Cutler, CHC, USN
MWHS-3 Wing Chaplain
Unit 41006

This is my favorite time of the year, all the holidays are over. I hope your holidays went well. They added special meaning being here, in Iraq, in many ways. To be here, only a few miles away from (Fallujah, and Haditha, the center of the creation of the Talmud) where the rabbis taught, and spoke about how to observe the holidays, is awesome. Also, to know that for over 2,600 years, Jews have been observing these holidays, in some fashion, again right here is amazing. The third significant thing, as well as being quite sad, is that the only functioning synagogue in all of Iraq, after 2,600 years, is here, at Al Asad. There were three High Holidays services throughout Iraq lead by Army rabbis, but they were held in a shared common space, not a dedicated synagogue. You could feel the history of this place, especially when we were praying as a community.

The evening, and first day of Rosh Hashanah, was okay. We did not have a minyan, which was disappointing. We had 14 people show up (4 non Jews, who were quite interested in the service.) The second day, 7 people showed up, and we had a Torah study session, and service. When you are accustomed to having several hundred people in attendance for the holidays, you get spoiled. In a way, this was better, because it was more intimate. The nice thing that came out of Rosh Hashanah was the meals that we ate together. We had dinner, and lunch, as a group. Many organizations, and synagogues, have been great in supporting us, by sending kosher food, such as salamis, and smoked salmon (lox.) They even sent raisin round challot. We had enough honey to start our own business.

In the afternoon, we went to an artificial lake on base, or reservoir, where we performed tashlich.

Yom Kippur was quite different. It was one of the most meaningful experiences I ever had observing the day of atonement. We had Jewish service-members, and civilians, come from all over the Province, and we had a high attendance of 26 people. I must tell you how spiritual they were, especially with the realization that these holi-

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days actually began in this area. The most beautiful part of the services was the complete involvement of these, mostly young, Jewish military members who actually knew the prayers, and could read Hebrew. A Navy Captain reservist, lawyer, and president of a synagogue in Jacksonville, Florida, conducted the service. He learned this on his own, and has a beautiful singing voice. After he chanted "Kol Nidre" the first time, everyone else joined in for the other two chantings. It was very emotional (and loud) to have everyone so intimately involved in the prayers, and service.

We had Torah study, meals before the services, and Broke-the-Fast together, as if we were one family. These soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, came and participated, not because they were told to by their families, but because their Judaism was so important to them, that they went out of their way to participate. I feel so proud to be among these Jewish Americans. I'm not sure that the descriptions above correctly convey all of what I experienced, but I know that these experiences will live with me forever.

Sukkot was just as amazing. There are four major bases here in western Iraq -- Al Asad, Ramadi, Al Taqqudum, and Fallujah. At each base the Jewish community put up a Sukkah. Just in time for the first two days of Sukkot, I received the four sets of lulav, and etrog I had ordered while I was home on leave. Here in Al Asad, two of my Religious Program Specialists (chaplain assistants) found wood, and constructed a Sukkah. A couple of us went to the nearest Palm tree, which was a few feet away, and cut off leaves for the covering.

The day before Sukkot, I invited the chaplains on the base, and their assistants, for 'Pizza in the Hut.' This was the first time that Christian chaplains have ever seen, or eaten, in a Sukkah. I showed them the passage in Leviticus about Sukkot, and we enjoyed a communal meal in the Sukkah that evening.

For the next few days, a group of us that met in the



Photo by: 1st LT. Jonathan Rabinowitz US Army

Sukkah for breakfast and dinner. All the meals were provided by donations from synagogues, and organizations back home. The challah was prepared by the dining facility.

I traveled to Al Taqqadum (TQ) during the middle of Sukkot. Colonel Thorsen, the airboss for TQ, is the Jewish lay leader. He, and others, constructed a Sukkah out of cammie netting. Eleven participants joined us for a service, and meal, in the Sukkah. On a side note, a few of them were not Jewish, but are interested in becoming Jewish. They had never seen a Sukkah.

Some of the Jewish personnel have interesting backgrounds. There was a Lance Corporal Marine whose mother is Israeli, and whose father is Navajo. He was raised Jewish, speaks fluent Hebrew, and visits his family back in Israeli at least once a year. There is a Sergeant Marine whose parents lived in Baghdad. When Israel became a nation, they walked from Baghdad, to the Promised Land. He was born in Israel, and the family moved to the States. He speaks fluent Hebrew and Arabic. There is a Corporal Marine whose father was an evangelical preacher who found out that her family were Marranos (secret Jews) and the entire church became Messianic. She decided to explore more about Judaism. At 16 years old she went to the local Conservative synagogue, and started studying, then converted to Judaism. Her parents shun her to this day.

