

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

SHELAH

Haftarah: Yehoshua 2:1-24

MAY 31 – JUNE 1, 2013

23 SIVAN 5773

DEDICATIONS: In memory of Charles Sutton, 24 Sivan

Congratulations to Aryana on her graduation this week from Landers College and her upcoming marriage this week to Steven.

NEXT SHABBAT – SHEVA BERACHOT FOR ARYANA AND STEVEN – PLEASE JOIN US

Our thoughts are with Aliza and Ephraim Bulow on the loss of their son Donny

Those who would like to get in touch with the Bulows can call or write

Aliza's cell phone 720-7323636 Ephraim's cell phone 720 933-2059

their address is 4634 W 14th Ave, Denver Colorado 80204 – please keep in mind Denver is 2 hours behind us.

This Shabbat, The Lembergers will be hosting Rabbi Matan Weisberg and his wife, Chaya, who run the women's division of Heritage House – Rabbi Weisberg will be giving a class open to the entire community during Seudah Shelishi. We are attaching a couple of articles that may be of interest relating to their work. Please invite your friends. If you would like to dedicate Seudah Shelishi, please let us know.

Candles: 8:00 PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM –Please say Shemah at home by 8:16 AM

11:00 - 12:00 Orah's will be here with our Shabbat Morning Kids Program upstairs in the Rabbi's study. Stories, Tefillah, Games, Snacks and more . . . And Leah Colish will be babysitting down in the playroom

Kiddush sponsored by _____

5:30 - Mincha Shabbat Afternoon Oneg with Rabbi Yosef and Leah; Treats, Stories, Basketball, Hula-hoop, Parsha Quiz, Tefillot, Raffles and Fun! Supervised play during Seudat Shelishit.

5:30: Ladies Torah Class at the Lemberger's 1 East Olive.

**Class - Rav Aharon on Pirkey Avot 6:30, Minha: 7:15 PM –
Seudah Shelishi and a Class 7:50 – with Rabbi Matan Weisberg
Evening Service (Arbith): 8:50 PM - Shabbat Ends: 9:00 PM**

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Daily 6:30 AM class – Honest Business Practices

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai – 7PM

**LADIES: Wednesday Night 8PM with Esther Wein at The Grill Home
Financial Peace University – Tuesday at 8PM**

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We are looking for more adult chaperones and potential drivers.

We need Sponsors – We are hoping to raise \$1800 to supplement the costs

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Editors Notes

This week commemorates the third Yahrzeit of Rabbi Mordechai-Tzemach (ben Suliman & Mazal) Eliyahu (25 Sivan 2010), the former Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel. The Rabbi was a noted sage in all areas of Torah study, as well as a significant kabbalist, he was considered to be one of the leading authorities on Jewish law in Israel. He was very dear to the community. I was sent a wonderful story about the Rabbi and his visit with the President of France, Jacques Chirac. You will certainly enjoy it and tell it over.

There is also an amusing story about Ari Mandel who offered to sell his Olam HaBah – his heavenly reward on EBay and the deep-pocketed online bidder who gets to keep his \$100,000.

Finally last week's article on Monty Hall was emailed to me. Following the many comments we got, I checked and it originally came from the JewishJournal.com. It was written by David Suissa, president of TRIBE Media Corp./Jewish Journal. We apologize that we did not give proper credit at the time.

This Shabbat we'll be by the Young Israel of West Hempstead for the Shabbat Chattan of my future son in law Steven Ritholtz. If you're around, stop by and say hi!

Mind Tricks

Is seeing really believing? Can I rely on what I see in a world where images can easily be changed and illusions lead me to believe I see something that perhaps I don't? Does it matter if I wear glasses? And if my glasses are dirty or shaded, how does that affect what I perceive?

We grew up with certain truisms. "A picture is worth a thousand words" and "Seeing is believing". The first is often attributed to Confucius, though it was more

likely the invention of salesmen for early 20th century ad agencies. The second claims many originators. We see in the Torah following the Exodus and in anticipation of receiving the commandments at Sinai that G-d tells the Israelites: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and [how] I bore you on eagles' wings, and I brought you to Me". Rashi comments on the words, "You have seen" by explaining that, "This is not a tradition that you have. I am not sending you this [message] with words; I am not calling witnesses to testify before you, but you [yourselves] have seen what I did to the Egyptians...". Sight may be our most powerful sense.

This week we read the portion of Shelach which begins with Hashem allowing Moshe to send scouts to explore the land of Canaan. Twelve of the most important leaders are chosen. The scouts spend forty days surveying the land. They return to Moses with samplings of produce. And although all 12 saw the same things, we get conflicting reports. Ten concede that the land flowed with milk and honey, but it is, "a land that devours its inhabitants". They warned that its population was mighty and the cities fortified and impossible to conquer. Only Caleb and Joshua, argued that the land was wonderful, and there was no reason to worry because G d could surely bring the Israelites victory in battle. The Jewish people spent that entire night wailing, expressing their preference to return to Egypt rather than be defeated in battle by the Canaanites condemning themselves to a forty year journey during which all would die. This night is the night of Tisha BeAv and because they cried crocodile tears, G-d would see that in the future, we would cry real tears.

Commenting on the scouts complaint, "In every place which we passed we found the inhabitants burying their dead", Rashi explains that they missed the point. In fact, Hashem caused many deaths amongst them at that time, and so the Canaanites were engaged in burying their dead. This proved beneficial for the spies, because the giants were occupied with their mourning and paid no attention to the spies. My dear friend Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky asks. "How can an event that was providentially meant to be so beneficial, be misconstrued as an omen of misfortune?"

He tells a story, "Back in the early 1950's a large shoe consortium with stores across the United States and Canada, decided to take their business venture into the emerging continent of Africa. They sent two of their salesman to explore the prospects of business in the remote villages across the Dark Continent. After just one week, they received a cable

from the first salesman: "I am returning at once. No hope for business. Nobody here wears shoes!" They did not hear from the second salesman for four weeks. Then one day an urgent cable arrived. "Send 15,000 pairs of shoes at once! I have leased space in five locations. Will open chain of stores. This place is filled with opportunity. Nobody has shoes!"

Each time we see something with our eyes, our minds interpret that vision based upon who we are, what we want to see and what we've experienced in the past. Any police officer can tell you that two people, who witness the exact same incident, often perceive it completely differently. The Talmud expounds on the sin of the spies by stating that spoke before they saw or in essence that which was in their mind overwhelmed anything they might see.

And whether we judge the scouts favorably by stating they simply wanted the people to spend more time with Moses in the desert living the miraculous life of maan within the clouds of glory or if we judge them critically by suggesting that they were reluctant to enter the land because they were afraid to lose their positions, this preconceived image of "it's better not to go into the land" clouded whatever their eyes might see.

And therein lies the lesson for all of us. We must never forget that whatever we see in life, whatever we experience in life and whenever we are asked to give an opinion in life, our vision is somewhat clouded by who we are, where we come from, what we want and what we dream about. All of us perceive each situation we find ourselves in differently.

