

WORLDVIEW



A FISHERMAN rides past an algae-covered beachside in Rizhao, Shandong province, China, on Tuesday. (Reuters)

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What we don't know

Time for strange bedfellows

In the fight against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, we have to put aside some of our differences



GRUMPY OLD MAN
LAWRENCE RIFKIN

A couple of weeks ago, I had a little back-and-forth with a reader in my role as letters editor of *The Jerusalem Post*. The reader had written in about a book review in the weekend magazine. The letter went as follows:

“Congratulations to Lawrence Rifkin – disguising himself as [name of the book reviewer] – for the hatchet job done on [the book that was reviewed]. Despite the pretense of objectivity, [the reviewer’s] loathing of anyone on the Right daring to denigrate those on the Left is quite clear.”

I wrote back: “You seem certain that was me. Perhaps you’ll tell me why.”

The letter writer replied: “I have never heard of [the book reviewer], and I know the names of many left-wing advocates. Her views, if she does exist, mirror yours....”

It goes to show that when we see or hear someone with views different from our own, we tend to lump them in with the universal “other,” no matter how moderate or extreme, learned or stupid those views are. (It helps, of course, when the name of a particular “other” is readily at hand – say, that of a columnist in the same publication or, even better, the editor of the section to which the complaint is being addressed. And by the way, I did not write the review.)

I start with this correspondence because it segues nicely into comments recently voiced by Eran Shayshon, director of policy and strategy at the highly regarded Reut Institute. He was interviewed by journalist Shahar Ginosar as part of a fine, in-depth piece in *Yediot Aharonot* on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and the less-than-stellar fight being waged against it, particularly due to differences between the country’s diplomats and the hide-bound politicians who give them their orders.

“The key is to actually make a clear distinction between the extremists and the rest,” Shayshon said. “The goal is to divide them. And that means to be open to listen to criticism from moderate voices against the government in order to return the extremists back to their natural size.”

It is an approach echoed by Uri Zaki, former US director of... wait for it... B’Tselem – The Israel Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories – yes, the local rights group often vilified for what is perceived as

an extreme pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel stance.

“I went to universities in the United States, specifically during Apartheid Week, in order to explain that I was an Israeli patriot, and to oppose the boycotts,” Zaki said.

“Like the Jewish left-wing groups in America that joined the fight against the boycott, our position has great influence,” he went on. “It is true that we will not fight a boycott of settlement products, but our efficacy in the fight over sovereign Israel’s good name is very obvious, much more than that of right-wing groups.”

He called it a “major missed opportunity.”

As Reut’s Shayshon concluded, “The message to the Right is to adopt the paradox: The more left-wing a group is that speaks out against BDS, the stronger its influence.”

I CAN already hear the groans. Zaki boycotts settlement products, and the BDS movement boycotts settlement products, so Zaki is BDS. BDS also calls for the boycott of all things Israel, and additionally calls for the right of return for all Palestinians. This means Zaki is seeking Israel’s elimination, no matter how much he professes to be a “patriot.” It’s like algebra. If a equals b, and b equals c....

I hear a lot of talk like this. Someone says: I’m on the Right. If you’re not on the Right, you’re on the Left. If you’re on the Left, you can’t possibly be pro-Israel – because I am pro-Israel.

What many fail to realize, though, is that a sizable sector of the political spectrum that is critical or even deeply critical of government policies regarding West Bank settlements and control over the Palestinians is no less critical of the BDS movement.

Believe it or not, many of those who fault the IDF for the way it waged war in Gaza last summer during Operation Protective Edge are deeply critical of the BDS movement, too. Of course, in the eyes of the Right, the UN’s skewed and biased report on the Gaza fighting now puts such people squarely on the side of those who would take great delight in Israel’s destruction, not merely its elimination. Which is to say – their views on BDS notwithstanding – these people are beyond the pale.

Which is entirely the wrong attitude when it comes to fighting BDS.

This is not to let Progressive Zionists off the hook, either.

Many on the Left who believe in the two-state solution say they’re against the BDS movement because one of its

core tenets clearly means an end to Israel. But then they promptly go back to boycotting settlement goods or even those made inside Israel proper, or protesting against this or that Israeli policy – and usually, right alongside the BDSers.