In Fallujah, I met a Lance Corporal Marine who was adopted, and raised as a Nazarene Christian. While in high school, he found his birth mother, and grandparents. He is in contact with his grandparents, not his mother. His

mother's parents were from Morocco, and Iraq. His father is not Jewish. While in high school he decided to explore more of his Judaism, started attending a Conservative synagogue, and gave up his Christianity. His parents were not happy, but they eventually came around, and fully accept him as a Jew. While at his first duty station he came across a Lubavitch Marine. They both went to the local Chabad house, and he became immersed in the Lubavitch movement. He spent his leave time at the Lubavitch Headquarters in Brooklyn. In the meantime, he has taught himself Hebrew, Arabic, and Yiddish. The Jewish lay leader in Fallujah is a civilian Department of Defence contractor from Boston. She grew up as an Orthodox Jew, and attended an Orthodox day school. Her job is to work directly with Iraqis who live in Fallujah. Her special project is to work with Iraqi women, and educate them about voting, schooling, and health issues. She is responsible for handing out grants so Iraqis, especially the women, can start their own businesses, and become self sufficient. These are only a few of the people that I have met.

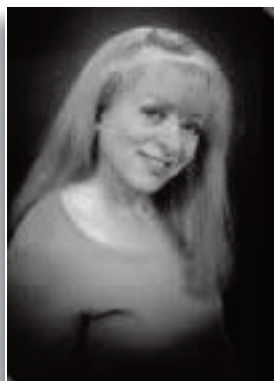
Finally, I returned to Al Asad in time for Shemini Atzeret and Simhat Torah. On the evening of Simhat Torah we took the Torah scroll, danced, and did the seven Hakafot. It was a lot of fun. The kosher Torah scroll I brought with me from Marine Corps Base, 29 Palms, California. We were able to read Torah, which is a rare treat.

This is the short of it for the holidays.
Kol Tuv,
Rabbi Cutler



A Chanukah Tradition for your Family Table

By Eddy Robey



Shining Candles, spinning Dreidels, and Latkes. Oh how we look forward to the Latkes.

We love all sorts of them: whether from White or Sweet Potatoes, Yams, or Carrots. There will be endless debates, Sour Cream or Applesauce?

No matter how rigid our diets, at Chanukah we must eat food cooked in Oil, to commemorate the miracle. Chanukah is certainly a holiday for modern times; a celebration of freedom, and diversity, which also includes tradition.

The Latkes are the tradition; the Tomato-Lemon Confit brings a bit of something exotic to your holiday table. The cultural roots of this dish reach back to France. Sweet, and tart, it will be enjoyed by all.

This should be made ahead of time so it can chill, and will keep in the refrigerator for a month. When Latke time is over, try it with Roast Chicken.

Some of us will use a Grater handed down for generations, and laugh about how bits of finger improve flavor.

Some will use a Food Processor, and still others will start with ready grated Potatoes from the Produce or Frozen Food sections of the market. Regardless of how the basic ingredients are shredded, our families will be full of smiles, when they gobble every bit of the finished product.

Latkes

Preparation Time: 25 minutes

(Pareve)

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

4 cups grated White or Sweet Potatoes,
(other options are Yams, or Carrots)

1 grated Onion

1/2-3/4 cup Flour or Matzo Meal

2 Eggs

Oil for frying (Not Olive Oil)

If grating your own Potatoes, the first step is to get the water out of them. This is most easily done by putting them in a towel, and squeezing so it absorbs, and drains the liquid. Sweet Potatoes, Yams, and Carrots, are not watery, and do not need this step.

Place the basic grated substance in a large mixing bowl, add all the other ingredients, and mix thoroughly. You may wish to adjust the amount of Flour or Matzo meal to the consistency you prefer. There is no salt in this recipe. That is because the potatoes keep getting more watery if you use it. Salt after cooking, if you want to.

Put a large bowl of ice water next to the stove. This is for use if you get burned by any splashing oil. With that in mind, save your sleeveless dresses for another time, and wear an apron if you don't want your clothes ruined. Oil burns are horrible, and any stains are usually permanent. Heat about 1/2 inch of Oil in a deep skillet. If you use a shallow one, you will be scrubbing the stove for a long time.

Heat the Oil until a drop of water dances on it. Use medium, rather than high heat to do this.

Scoop some of the Potato mixture with a heat proof spatula. Use another spatula to slide it into the oil. DO NOT put it in with your hands, or you will get burned.

Let the Latkes cook until browned, then turn using both spatulas, so the Oil doesn't splash. When browned, remove, and drain on paper towels.

For those of you who must be very careful about Fat intake, here is another method of cooking.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Spray a baking pan with Vegetable Oil.

Form patties and place in the pan.