My teacher, Rabbi Asher Abittan, z'sl would explain to us that the first commandment of mussar – of ethical behavior - was to make every endeavor to know ourselves, know what glasses we are wearing and know that which might cloud or influence what we see. Once we know that what I see is not exactly what you see and before I act, I better ask and understand what you perceive; we'll all get along much better.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

The Chief Rabbi of Israel and Napoleon's Throne

In the early 2000's, Rabbi Mordechi Eliahu, the Rishon L'Tzion (Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel), received an official invitation from the President of France, Jacques Chirac, to visit his country.

Mr. Chirac, before ascending to the office of President in 1995, had previously served two terms as Prime Minister and nearly 20 years as the Mayor of Paris. Throughout his career he was known as a hard line, pro-Arab leader who constantly pushed Israel to cede territories to the Palestinians, thus bringing French-Israeli relations to an all time low.

Rabbi Eliahu, on the other hand, was a very outspoken individual with little patience for the formalities that are the essence of French culture. So the members of the Israeli embassy there were understandably very tense and apprehensive that the Rabbi might say or do something that would make things even worse than they were.

However, when the Rabbi arrived they soon calmed down. His outgoing and friendly demeanor put everyone at ease, and it seemed obvious to the embassy staff that the meeting would be nothing other than formalities and smiles.

But they were wrong. For instance, at the first leg of the official tour when they visited the French National Museum, the Rabbi demonstrated what seemed to be a shameful ignorance and insensitivity to French heritage.

When he was shown the throne of Napoleon he asked if it was for sale; and if so, for how much; and how long ago did Napoleon live! Then when shown one of the rooms of King Louis the Fourteenth he asked if this King was a moral person, which caused everyone to blush and even laugh behind the Rabbi's back.

The tour guide explained that the chair of Napoleon was of great historical and national importance and was certainly not for sale and regarding King Louis; although he was not known to be a particularly moral person, nevertheless France is proud of him as part of their heritage.

Afterwards they returned to the office of the president for an official ceremony where, after many introductions and formalities, Rabbi Eliahu was invited to say a few words that would be simultaneously translated into French.

Rabbi Eliahu began by describing in detail his tour of the museum and his questions that caused everyone to laugh.

At this point Rabbinit Tzivia realized that the translator was not paying attention to every word her husband was saying and, realizing that her husband was making some sort of point, requested that the

chief Rabbi of France, who was also present, should take over the task.

Rabbi Eliahu continued, "In my visit to the Museum I learned that the chair of Napoleon was not for sale because of its historical importance and that King Louis, although not a man of pure character is nevertheless revered and honored as a French hero. "I noticed that you expected me to honor these men also and were surprised when I did not do so, even though I am not French and do not even live in France.

"If so, my dear friends, I ask the same thing from you: We Jews also have our founders: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob but not of two or three hundred years ago and of questionable character like yours but of three and four thousand years ago and of impeccable integrity and selflessness.

"Is it too much to ask that just as you expect us to respect your founders and kings, so you should in turn respect ours?"

"For instance, over three thousand years ago Moses brought us to the Promised Land and some four hundred years afterwards our King David and King Solomon secured the city of Jerusalem.

"That is our history.

"Does it not make simple sense that just as you expect us to honor your heritage so you should honor ours? If the chair of Napoleon is not for sale then how can you expect us to sell parts of Israel and Jerusalem?"

The members of the Israeli embassy were in panic: this was exactly what they were afraid of! In the moment of silence that followed they were certain that Chirac would simply storm out of the room in a fury.

But they were in for a big surprise. All of the French officials present, including the President himself, stood and applauded!

Then Chirac warmly shook the Rabbi's hand, and immediately called one of his assistants and whispered something in his ear. The man left the room hurriedly and returned in just seconds with a small, velvet box.

Chirac asked for silence and then announced, "This medallion is usually reserved for visiting heads of state, but I have never heard anyone speak such clever words like these. They so impressed me that I am presenting this to you." And when he finished speaking the crowd gave the rabbi another standing

ovation. Adapted and supplemented by Yerachmiel Tilles from the rendition of Rabbi Tuvia Bolton on //ohrtmimim.org/torah (based on Sichat HaShavua #1331).

Heaven Can Wait for \$100K Jewish eBay Guy By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

The Jewish man who sparked a frenzied day of bidding by auctioning off a prime spot in heaven — a spiral that reached six figures before the online giant shut it down — insists the whole thing was a big joke.

"Disappointed? No. It was a joke that ran away from me, and sure, why not?" said Mandel, 31, of Teaneck, N.J. "When it reached \$100,000 I didn't really expect to get that money."

"It was nice to fantasize," he added. "But I didn't think it was going to happen."

Mandel said he had no idea his auction would turn into an internet sensation.

"I'm not a master prankster," he said. "This idea just popped in my head and I jumped on it."

Some in the ultra-Orthodox world apparently believed he was mocking their faith. But Mandel says his auction, which was peppered with references to Yiddish phrases and referred to common Jewish beliefs, was a good-natured joke.

"To those of you who took this seriously, chill out. It was just a joke," he said. "Whether or not you're a believer in this sort of thing, chill out."

Mandel was raised in an ultra-Orthodox community in upstate New York but left the community about seven years ago. He is now a divorced father of one child and a student who works as a part-time translator.

He posted "My Portion in Olam Habaah (Heaven)" on eBay Tuesday morning asking for an opening bid of a modest 99 cents.

He explained that he was sure to secure a spot in the hereafter because of his good deeds carried out over the years. He even offered to return the successful bidder's cash if he fell off the wagon.

Within a few hours, people were bidding several dollars. Then hundreds of dollars. Then, things really got crazy. In a frenzied hour late in the afternoon, the top bid skyrocketed to \$99,900.

Around the same time, eBay started getting complaints from people offended by the auction. As Mandel understands it, ultra-Orthodox internet users posted the item on online bulletin boards, sparking anger in the community.

"There were countless people offended," Mandel said. "People sent me screen shots of people having reported it."

An eBay representative called Mandel to inform him that the auction violated a rule prohibiting putting "non-tangible" items up for bids. The site warned him not to try to repost the item, and pulled down the listing from its web site.

Within seconds, the \$100,000 bid was gone what looked like a six-figure bonanza turned into a internet mirage.

Mandel says he's not upset about losing out on a big payday.

"I had fun while it lasted, you know? It was just a little gag," he said. "Kept me busy for a day."

As for the ultimate question, Mandel says he has no idea who might have bid \$100,000 for his little slice of Jewish heaven.

"I have no clue," he said. "I didn't have time to go into eBay all day, I was too busy talking to people here and everywhere else on the internet."

The 'Muslims-Killed-by-the-West' Lie By Dennis Prager

The alleged butcher of the off-duty British soldier, Drummer Lee Rigby, defended his carving up of a living human being by claiming that he was engaging in "an eye for an eye" because the British army is killing Muslims in Afghanistan.