A common excuse is that saying something against BDS will change nothing. Another is that there is no way people on the Left can align themselves with those on the Right because that would only perpetuate the occupation or this or that injustice, or merely because it would, God forbid, make them look like Bibi-lovers (which, I must admit, gives me pause sometimes, too).

THE BDS movement has certainly attracted enough of a following for our government to finally sit up and stop waving it off with simplistic refrains like “anti-Zionism” or “anti-Semitism.” However, while having a reasonable grasp of right and wrong, many (if not most) of the rank and file who today identify with the idea of BDS have not, for whatever reason, read the fine print.

To myopic people like this, there is only so much you can say about start-up nations or God-given land. If such followers of BDS are shown what the movement is really about, chances are they will think again. And for this they will need a magnifying glass and a couple of simple explanations, not indoctrination or bombastic lectures. So the messenger will be the key.

This is where the Zionist Left comes in. Of course, these Zionists will have to see the problem and understand that they can be part of the solution – perhaps even the entire solution. They will have to be willing to risk their credentials, but they can take solace in the fact that their true fellow progressives – if they *really are* progressives – will understand.

On the Right, people are going to have to accept that there are varying shades of gray, that not everyone who disagrees with them is the enemy. They are going to have to leave the algebra out of the equation and try to keep their bile down as they validate some of those they long have denigrated, and even step aside to let them do the heavy lifting.

It’s a time for strange bedfellows. On some issues, disparate sides have to be willing to overlook their distrust and end their recriminations. We must work together to defeat the enemy. And the enemy should not be us. ■

‘On the Right, people are going to have to accept that there are varying shades of gray, that not everyone who disagrees with them is the enemy. They are going to have to leave the algebra out of the equation and try to keep their bile down as they validate some of those they long have denigrated, and even step aside to let them do the heavy lifting’

The man who would be commissioner



POLICE AND THIEVES
BEN HARTMAN

It was October 1, 2000, and Israel was on the brink of one of its darkest and most violent eras. The second intifada had begun days earlier, and in the hours to come, as rioting broke out across the Arab sector, two Israeli Arabs and a Gaza man would be shot dead by Israel Police snipers during a riot at the entrance to Umm el-Fahm in the Wadi Ara region.

Dozens were wounded that same day, and within a week and a half 13 Israeli Arabs had been killed in rioting and in clashes with Israel Police and protesters in what came to be known as “The October 2000 Events.”

The commander of the Border Police officers on duty that day in Wadi Ara is today on a much loftier perch – acting National Police Commissioner Asst.-Ch. Bentzi Sau.

In a statement last month when Sau was named the acting commissioner, the nongovernmental organization Adalah called him “a criminal whose only place is in prison, behind bars. The promotion of Sau is an aggressive and rude message. It says that the ‘black history’ between Arab citizens of Israel and the police will continue.”

In 2003, Sau was found to have authorized unnecessary measures by Border Police forces on duty at the Umm el-Fahm junction, by the Or Commission of Inquiry that probed the events of October 2000. The commission also recommended that he not be promoted for the four years following the publication of the report. In 2006, when he was appointed to head the operational

branch of the Public Security Ministry, Adalah successfully petitioned the promotion, saying it would violate the Or Commission’s findings.

Eventually, in May 2010 he was appointed to head the Central District – Israel’s largest – and in May 2013 he took over as head of the Tel Aviv District, a marquee post and a solid stepping stone to national commissioner.

Sau was helped – for lack of a better word – on his way to the top by the termination of deputy commissioner Asst.-Ch. Nissim Mor in February, due to a sexual harassment investigation. Mor’s termination was the latest in a series of scandals that saw over a half a dozen top police commanders resign or be terminated in less than two years, mainly due to sexual misconduct.

His appointment to acting commissioner until the new commander is selected later this month was not without its critics, however little coverage they may have received. Late last month, the Joint List issued a statement calling for Sau to not be appointed acting commissioner due to his role in the killing of Arab Israelis during the October 2000 clashes. According to the party, appointing Sau would inflame the Arab sector and would “constitute an affront to the Arab public.”

They added that the appointment would lead them to refuse to cooperate with police leaders and that local Arab community leaders across Israel would do the same.