Spray the tops of the patties and then bake for 30 minutes or until brown. These will not be the same as fried Latkes, but will allow you to enjoy something without upsetting your Cholesterol count. The spray contains oil, so you will be eating food cooked with oil as tradition asks.

Tomato-Lemon Confit

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

(Pareve)

3 pounds Plum Tomatoes,
(peeled, seeded and chopped coarsely)

2 large Lemons,
(sliced as thinly as possible)

8 cups Sugar

First, I will tell you how to peel, and seed Tomatoes, a much easier process than you might think.

Place a large pot of water on the stove at high heat, and bring it to a boil.

Next to it, on the counter, place a large bowl of ice water.

A few at a time, drop the Tomatoes into the water.

Boil 1 minute, then remove them with a slotted tool, and put them in the ice water.

Repeat with all of them. The skins will slip right off the Tomatoes.

To seed the Tomatoes, cut them in half, and scoop out the seeds with the tip of a butter knife. Discard the seeds, and chop the Tomatoes.

Place the Tomatoes, thinly sliced Lemons, and Sugar in as large a non-reactive pot as you have. Non reactive means that it is coated in some way, either with enamel, or a non-stick finish. Acidic ingredients taste metallic when cooked in an uncoated pot.

Stir, and allow to sit for an hour. This will be enough time for the Sugar to draw the juices from the tomatoes and Lemons.

Place the pan over a medium-high flame, and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. The mixture will foam, so watch out for runover.

Boil, and stir for about 20 minutes. As the juices evaporate, the mixture will thicken, and the foam become less. You are watching for the moment when the foam will disappear into the mixture.

Remove from the heat, and allow to cool before putting the Confit in the refrigerator. Sugar boils at very high temperatures, and it is safest to wait before pouring the confit into another container.

Chill and serve.

Excerpted from:

It's Not Just Chicken Soup

ARE YOU AGE 25 - 45...

Looking to meet new **Jewish friends**, network professionally and get more involved in the **Jewish community**?

DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS!

SUPER SUNDAY

Sunday, December 14th
Sabes JCC, Barry Family Campus
Support your community by volunteering between 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.

SUPER SUNDAY AFTER DARK PARTY

Sunday, December 14th
Champps (Minnetonka)
Party to feature Guitar Hero, food and drinks beginning at 7 p.m.

TZEDAKAH BOWL

Thursday, December 25th
Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome
Organized football and family activities from 8:15 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

HAPPY HOUR AT LAREDO'S

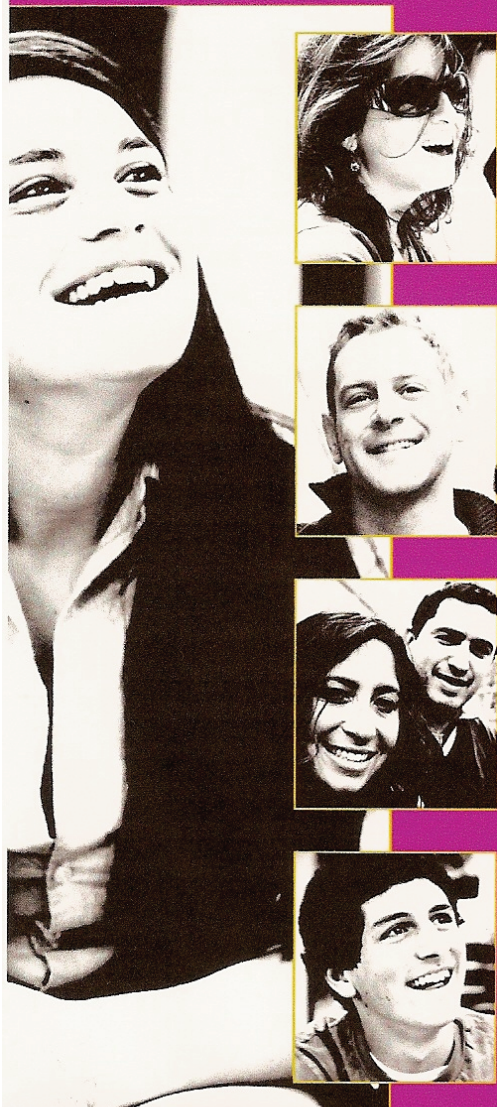
Thursday, January 29
Join us anytime after 5:30 p.m.

CASINO NIGHT

Saturday, January 31
Oak Ridge Country Club
Enjoy your favorite casino games, appetizers and cocktails.

Are you receiving our monthly Young Leadership E-mail about upcoming events? If not, contact Barb Adelman at 952.417.2347, badelman@mplsfed.org to sign up!

Visit us online at www.jewishminnesota.org.



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