Normally there is no reason to respond to the justifications offered by terrorists and other murderers of the innocent. But in this case it is important to do so because much of the Muslim world resonates to this argument and because much of the world's left offers this argument.

This is true even though a large majority of Muslims do not support terror and even though leftists do not support it. Nevertheless, throughout the Muslim and leftist worlds it is believed — and our children are taught this at college — that America, the UK. and

other countries are targeted by Muslims because we kill Muslims.

The argument is morally perverse and a lie.

First, the U.K. and others are in Afghanistan in order to defend Muslims. Brits and other Westerners are risking their lives, and dying, in that country on behalf of Muslims.

Here's a question for Muslims and leftists who buy this argument about the West killing Muslims in Afghanistan: Who are we fighting in Afghanistan?

I thought the Brits and Americans were fighting the Taliban, the people who throw acid in Muslim girls' faces for attending school, the people who murder nurses who inoculate Muslim children against disease. Now, if fighting the Taliban is to be equated with fighting Muslims, this is a real contradiction of everything much of the Islamic world and virtually all of the left have been contending for years — that the Taliban represent a tiny group of extremists in the Muslim world, and that they have so completely perverted Islam that they cannot even be called Muslims.

Well, you can't have it both ways. If killing the Taliban is the same as "killing Muslims," then you can't argue that the Taliban don't represent Islam or Muslims.

So, on the issue of the West fighting in Afghanistan, the Muslims and the left need to make up their minds: Is killing the Taliban a service or a disservice to Muslims? This is the first and last question both groups need to answer. Everything else is commentary.

Second, if any group here should be entitled to exercise an eye for an eye, wouldn't it be Christians? It is Christians who are being murdered, and whose communities are being decimated, in the Muslim world. Christians have lived in the Middle East — in places such as Iraq and Egypt — since long before Muhammad was born. It is Christians in Nigeria who are routinely slaughtered by Muslims. And it is Christians in Pakistan who are burned alive in their churches.

And what about the 52 Brits blown up by Muslim terrorists in the U.K. on July 7, 2005? How is it that not one Brit decided to take an eye for an eye against any Muslim?

In the real world — as opposed to the fantasy worlds of the Organization of Islamic States and your local university — it is Christians who are being killed by

Muslims, not Muslims who are being killed by Christians.

And there's a third lie to this claim of Muslims as victims of the West.

Nearly every one of the tens of thousands of Muslims killed in the last few years has been killed by other Muslims — in Syria and Iraq in particular.

There is something of great significance to be learned from this. In the Muslim world today, it is hatred of the West, not love of — or even concern for — fellow Muslims, that animates Muslim atrocities and terror against the West. Just as it is Arab hatred of Israel, rather than Arab love of fellow Arabs that animates the Arab world.

Every Muslim and every Western leftist who perpetrates the lie about the West killing Muslims as the source of Islamist terror abets that terror.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: Moshe sends the Spies on their mission.

2nd Aliya: The Spies return carrying the massive fruits of the land. They deliver their negative report and the nation loses its faith in G-d and Moshe.

3rd Aliya: Moshe successfully argues for the life of the nation, and Hashem issues the 40 year decree of wandering and dying.

4th Aliya: The Spies die, and the nation is informed of their own punishment.

5th Aliya: The laws of the Mincha - meal offering are stated.

6th Aliya: The laws of separating Challah - the dough offering, and the communal sin offering are stated.

7th Aliya: The individual sin offering; the incident with the man who transgressed Shabbos by gathering sticks; his punishment; and the Mitzvah of Tzitzit, conclude the Parsha.

This week's Haftorah Yehoshua 2:1 relates the story of Yehoshua sending Kalev and Pinchas to spy out Yericho, their encounter with Rachav, and their report confirming the fear of Yericho's inhabitants. The connection to our Parsha is obvious, however the outcome of this "second mission" was far different than the first one 38 years earlier. The year was 2488 -1273 b.c.e.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

Do not rebel against Hashem and you will not fear the people of the land." (Bemidbar 14:9)

This week's perashah details the first encounter between the Jewish nation and the Land of Israel. While ten out of the twelve spies sent ahead to scout out the land warn that the Jews have no realistic chance of overcoming the enemies that occupy the Land of Israel, Yehoshua and Caleb take a different tack. Their argument is that the size and power of the enemy is irrelevant when it comes to Jews living in Israel. The only thing that is relevant is how the Jews conduct themselves in their relationship with Hashem.

The verse quoted above says don't rebel and do not fear. Rashi explains that we mustn't think that "do not rebel against Hashem" and "you should not fear the people of the land" are two different things. Rather, one is an outgrowth of the other. If you don't rebel against Hashem then you will have no reason to fear. This explains why Yehoshua and Caleb told the people "Do not rebel against Hashem," although they were trying to calm the people rather than to chastise them. For trusting G-d rather than rebelling against Him will alleviate their fear (from Mishmeret Hakodesh).

In times of uncertainty, Jews in Israel and around the world have to go back to basics, to focus on spiritual growth and our relationship with Hashem.

Actually, all of the Jewish nation is not far from this realization. A year ago, in explaining the need to make large painful cuts to Israel's national budget, finance minister Yuval Steinmitz told his cabinet colleagues, "If Heaven forbid Israel faced the situation of Spain no entity or country would give us 100 billion Euros in assistance." The point is well taken; no one will bail the country out economically. The same is true when it comes to national security. The world won't raise a finger if Israel gives up Yehudah and Shomron in order to create an independent Palestinian state and then finds Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport under constant missile fire.

The math is simple. Even the secular Jew agrees that Israel can't count on anyone. Any student of Jewish history knows that the Jewish nation has always been on its own, despite all of its enemies. So if we're still here, it must be Hashem is with us.

This recognition, even by senior government ministers, that Israel can't count on anyone else, is significant. It is our hope and prayer that this recognition, in light of the dangers threatening Israel's survival, will prompt some soul-searching that leads to a nationwide reawakening to our relationship with Hashem. Only then will we have nothing to fear. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

At the end of the perashah, the Torah tells us that one individual was caught violating the Shabbat by chopping firewood and was brought before the Bet Din for judgment. Moshe was informed that this person must be put to death by stoning and, indeed, they carried out this sentence. The Gemara tells us that this person's motive was for the sake of heaven, because he had heard people questioning whether the punishments written in the Torah would ever be meted out. He therefore used himself as a test case so that the Jewish people would take the commandments seriously and thereby the Torah would be observed more properly.