Whether or not someone believes that Sau’s conduct during the October 2000 riots should preclude him from being appointed the new commissioner later this month, it’s clear that such a record isn’t a deal breaker. The Israeli-Arab constituency that has protested the move is

of little or no influence on the decision makers, and in light of the frequent rioting and “lone wolf” attacks in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the past couple of years, an image as a tough commander willing to use deadly force could help him in some circles.

The appointment would show that a violent history with Arab Israelis and a feeling of distrust from leaders of 20 percent of the country he is to serve are not enough to preclude him from the post. It would indicate that the misuse of force against protesters is much more acceptable than sexual misconduct, and that while the organization is making headway and becoming more enlightened in terms of sexual harassment and the treatment of female employees, such progress has not been made with the Arab public. It could perpetuate the belief that they are seen as an enemy within.

The irony is that Sau has arguably done a significant amount in the years since to win the trust of Arab Israelis, or at least their endorsement as a quality commander. As head of the Central District – a region that includes the Arab Triangle and mixed Arab-Jewish locales such as Lod and Ramle – he oversaw an outreach program in the district that appointed an adviser for Arab affairs, largely in an attempt to curb so-called “honor killings,” which have wreaked terror in Arab communities in his district and beyond. He also had success in bringing down the murder rate in the district, including in Arab communities.

Still, it’s well known that a single riot, a single act of misconduct can define a policeman’s career and spark a cycle of violence that is often very difficult to contain.

The next national police commissioner will have a colossal job ahead of him. In addition to fighting all sorts of crime, terrorist attacks and rioting, he (or someday, she) will have to repair an organization that is suffering from a very poor public image and reeling from one scandal after another, including the tragic suicide this week of Asst.-Ch. Efraim Bracha, the head of the National Fraud Squad and one of the most esteemed officers in the organization.

The community that suffers the most from crime is the Arab sector, with a highly disproportionate homicide rate, and towns and villages awash in illegal firearms and organized crime. Any national police commissioner looking to battle crime in the communities where it is the most deadly will need the cooperation of that community, regardless of what they did in 2000. ■

The writer covers crime, African migrants and security issues for The Jerusalem Post. His blog can be found at www.benjaminhartman.com

BORDER POLICE walk in front of Damascus Gate in Jerusalem. The author points out that Bentzi Sau’s appointment as National Police Commissioner could inflame tensions with Israeli-Arabs for his role in the October 2000 riots that left 13 people dead. (Illustrative/Marc Israel Sellem)



Campus thought control



THINK AGAIN
JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

Former US ambassador Michael Oren relates in *Ally: My Journey Across the American-Israeli Divide* how he was warned by journalist Jeffrey Goldberg that US President Barack Obama would pick a fight with Israel from day one. Sadly, that prediction – unlike Goldberg’s repeated assurances that Obama was serious about a military option against Iran – proved correct. On day one, Obama demanded a complete settlement freeze and made no distinction, in Oren’s words, between the extension of a balcony in Jerusalem’s Gilo neighborhood and building in Itamar.

Soon thereafter, the administration declared president George W. Bush’s April 14, 2004, letter acknowledging that Israel would retain the settlement blocs in any peace deal to be null and void, even though the letter was the quid pro quo for Israel’s 2005 expulsion of 8,000 Jews from their homes in the Gaza Strip.

In a meeting with Democratic Jewish congressmen shortly thereafter, the latter were almost unanimously supportive of the president. Oren exited the meeting concerned about both the American-Jewish community and continued bipartisan support for Israel.

He had good cause on both counts. By the time he left office, Oren had sized up the Jewish community’s response to the threat of Israel’s annihilation by an Iranian nuclear weapon as “for the most part removed and impassive.”

And pollster Frank Luntz provided the Israeli government with some distressing results this week about waning Democratic support. Among highly educated, high income, politically involved Democrats, 76 percent believe that Israel wields too much control over American foreign policy; almost one half think Israel is a racist country and less than a half think Israel desires peace. Some 45% said they would be more likely to support a candidate who criticized Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians. The contrast with Republicans could not have been sharper.

Luntz’s findings come at a time when numerous polls show America trending more liberal and Democratic Party identification up.

TO A large extent those worrisome trends reflect the hegemony of leftist thought in the groves of academe in America. Those Democrats polled by Luntz are shaped in America’s universities, where a particular political orthodoxy is ever more entrenched. America’s universities spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually ensuring every type of diversity, except one: diversity of thought.