At first glance, it seems that this man should be called a hero since he sacrificed himself for the sake of Heaven and the Torah, and yet, we know he is considered a sinner and was treated as such. The message here is that we should not be smarter than Hashem. If He tells us not to do something, then that is His will, and to do the reverse, although with "kosher" motivations in mind, is not the proper thing. Many times we talk about other people, knowing that it is against the Torah, with the excuse that G-d Himself would want us to do this. Other times we act in an improper way in business and rationalize that in our situation, this is the proper way because more benefit will come out. We have to keep this lesson in mind and always ask a halachic authority if we want to change what we know to be correct. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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[Yehoshua and Kaleb](#)

Parashat Shelah tells the tragic story of the Meragelim, the scouts sent to Eretz Yisrael who came back with a discouraging report and urged the nation not to proceed into the land. Two of the twelve scouts – Yehoshua and Kaleb – dissented and presented a favorable report about the land and the prospects of its conquest. Unfortunately, the majority prevailed, and the people were persuaded not to proceed.

When the Torah lists the names of the twelve scouts, it refers to Yehoshua – who was the closest disciple of Moshe Rabbenu – by the name "Hoshea." Rashi explains that this was Yehoshua's original name, but Moshe added the letters "Yod" and "Heh" to form the name "Yehoshua." These letters, which spell a Name of Hashem ("Y-ah"), were added as a prayer to G-d that "Y-ah Yoshi'acha Me'asat Ha'meragelim" – "G-d shall save you from the plot of the scouts." Moshe knew through prophetic insight that the scouts would plot to dissuade the people from entering the land, and he thus prayed that his dear student would be protected from their influence and have the fortitude to oppose them.

The second dissenter, Kaleb, also received the strength to oppose the majority through the power of prayer. As Rashi tells later in the Parasha, when Kaleb arrived in Eretz Yisrael he temporarily separated from the other spies and went to Hebron, to the site of Me'arat Ha'machpela, where the patriarchs are buried. He went there in order to pray for assistance in resisting the influence of the scouts.

Yehoshua and Kaleb were outstanding Sadikim, and yet they needed special prayers for protection from the influence of their peers. Moshe was concerned about his closest and most outstanding disciple, and Kaleb did not feel confident in his ability to withstand the pressure without reciting a special prayer at a holy site. The power of peer influence is so strong that even the greatest Sadikim are vulnerable to its force, and can get thrown off course by their surroundings. As great as Yehoshua and Kaleb were, they needed special divine protection to be able to withstand the pressure exerted by the other ten scouts.

This message assumes special importance in contemporary times, when we live in a society that has, unfortunately, plummeted to such depths of immorality. We are bombarded on a daily basis by messages that run in direct contrast to the Torah values which we hold dear. We are far from the level of Yehoshua and Kaleb, and yet we are exposed to unrelenting -sinful influences constantly. If Yehoshua and Kaleb needed special prayers to protect them, then we can only imagine what kind of lengths we must go to in order to protect ourselves and our children from the negative influences exerted upon us. In every generation, but especially in ours, we must work vigorously to shield ourselves from the influences around us, through prayers, Torah learning and education, and by surrounding ourselves with like-minded devoted Jews so we come under their positive Torah influence instead of being exposed to the negative influences of contemporary society.

Rabbi Wein JEWISH REVENGE

More than seventy years have passed since the onset of the Holocaust and the destruction of most of the Jews of Europe. Any objective observer will have to agree that almost all of the perpetrators, planners and collaborators who participated in that heinous stain on the civilization and culture of the Western world were never punished for their behavior and crimes. Even those who were tried were soon rewarded with commuted sentences, shortened prison terms, and eventually full rehabilitation and participation in regular civil life.

That generation of criminals mostly died in their beds without ever having to truly account for their crimes to the families of their victims or to the judgment and conscience of the world at large. Except for the Nuremberg Ten, Adolf Eichmann and a few hundred top Nazis who fell into Soviet hands, there were very few revengeful reprisals against the murderers who continued to live normal lives after the end of the war.

Simon Wiesenthal as an individual person, and later recognized by the organization named after him, continued, and still continues, to pursue the murderers living amongst us. But, in the main, their pursuit remains futile relative to the number of criminals and the crimes that were committed. Jews are apparently not that good at playing revenge games, as revenge is popularly defined in our violent culture.

Israel has managed a number of times to exact revenge upon terrorists and murderers but the list is long and the day is short. And in the clucking, politically correct, even-handed culture that currently dominates Western intellectual thought and political action, retribution is frowned upon. Where there is no morality present, there really is no crime present either, for everything is understandable and even justifiable.

And, anyway, victims must bear most of the guilt for the fate visited on them. For otherwise how can one explain the presence of this type of evil in a rational and mentally well-balanced world?

So Jewish vengeance must perforce take on a different definition and be seen in a far more focused and illuminating light than ordinary acts of retribution. Last week the family of the Belzer rebbe – the Rokeachs – celebrated the wedding of the rebbe's grandson. The wedding ceremony took place in the courtyard of the great and magnificent Belz synagogue and the festive meal took place later in

the International Conference Center – Binyanei Haumah – in bustling, traffic-choked Jerusalem. Over fifteen thousand people attended the wedding.

The previous Belzer rebbe escaped from Hungary in 1944 just weeks before the German invasion and takeover of the country. He arrived in the Land of Israel, broken in body and alone in spirit, with almost all of his family and chasidim on the way to Auschwitz. He barely was able to muster up a minyan – a quorum of ten men – to start up his court once again. But somehow Belz, like the Jewish people itself, rejuvenated and revitalized the future generations that were miraculously born to it.

Today, the grand Belz synagogue dominates parts of the Jerusalem view and once again, as in Eastern Europe, Belzer adherents flock to the court of the rebbe for advice, sustenance, prayer and spirit. Thus, last week, caught in a taxi on a Jerusalem street in the midst of a colossal traffic jam occasioned by the wedding procession, I thought to myself: "This wedding and all that it entails and represents is our true revenge against Hitler and his cohorts. I thank the Lord that I have lived to witness it."

In effect, the existence of the Jewish people and especially of the State of Israel is itself the true revenge against all those criminals who attempted to destroy and uproot us just a few decades ago. The Holocaust was a terrible event in our history – an event without human explanation or even seeming theological justification. Yet the aftermath of the Holocaust, the revival of the Jewish people in all facets of human life, culture, technology, medicine and politics, the creation and continued flourishing of the State of Israel, the salvation of Russian Jewry, and the immense growth of Torah and tradition in Jewish society, are all nothing short of being truly miraculous.

This is the ultimate revenge against those who sought to destroy us – if you will have it, the ultimate revenge against history itself. The prophet taught us: "Not by might nor by strength but by My spirit!" We cannot kill all of our enemies nor punish all of those who rise against us. But in our existence and continued intellectual, physical and spiritual development do we refute all of their hateful, false accusations and nefarious plans. Being Jewish in practice and perspective is itself sufficient to allow one to be part of the ongoing pattern of Jewish revenge.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks
Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations
of the Commonwealth**

Beyond the Fringe

Our sedra ends with one of the great commands of Judaism - tsitsit, the fringes we wear on the corner of our garments as a perennial reminder of our identity as Jews and our obligation to keep the Torah's commands:

God spoke to Moses, telling him to speak to the Israelites and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments for all generations. Let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe: look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them, so that you do not stray after your heart and eyes which in the past have led you to immorality. You will thus remember and keep all my commandments and be holy to your God.

So central is this command, that it became the third paragraph of the Shema, the supreme declaration of Jewish faith. I once heard the following commentary from my teacher, Rabbi Dr Nahum Rabinovitch.

He began by pointing out some of the strange features of the command. On the one hand the sages said that the command of tsitsit is equal to all the other commands together, as it is said: "Look at it and recall all the commandments of the Lord and observe them." It is thus of fundamental significance.

On the other hand, it is not absolutely obligatory. It is possible to avoid the command of fringes altogether by never wearing a garment of four or more corners. Maimonides rules: "Even though one is not obligated to acquire a [four-cornered] robe and wrap oneself in it in order to [fulfil the command of] tsitsit, it is not fitting for a pious individual to exempt himself from this command" (Laws of Tsitsit, 3: 11). It is important and praiseworthy but not categorical. It is conditional: if you have such a garment, then you must put fringes on it. Why so? Surely it should be obligatory, in the way that tefillin (phylacteries) are.

There is another unusual phenomenon. In the course of time, the custom has evolved to fulfil the command in two quite different ways: the first, in the form of a tallit (robe, shawl) which is worn over our other clothes, specifically while we pray; the second in the form of an undergarment, worn beneath our outer clothing throughout the day.

Not only do we keep the one command in two different ways. We also make different blessings over the two forms. Over the tallit, we say: "who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to wrap ourselves in a fringed garment." Over the undergarment, we say, "who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the precept of the fringed garment." Why is one command split into two in this way?

He gave this answer: there are two kinds of clothing. There are the clothes we wear to project an image. A king, a judge, a soldier, all wear clothing that conceals the individual and instead proclaims a role, an office, a rank. As such, clothes, especially uniforms, can be misleading. A king dressed as a beggar will not (or would not, before television) be recognised as royalty. A beggar dressed as a king may find himself honoured. A policeman dressed as a policeman carries with him a certain authority, an aura of power, even though he may feel nervous and insecure. Clothes disguise. They are like a mask. They hide the person beneath. Such are the clothes we wear in public when we want to create a certain impression.

But there are other clothes we wear when we are alone, that may convey more powerfully than anything else the kind of person we really are: the artist in his studio, the writer at his desk, the gardener tending the roses. They do not dress to create an impression. To the contrary: they dress as they do because of what they are, not because of what they wish to seem.

The two kinds of tsitsit represent these different forms of dress. When we engage in prayer, we sense in our heart how unworthy we may be of the high demands God has made of us. We feel the need to come before God as something more than just ourselves. We wrap ourselves in the robe, the tallit, the great symbol of the Jewish people at prayer. We conceal our individuality – in the language of the blessing over the tallit, we "wrap ourselves in a fringed garment." It is as if we were saying to God: I may only be a beggar, but I am wearing a royal robe, the robe of your people Israel who prayed to You throughout the centuries, to whom You showed a special love and took as Your own. The tallit hides the person we are and represents the person we would like to be, because in prayer we ask God to judge us, not for what we are, but for what we wish to be.

The deeper symbolism of tsitsit, however, is that it represents the commandments as a whole ("look at it

and recall all the commandments of the Lord”) – and these becomes part of what and who we are only when we accept them without coercion, of our own free will. That is why the command of tsitsit is not categorical. We do not have to keep it. We are not obligated to buy a four-cornered garment. When we do so, it is because we chose to do so. We obligate ourselves. That is why opting to wear tsitsit symbolises the free acceptance of all the duties of Jewish life.

This is the most inward, intimate, intensely personal aspect of faith whereby in our innermost soul we dedicate ourselves to God and His commands. There is nothing public about this. It is not for outer show. It is who we are when we are alone, not trying to impress anyone, not wishing to seem what we are not. This is the command of tsitsit as undergarment, beneath, not on top of, our clothing. Over this we make a different blessing. We do not talk about “wrapping ourselves in a fringed garment” – because this form of fringes is not for outward show. We are not trying to hide ourselves beneath a uniform. Instead, we are expressing our innermost commitment to God’s word and call to us. Over this we say the blessing, “who has commanded us concerning the precept of tsitsit” because what matters is not the mask but the reality, not what we wish to seem but what we really are.

In this striking way tsitsit represent the dual nature of Judaism. On the one hand it is a way of life that is public, communal, shared with others across the world and through the ages. We keep Shabbat, celebrate the festivals, observe the dietary laws and the laws of family purity in a way that has hardly varied for many centuries. That is the public face of Judaism – the tallit we wear, the cloak woven out of the 613 threads, each a command.

But there is also our inner life as people of faith. There are things we can say to God that we can say to no one else. He knows our thoughts, hopes, fears, better than we know them ourselves. We speak to Him in the privacy of the soul, and He listens. That internal conversation – the opening of our heart to Him who brought us into existence in love – is not for public show. Like the fringed undergarment, it stays hidden. But it is no less real an aspect of Jewish spirituality. The two types of fringed garment represent the two dimensions of the life of faith – the outer persona and the inner person, the image we present to the world and the face we show only to God.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

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FEATURE BY GAVRIEL HORAN

Keeping Reb Meir Schuster's Dream Alive

A young kollel couple, inexperienced in fund-raising, took upon themselves a huge challenge in order to help secure the future of Heritage House

Rachel was Jewish, but you might never have guessed it by looking at her with her shaved head and large backpack. Obviously, her Judaism meant very little to her; Israel was just another stop on her backpacking trip around the world.

She could easily have ended up moving on, never reclaiming her Jewish heritage. Instead she did an about-face and today is *frum*, and living in Yerushalayim with her husband and baby.

What inspired Rachel to make the change? There were many individuals along the way who contributed, but the catalyst that got her going was Heritage House.

The Heritage House youth hostel in the Old City of Yerushalayim is a home for thousands of Jewish travelers passing through Israel each year. Besides providing a free bed, Heritage House serves as a base where young secular Jews can begin to explore their Judaism in a nonthreatening and nurturing environment.

It is often their first exposure to Orthodox Jews. Just meeting warm, nonjudgmental, and intelligent *frum* Jews melts away many of the stereotypes and prejudices against Judaism. Indeed, every year dozens of students go on from Heritage House to enroll in seminaries and yeshivos throughout Israel. Even those who don't become more observant gain a greater appreciation and respect for Judaism and a desire to become more connected in the future.

Since its inception, the women's Heritage House was granted the use of its spacious facilities free of charge due to the generosity of a magnanimous donor. This week, after 25 years on the premises, Heritage House finally secured long-term

usage of the building, providing it with a permanent home in Yerushalayim.

Incredibly, the massive fund-raising effort needed to make this possible didn't come from professional fund-raisers, but from a young *kollel* couple who committed themselves to achieving the impossible.