At the University of Iowa Law School, for instance, until very recently 49 out of 50 members of the faculty were registered Democrats. Of 155 Princeton faculty and staff members who contributed to the presidential campaign in 2012, only two contributed to Mitt Romney – a visiting engineering professor and a custodian.

Not by accident is the most leftist dominated segment of American life also that in which free speech is least protected. Kirsten Powers (a

Democrat) has written a new book called *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech*. Much of that book is devoted to American universities where left-wing students, administrators and faculty have sent the message that “anyone [who] strays off the leftist script... might find themselves investigated, harassed, ostracized, even expelled” because their speech has given offense.

Nearly 60% of the colleges and universities in America have campus speech codes that dramatically restrict, if not obliterate, freedom of speech. One, for instance, bars students from “offending... a member of the university community.” Fordham University prohibits using email to “insult.” Offense and insult are determined by the ones so offended. Numerous universities have instituted “trigger warnings” on course content to warn students that course material may cause them distress by challenging their worldview.

Janet Napolitano, chancellor of the University of California system, the nation’s largest, recently instituted seminars for deans and department chairs to guide them in things that should no longer be said because they constitute “micro-aggressions,” defined as “brief, subtle verbal or non-verbal exchanges that send denigrating message to the recipient because of his or her group membership.”

Included are such statements as “America is a land of opportunity”; “I believe that the most qualified person should get the job”; “America is a melting-pot” and “affirmative action is racist.”

Each of these “suggestions” seeks to impose a particular societal vision and/or foreclose societal debate. They constitute a liberal version of the Gulag’s reeducation centers. Objections to the first two statements are based on a desire to portray America as so racist that individual talent and hard work are virtually irrelevant and it is impossible to speak of a hirings based on merit. “America is a melting-pot” is objectionable, because it prefers the traditional view of America as an affirmational society bound together by certain common ideas over the multicultural vision of a balkanized society based on ethnic, racial and sexual identities. The view that non-colorblind admissions and hiring is inherently racist is one side of a long-standing debate, and it just happens to be the view adopted by the US Supreme Court of late.

A group of Scholars of Color recently disrupted a class at UCLA, charging that the tenured professor had committed “micro-aggressions” against them. Example: The professor changed one student’s capitalization of “indigenous” to lower case, and thus disrespected her ideological point of view. Were the students punished for disrupting a class? No. The 79-year-old professor was instructed to stay off the graduate campus for a year, and UCLA commissioned an “Independent Investigative Report on Acts of Bias and Discrimination Involving Faculty.”

At Marquette University, a Jesuit school, Prof. John McAdams was stripped of tenure and fired for a blog post, in which he criticized by name a graduate teaching assistant who had told a student that he could not defend the traditional Catholic teaching on same-gender marriage in class because it might offend other students.

McAdams wrote that the graduate student

had used “a tactic typical among liberals now. Opinions with which they disagree are not merely wrong and are not to be argued against on their merits, but are deemed ‘offensive’ and need to be shut up.”

His firing proved how right he was and how effective those tactics have proven.

Not all offense is equal. Jewish students live in a hostile environment, which can at times be genuinely frightening, on many campuses across America. Last summer, Boston police had to protect pro-Israel students over three successive days from pro-Palestinian mobs shouting “Jews back to Birkenau.” Over 50% of Jewish students report that they have personally experienced or witnessed anti-Semitism.

No one, it seems, is particularly concerned about aggressions – micro or otherwise – against them, even though Jew hatred is not exactly an unknown phenomenon throughout history. On about 200 campuses, there are annual Israel Apartheid Week rallies calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. Many of the events are formally sponsored by academic departments and promoted by professors on their emails.

Ruth Wisse, in “Anti-Semitism Goes to School” (in the May *Mosaic*) describes how a group of pro-Palestinian student groups demanded that candidates for student government at UCLA and Berkeley sign a pledge that they will not participate in trips to Israel organized by groups like AIPAC or Aish International’s Hasbara Fellowships. Most candidates refused to sign, but the student government president did.

While expressing discomfort with the pledge, UCLA’s Jewish chancellor declined to go further on the grounds that promotion of the pledge is a form of free speech. When it comes to leftists, minorities and those otherwise easily offended, the subjective hurt of those offended trumps free speech; when it comes to insult and intimidation of Jewish students, however, the value of campus free inquiry and speech is suddenly rediscovered.

As Wisse puts it, “Institutions that enforce ‘sensitivity training’ to ensure toleration for gays, blacks and other minorities may inadvertently be bringing some of these groups together in common hostility to Jews as the only campus minority against whom hostility is condoned.”

Crossing the Line 2: The New Face on Anti-Semitism on Campus, an excellent documentary by Jerusalem U intersperses interviews with Jewish students with scenes from campus anti-Israel rallies. In one surreal scene, Becky Sebo, a student at Ohio University speaking against a student government Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions resolution, is dragged away in handcuffs by police. The police were called by the student government president, whom we see in another scene pouring a bucket of blood on herself in support of BDS.

In two weeks, we will discuss the ideological underpinnings of what has been called liberal fascism, and its implications for Jews and Israel. ■

The writer is director of Jewish Media Resources, has written a regular column in The Jerusalem Post Magazine since 1997, and is the author of eight biographies of modern Jewish leaders.

Discovering Zionism in Japan

• BRIAN K. RIZEN

Most Jews regard themselves as Zionists, and I'm one of them. I support Israel as a Jewish homeland, now and forever. More fleeting, however, is the spirit of Zionism.

Some experience that spirit when the landing gear touches down at Ben-Gurion Airport on their first visit to Israel. Others taste what it means to be a Jew in Israel at the Western Wall on Shabbat or in the wilderness of the Arava.

For me, I first experienced that spirit of Zionism in – of all places – Japan. Let me explain.

Most of the time, I am a track physician at Parx Racing, where the job all too frequently involves dealing with injuries suffered by jockeys. It's a tough, dangerous job, and I have a vested interest in keeping them safe. At that place and at this time, I am the "jock doc."

My commitment to their well-being led some years ago to a conference in Tokyo of physicians from around the world who treat jockeys and share my commitment to their safety. It was a fantastic two days of learning and sharing.

I had another goal for this trip. I felt compelled to make a pilgrimage to the Chiune Sugihara Memorial Museum. Known as the "Japanese Schindler," Chiune Sugihara had helped roughly 6,000 Polish Jews escape the Nazi extermination machine over 29 days in 1940. Sugihara's act of courage was chronicled by one of the Jews he saved, the late Johns Hopkins University scholar Samuel Iwry, in *To Wear the Dust of War: From Bialystok to Shanghai to the Promised Land*.

Japan's consul to Lithuania, Sugihara wrote and signed the letters of transit that allowed the Jews to travel through

Russia on their way to Japanese-held Shanghai. He did so out of conscience and against the explicit written orders of the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

I was determined to say kaddish at his grave (he died in 1986), and for a year before the trip I kept a picture of Chiune Sugihara and his wife, Yukiko, taped to my computer monitor as a reminder of my commitment.

A commitment indeed was required. The Sugihara Memorial Museum is located in his birthplace, Yaotsu in Gifu Prefecture, far from the bright lights of Tokyo. The train connections for my travel to Yaotsu were arranged by the assistant concierge at my hotel, but I carried several burdens. I had all my luggage, and I knew only a few words of Japanese. Perhaps worst of all, I had no clue how I would get from Yaotsu to Osaka, the next stop on my journey.

After a six-hour trip, I arrived at the memorial museum, which is perched atop the Hill of Humanity. I spent the next hour or so tearfully touring the two-story museum where the progeny of "Sugihara's List" had sent letters of gratitude and pictures.

An exhibition faithfully reproduced his office in Kaunas, Lithuania, and allowed me to imagine him tirelessly writing and signing the transit visas over a mere 29 days. With a lump in my throat, I wrote in the names of the wife and daughter of my mentor, Dr. Marco Nahon. Both had perished in Nazi gas chambers.

As I exited the museum, I noticed a small souvenir stand selling booklets describing the Sugihara saga, which has been translated into many languages. There, I noticed a woman purchasing the Hebrew version.

Never shy, I asked if she was Israeli. Yes, she said, and was part of an Israeli bus tour. The buses were waiting to depart for

their next destination – Osaka.