Reb Meir Schuster — Rising To The Occasion

Following the 1967 Six Day War, hundreds of idealistic secular Jews came to Israel to volunteer. They flocked to the Kosel, which they knew was the spiritual center of the Jewish people, but didn't know how to connect to it. Rabbi Meir Schuster, an unassuming *kollel* student at the time, saw a secular young man at the Kosel who had clearly had been moved by his experience there. Reb Meir approached him and asked if he would be interested in learning more about Judaism. The young man said he would love to learn more about his heritage.

Reb Meir was so inspired by this encounter that he began patrolling the Kosel day and night, searching for lost Jewish souls and bringing them back to Judaism. Ironically, Reb Meir is an introvert by nature, completely untrained in *kiruv* or public speaking. Nonetheless he saw the need, rose to the occasion and had unimaginable Divine assistance. His life is testimony to what people can do if they commit themselves to helping *Klal Yisrael*.

During his 40-year career Reb Meir would gather dozens of students a day from the Kosel and send them off to *baalei teshuvah* yeshivos. Early on, he realized that there was no place to send those who were not yet ready for yeshivah. Back then,

the only places they could stay in the Old City were in the Muslim and Christian Quarters — options that were replete with all sorts of negative influences. Reb Meir decided to set up a halfway house to help students make the transition between a totally secular lifestyle and a yeshivah setting.

In 1985, he opened the men's and women's Heritage House youth hostels in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Since then, over 60,000 young Jews from around the world have stayed under their roof, countless numbers of whom have increased their Jewish observance due largely to their experiences there.

Although it seemed as if his energy and devotion to the Jewish people would last forever, at the age of 65, Reb Meir was diagnosed with Lewy Body, a debilitating disease with symptoms similar to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. After 25 years under his watchful leadership and devoted efforts, the Heritage House was suddenly on its own.

A Home of Their Own

With the loss of Rabbi Schuster's leadership, there was a very real danger that Heritage House would cease to exist. Who could rise to the occasion and assume the mantle of leadership left by this *kiruv* giant?

Rabbi Matan and Chaya Weisberg had been running the women's Heritage House for seven years as the *av* and *eim bayis*. After witnessing so many miracles and success stories, they felt they had to do something.

"Lives are being saved through the hostel on a regular basis," Rabbi Weisberg said. In addition to overseeing the day-

to-day workings of the women's hostel, Rabbi Weisberg also learns in the Mir Yeshivah. "We've personally watched hundreds of brave women change their lives and therefore felt an obligation to try to save the organization."

The Weisbergs had their own share of life-changing experiences. Rabbi Weisberg was born in Israel and raised in South Africa. While serving in the IDF, he started to become *frum*. After completing his army service he enrolled in Aish HaTorah in the Old City and has been learning in yeshivah ever since. During his time at Aish, he worked as a counselor at the men's Heritage House. Shortly after getting married, the Weisbergs were offered the position of *av* and *eim bayis* at the women's hostel.

Later, the Weisbergs set out to accomplish the impossible — lead a campaign to secure the organization's presence in the building, despite their lack of fund-raising experience. "We felt it was essential for the future of Heritage House and for Reb Meir Schuster's legacy so that it could continue to grow and thrive even without his involvement," Rabbi Weisberg said. "Reb Meir's story obligates everyone to try to do whatever he can to help *Klal Yisrael*."

Shortly before one of their first parlor meetings in Chicago, the Weisbergs needed to produce a video. They called up a video production studio straight from the phonebook, skeptical that anyone would agree to do the job on such short notice. When they asked the president of the company if he had ever heard of Heritage House he shouted, "Of course I've heard of Heritage House — I became *frum* there!" He agreed to do the project imme-

diately, at a discounted rate.

He put them in touch with his videographer and editor who, it turned out, also had their first exposure to *Yiddishkeit* at Heritage House, leading them to become *frum*. "We've had stories like that on a weekly basis," Rabbi Weisberg recalled. "It obligates us to continue!"

After nearly a full year of hard work and tremendous *siyatta diShmaya*, they succeeded in securing long-term usage of the building with the help of many kind lenders and donors, giving Heritage House a permanent home for the very first time.

Teaching by Example

As the new directors of the women's Heritage House, the Weisbergs plan to continue providing a home for young nonaffiliated Jewish women from all over the world. The bulk of women who pass through the hostel are visiting Israel on volunteer and internship programs, not to mention Birthright participants who come because it's free. They also get a fair share of Jewish travelers on their way around the world.

Considering that the Heritage House staff may only have one chance to reach out to these visitors, they have to do so without sounding preachy. "Our job is to try to build a genuine relationship with the women, while encouraging them to grow and make greater choices," Mrs. Chaya Weisberg said. "We do that by creating a genuinely warm environment that teaches *Yiddishkeit* by example. We share Torah in a natural way, not by lecturing."

In addition to managing the hostel staff, Mrs. Weisberg also

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"Heritage House has the ability to help every Jew feel at home in Yerushalayim," says Mrs. Weisberg.



Rabbi Weisberg: "We've personally watched hundreds of brave women change their lives and therefore felt an obligation to try to save the organization."

SECURITY & DIPLOMACY

Continued from page A9

officers and soldiers who come to the United States for training for this purpose.

Leahy, who is on the Democratic Party's left flank, has been sharply critical of Israel in recent years, especially following Operation Cast Lead in late 2008. However, he also signed Congressional resolutions supporting Israel's right to self-defense.

Al Jazeera Journalist Detained In Israel

An Al Jazeera journalist has been detained in Israel for more than a week. Samir Allawi, 46, who heads the network's office in Kabul, Afghanistan, was arrested on Aug. 10 after a three-week family visit in Yehudah and Shomron.

He was brought before a military judge earlier this week, where

he was reportedly charged with membership in Hamas and making contact with members of the group's military faction.

Allawi rejected the charges, and claimed through his lawyer that they were trumped up solely to keep him behind bars.

Allawi's arrest was condemned by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Hamas Accuses Fatah of Violating Reconciliation Agreement

Hamas on Sunday accused PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement of violating a reconciliation agreement by opening voter registration for local elections due to be held in October in Yehudah and Shomron.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said voter registration violated the agreement's call on both sides to avoid unilateral steps that could jeopardize the pact signed in Cairo in April.

Implementation of the accord has been held up by a disagreement between Hamas and Fatah over who would head an interim unity government in the run-up to presidential and parliamentary elections next year.

Al-Hayat: U.N. Striving To Demilitarize Southern Lebanon

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has disclosed that U.N. peacekeeping forces are working to enforce the demilitarization of southern Lebanon, below the Litani River. The U.N. hopes to gain the cooperation of the Lebanese army, the London-based *Al-Hayat* newspaper reported at the weekend.

The area involved was declared off-limits to Hizbullah at the end of the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

Al-Hayat added that Ban has told members of the U.N. Security Council that both Lebanon and Israel have agreed

to negotiate maritime security issues through the United Nations and with assistance from local experts. The two countries have been at loggerheads over the boundary between their maritime economic zones, a sensitive issue due to Israel's major deep-sea gas finds off its northern coast.

Syria Calls on U.N. To Thwart Israel's 'Separation Fence' on Golan

Israel is harming the residents of Majdal Shams and taking over their lands in order to build a "racist separation fence," Syria's ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari, complained last week in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.

The letter was sent to the secretary-general on Aug. 8, the day the Syrian army killed more than 60 protesters in the city of Deir al-Zour. On the same day, Arab

League Secretary-General Nabil al-Arabi issued the first condemnation of the Assad regime's actions and called for an end to the killing of civilians.

Egypt to Put 'Mossad Spies' On Trial

Egypt's attorney general has referred a Jordanian and an Israeli to the National Security Emergency Court on charges of "spying for a foreign country with the purpose of harming Egyptian national interests."

Bashar Ibrahim Abu Zeid, a Jordanian telecommunications engineer, was detained in Egypt last April after intelligence information allegedly showed he was spying for the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency.

Ofer Harari, a Mossad officer, is to be tried in absentia. Harari is alleged to have tasked Abu Zeid with recruiting Egyptians working in the telecom sector and tracking telephone calls in Egypt.

REB MEIR SCHUSTER

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works as a family therapist. From her experience, one of the most successful forms of *kiruv* is to allow secular Jews to experience a loving *frum* home from the inside.

This poses a problem, however, because although most religious people care about secular Jews and want to invite them over for Shabbos to witness a *frum* home, it is not always possible to do so for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, secular Jews often

feel a certain degree of pressure and insecurity in a *frum* home.

"Heritage House has the ability to help every Jew feel at home in Yerushalayim," she continued. "Our staff sets a home atmosphere in which secular girls can totally be themselves while experiencing a *frum* environment. Whether through light-hearted joking, serious discussions, singing and dancing, or bringing them to *frum* weddings, we aim to touch each and every *neshamah* in the way that works for them. We genuinely care about each and

every woman who walks through our door."

The results speak for themselves. Although the vast majority of the 1,100 girls who visit Heritage House each year have minimal to nonexistent interest in learning about Judaism when they first arrive, 75 percent of them end up going to classes in one of Yerushalayim's *kiruv* programs. Dozens go on to attend seminaries in Israel long-term, and countless others begin making steps toward *teshuvah* after they return home through Heritage House's

follow-up system.

One of their most antireligious guests was a very intelligent girl from Toronto who came to Israel to attend an *ulpan* in Tel Aviv. When she stopped by Heritage House, Mrs. Weisberg offered her the opportunity to stay for the rest of the year and attend an even better *ulpan* in Yerushalayim. The girl accepted the offer but made sure to avoid all of the staff members for weeks. After five weeks at the hostel, she finally opened up to one of the counselors about her questions regarding feminism

in Judaism. The counselor convinced her to attend a class the next day on the subject. She loved it and continued going. She eventually went on to attend a Hebrew-speaking seminary and married an Israeli *baal teshuvah*.

"We are planting seeds," Mrs. Weisberg said. "Whether it's us or somebody else in the future, our goal is to lower the barriers that stand between these Jews and the *frum* community. Every word and action makes a difference. You never know when it will bear fruit."

THE FACE

Continued from page A23

OIG report states that the embassy has invested too much time inspecting the use of the guarantees.

"Planning should begin now for its orderly termination," the report states. "Since the last OIG inspection, Israel has been admitted to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, an indication that it is now a modern, self-sufficient economy capable of supporting its citizens as an industrialized country. The OIG team found a broad consensus that the loan guarantee program can prudently be terminated in accordance with the sunset clause in the original legislation, which provided that it would end by 2011."

Cunningham, Shapiro's predecessor — who is now the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan — earned praise in the report for the "productive relationships" he forged with senior Israeli and Washington officials. Nevertheless, the report states, "Communication within the mission is limited. The ambassador is respected for his intellectual ability but rarely interacts with employees below the most senior ranks. The ambassador does not visit the [political] section and does not routinely share with it the results of his

meetings. ... The deputy chief of mission's outgoing personality complements the ambassador's more reserved leadership style.

"The embassy struggles to meet a heavy demand for analytical reporting in an environment where many interlocutors deal only with a few key Washington officials," the report continues. "The problem is exacerbated by poor management of the political section. Political work is hindered by a lack of clearly prioritized instructions to facilitate the efforts of all officers.

"The [OIG] team also encouraged the mission to add its greatest comparative value by expanding contacts with mid-level politicians and reporting on domestic factors that affect the policies and stability of Israel's coalition government," states the report, which also highlights the unbearable burden created by the thousands of visits by high-ranking American officials each year: "The volume of official visitors to Embassy Tel Aviv is so great that it is interfering with essential business."

A Diplomat Divided

The report states that the embassy building on Hayarkon Street in Tel Aviv is antiquated and dilapidated, and that the crowded conditions are intolerable. A law passed in Congress in 1995 ruled that until the embassy is moved to Yerushalayim, the State Department is forbidden to build any new building for

American diplomats. Since then, all U.S. presidents have postponed the transfer of the embassy, due to political and security considerations. It has been years since any significant expansion or renovation of the building has been undertaken.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Consulate General is located on Agron Street in western Jerusalem and is responsible for links with the Palestinian Authority. Like Shapiro, the consul general in Yerushalayim, Daniel Rubinstein, is Jewish, speaks Arabic and Hebrew, and has abundant experience in the Middle East. The consulate is not subordinate to the embassy in Tel Aviv and reports directly to Washington. This is relatively rare in the American diplomatic administration, similar only in Hong Kong, where the consulate is independent despite being part of the American diplomatic mission in China.

Since the start of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, a professional rivalry has developed between the embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Yerushalayim. In many instances, instead of working together to advance American policy, the ambassador and the consul general have engaged in internal battles in Washington.

Rival Reporting

The inspection report reveals that coordination between the two representatives has



Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel James B. Cunningham (R.), with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, forged "productive relationships" with senior Israeli and Washington officials, but not with lower-ranking employees in his embassy.

improved due to good personal relationships between the two current heads. But, it adds, "Instead of waiting for such problems to resurface, the missions could move now to institutionalize this atmosphere and create an ongoing culture of cooperation.

"The embassy bases its reporting on Israeli sources, and the consulate on Palestinian sources. On occasion, this has led to the contradictory perspectives of two foreign adversaries rather than an integrated view of both missions. The embassy and consulate have begun to hold joint meetings on some subjects, but their efforts to combine reporting have been hindered by too

narrow a view of which post will receive the primary credit and which one will be listed as 'contributing.'

"The consulate produces strong reporting on the West Bank, where it has extensive contacts with the senior levels of the Palestinian Authority," the report continues. "The mission is aware that it is less successful in reporting the views of ordinary Palestinians outside Ramallah. For security reasons, those areas are more difficult and expensive to reach; for now, the mission focuses its scarce resources on areas such as Ramallah that are more likely to undergo immediate reporting and respond to heavy demands by Washington consumers."