It had to be *beshert*, or divine providence. Outside the buses were three men smoking and drinking black coffee. "*Shalom aleichem* [peace be upon you]," I greeted them. "*Aleichem shalom*," they replied.

One of them, Shauli, was the Israeli tour leader, and I asked if I could hitch a ride to Osaka. Over the mild protest of the Japanese chaperone who mentioned liability issues, I was invited to join the group. (Cultural note: Israelis hitchhike as a way of life; Japanese do not.)

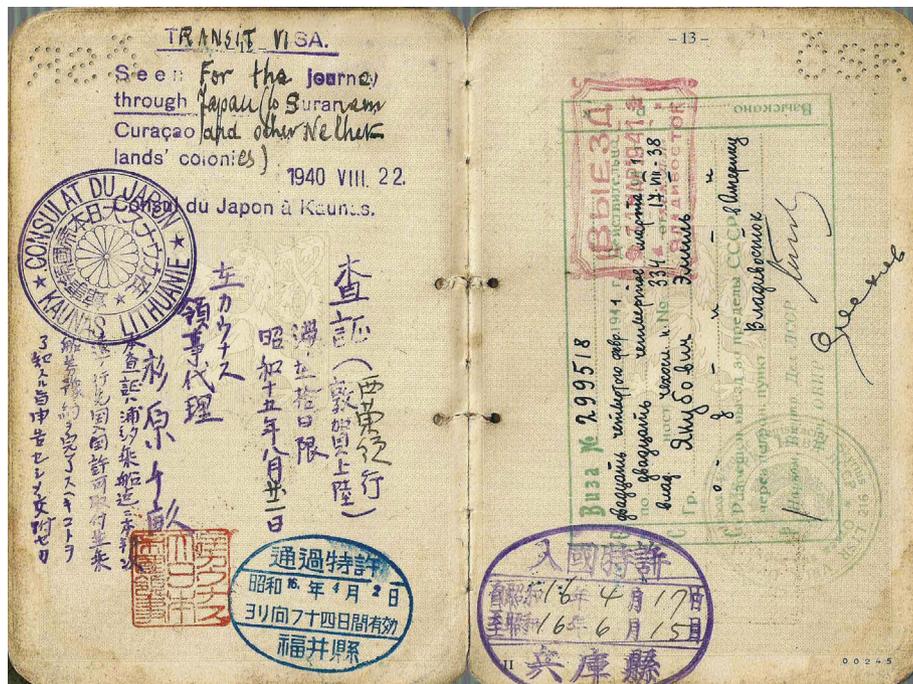
I was welcomed aboard with warmth, love and a deep feeling of belonging. The joy I experienced for six hours traveling with my fellow Jews is one of the highlights of my life. Although only about half of the group spoke English, our communication was meaningful and spiritual. I sat in joyous awe as I was fed both bodily and spiritually, sharing *salami*, fruit, cookies and scotch. My new friends sang poignant Israeli folk songs, and some even danced in the aisle.

How was it that our paths crossed in this vast universe at that very moment? Beshert, it had to be. For me, it was a coming home, a return to Zion. With a Japanese mountain range backlit by the setting sun, I experienced what it meant to be a Jew and a Zionist. This was truly an epiphany – experiencing the spirit of Zionism for the first time and amazingly, in Japan.

The writer lives in Center City Philadelphia with his wife, Alice, and continues to serve as the "jock doc" at Parx Racing.

Japan's consul to Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara wrote and signed the letters of transit that allowed the Jews to travel through Russia on their way to Japanese-held Shanghai. He did so out of conscience and against the explicit written orders of the Japanese Foreign Ministry

A 1940 TRANSIT visa issued in a Czechoslovakian passport. The holder managed to escape to Poland in 1939, then to Lithuania, and in 1940 received the visa from Chiune Sugihara and used it to travel through Siberia to China. (Wikimedia Commons)



CHIUNE SUGIHARA memorial. (Brian Rezen)

Lone soldiers on leave: Do you know where they go?