Heritage House: A Taste of Judaism Beyond Bagels and Lox

By BaltimoreJewishLife.com/Margie Pensak

Posted on 09/16/11

Baltimore, MD - Sept. 15 - **Bracha Shor** first visited Israel in 1993, when she was on Semester at Sea--a shipboard program for global study abroad. It was one of thirteen countries around the world that the program visited. Fortunately for Bracha, her ship just happened to arrive at the Israeli port on Shabbos.

"I wasn't yet keeping Shabbos and didn't realize that everything would be closed," says Bracha. "**Heritage House** youth hostel in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City section of Yerushalayim was open, it was free, and I ended up going to the women's house; there was a separate one for girls and guys. They tell you, early in the morning, to go experience Israel and come back at night. That's what I did. You got to talk about whatever you wanted to, they set you up for meals on Shabbos, and I got to meet some wonderful families.

"I loved Heritage House so much, after I became shomer Shabbos and mitzvos, I went back in the beginning of '05," continues Bracha. "I ended up staying there for six months! It's so comfortable and they were very hands off and laid back, helping people learn about their Jewish heritage. Because of Heritage House, I ended up exploring my educational program options in Israel. Again, I thought I would stay for just two weeks; I ended up staying for two years, learning at Shearim College of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, a women's Torah study program. While in Israel, I met my husband-to-be and we got married.

"It's just a very special place and it gives people the chance to explore their Jewish roots and grow, even if they don't realize that there was room to grow in Yiddishkeit," says Bracha. "By just going to Hebrew school, who knew that Judaism is beautiful and that there is something of value in it? The typical attitude of a Hebrew school graduate is: I learned what I needed to know before my bar mitzvah or bas mitzvah--what else is there to learn?"

Today, thanks to Heritage House, Bracha is shomer Shabbos and resides in Baltimore, together with her husband, **Laivi**, and family. The Shors own Sweet and Good Catering, a kosher gourmet ethnic catering business; Bracha is its executive chef.

Bracha's spiritual success story is but a variation on the theme heard over the years from several of the 50,000 people who have had the opportunity to stay and learn at Heritage House. The non-profit Jewish outreach youth hostel, founded by the legendary **Rabbi Meir Schuster**, in 1984, began when Reb Meir gathered dozens of students a day from the Kosel and sent them off to baalei teshuvah yeshivos. He subsequently started separate Men's and Women's Hostels and was also responsible for the Israeli Kiruv learning centers now called Heritage Projects (Shorashim), founded in 2000, which continue to successfully do kiruv today with thousands. After 40 years of being a one-man kiruv organization, Reb Meir was recently diagnosed with Lewy Body, a debilitating disease with symptoms similar to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. [Ed. Note: Please daven for a refuah sh'laimah (speedy recovery) for Meir Tzvi ben Merka.]

Rabbi Matan Weisberg and his wife, **Chaya**, who run the women's division of Heritage House, have witnessed its many miracle and success stories over the years, and feel that it is their obligation to try to save the organization, now that Rabbi Schuster can no longer fundraise.

This past Tuesday evening, at an Open House held in the Baltimore home of **Yaakov and Ester Gur**, Rabbi Matan Weisberg had those who attended spellbound, while he told success stories similar to Bracha's. He told the story of Rachel, a Sefardi girl, who just finished her internship in medicine. "She came to Heritage House for a night," says Rabbi Weisberg. "My wife didn't think that it had any impact on her. Heritage House had someone from her community back home follow up with her, asking if she would like to attend a Shabbaton. She went to it, and to a couple more after that, and nine months later, she showed up to Heritage House dressed like a Bais Yaakov girl."

Perhaps the great success of Heritage House is due not only to the wealth of information on touring, studying, and intern and work opportunities in Israel, in a warm, friendly and non-threatening environment, but to the follow up connections it provides once its guests return to their Jewish communities back in their home towns around the world. Staff members in North America, England and South Africa make it possible for continuity of experience by offering educational seminars and Shabbos hospitality.

Rabbi Weisberg also told the story of a very liberal Jewish girl who had an Arab boyfriend. "She came to Heritage House and stayed two nights," relates Rabbi Weisberg. "She came back four years later and said, 'I remember what you taught me; I'm back to learn.' She is on the path now and has broken up with her boyfriend."

Yakov Saver was in attendance last night and shared his 1984 recollections of being the first general manager of Heritage House, even before it became an official youth hostel.

"It was not even open yet and I was sweeping and cleaning up the completely empty apartment when there was a knock on the door," recalls Yakov. "It was Meir Schuster with two guys wearing backpacks. He told me to make one phone call to a particular person; that same day the beds and other furnishings he told me to order came. It became Heritage House that afternoon, when it became furnished. That's Meir Schuster!"

"This 3-bedroom apartment on Hameshorerim held 25 beds, another 15 mattresses on the floor, and 20 more mattresses on the marpeset (porch)," continues Yakov. "Because Reb Meir didn't want to send people to other hostels for Shabbos and yom tov, I took in another 1-2 dozen people into my own apartment....Heritage House has been planting seeds since 1984, and we will never know everyone whose spirituality was positively affected by their stay."

Just some of the thousands of Heritage House success stories that abound can be found by visiting <http://rebmeirschuster.org>. There, you can read a very powerful story, "The Man at the Wall", written by Baltimore's own

Mrs. Bracha Goetz. It tells of her own experience, and that of her husband, Rabbi Aryeh Goetz, with Reb Meir, and the powerful influence he had on their lives. Here is an excerpt:

It is 1976. The man who was to become my husband was praying at the Kotel. Larry had finished his time in a kibbutz ulpan, and was still volunteering in a development town in the Negev, when he decided to spend the weekend in Jerusalem. He was scheduled to return to the States a few weeks later, with no clear plans. Larry put a note in a crevice in the Wall and then prayed sincerely to find his path in life. When he finished, there was a tap on his shoulder. It was Rabbi Schuster, asking him, "Do you have the time?" Thank G-d, Larry did have the time, and he followed Reb Meir to a yeshiva for baalei teshuva where he began the process of finding his life's path. After nine years of learning and teaching at Yeshiva Aish HaTorah, young wandering Larry became Rabbi Aryeh Goetz.

It is 1978, and after completing my first year of medical school, I was volunteering on the oncology ward at Hadassah Hospital, visiting with patients who were dying, while my secret mission was to learn the purpose of living. During my first few days in Israel, I went to the Kotel, and Reb Meir Schuster found me there. His purity and his sincerity came right into my heart. I began to study at the women's division of Ohr Someyach, and the process of understanding the purpose of living began for me as well."

To learn more about Heritage House, visit www.heritage.co.il. If you wish to help Heritage House's women's division keep its doors open, send your tax deductible contribution payable to American Friends of Y.B.H., c/o Weinberg Family, 5923 17th Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, 11204.

[Ed. Note: Please daven for a refuah sh'laimah (speedy recovery) for Rabbi Schuster: Meir Tzvi ben Merka.]