• GAYLE SHIMOFF

It has been one year since Operation Protective Edge and contributions of lone soldiers, and the ultimate sacrifices they made with their lives, were unfortunately headline news during this war. Their stories became our stories as we identified with the sacrifices they made to move to Israel and become part of our country. As fellow immigrants, we could relate to the difficulties of packing up and leaving families to start a new life. As parents of soldiers, we understood the stresses they faced. However, these soldiers were different from our sons and daughters, because they did not have their families waiting for them, waiting for them to return safely home from battle. The deaths of some of these volunteers highlighted their ultimate sacrifice; giving their lives for their people, so far away from their families. For Max Steinberg's family from California, it quickly became evident that the entire country was his family when more than 30,000 people attended his funeral.

Since the war, the issue of lone soldiers has been a hot topic. The Israeli public, especially English speaking immigrants, are more aware of them now than they were a year ago. We bake cookies, send care packages and organize Shabbat dinners. We donate money for winter clothes, hydration systems and pizzas. But how many of us know what life is like for them on a daily basis? Do we understand what it means to be alone all the time?

About six months ago, I had a "guest" in my house for nearly two weeks. This guest was an English-speaking lone soldier, in an elite combat unit, who had been a welcomed guest in my home many times before. He had spent weekends and holidays with us over the years, but many months could go by without hearing from him. By the time he landed on my doorstep this time, he had been on extended sick leave for nearly two months, because of a head injury he sustained during a training exercise in the army. I don't know exactly what transpired during his army service or during his sick leave. I do know that during his recuperation he had no structure, no supervision and no one to check in on him during this difficult time. I do know that by the time he came to stay with my family, he no longer had a place to live or enough money to buy food.

I do know that "home" for him had been a run-down, not-very-clean apartment shared with other lone soldiers he rarely saw. I do know, that even in the

best of circumstances he would return to his apartment on a Friday afternoon having to deal with cleaning, shopping, laundry and Shabbat preparations; but more often than not, just crash and go to sleep.

How often did his commanding officer reach out to him? Was the army negligent in taking care of this lone soldier? Is his story representative of how the army treats its soldiers when they falter? What took place when he checked in with the army and doctors during his sick leave? Could he have reached out to me for help sooner? Could the army have done more?

If someone had just been watching out for this lone soldier, noticing what was going on with him, checking up on him during those two long months when he was on sick leave, things would have turned out better, and maybe he would still be living in Israel.

Lone soldiers from overseas volunteer in our army for a myriad of reasons, most of them out of altruism and Zionism. Some are running away from problems, but most come to defend their country and help their people. Some of them are "adopted" by relatives or family friends, and some of them are on kibbutzim as part of the Garin Tzabar program. Many of the nearly 3,000 lone soldiers from overseas, however, live on their own, and most of them do well, if not very well, in the army.

But when something goes wrong and life gets tough, no one wants to feel alone. Everyone wants to know that someone has their back. Sick leave is often feared by lone soldiers, because there is no one to take care of them after they leave their base. They may be sent "home" by their officers, but more often than not, they would prefer to stay with their units, where at least someone will make them a cup of tea. There are nearly 6,000 lone soldiers in Israel today; most of whom return to empty, lonely apartments with no groceries, no drinks or no toilet paper.

Lone soldiers from overseas are a neglected population with unique needs. As immigrants, their needs should not be just the responsibility of the army, but the government and civil society should collectively look out for them as well. These soldiers would benefit from the support of a community, where there is a place they can call home.

This fall, a new home for lone soldiers will open in Beit Shemesh. It will be situated between neighborhoods with many English-speaking families, both new and veteran immigrants, whose own sons and daughters serve in the army. This will be a home in the fullest sense of the word – not just a place

to live. Adoptive families and a house counselor will take care of them, being there for them, in whatever ways they need. While there are a few other homes for lone soldiers around the country, this home will be unique in that it is specifically geared for English-speaking lone soldiers who want to be part of a community.

This grassroots effort, in coordination with The Lone Soldier Center in memory of Michael Levin, is being embraced by our communities and neighbors, supported by our friends and families, and applauded by our soldier sons and daughters.

In combat, there is no place for mom and dad. I know that very well. My son, a soldier in Nahal (Fighting Pioneer Youth), is continuously reminding me of that fact. But when he is sick, you can be sure that he turns to me and his father for comfort and help. When any soldier is sick, injured or on extended sick leave, he needs his mom and dad, or a caring, responsible adult in his life to take care of him.

The writer is a graduate student in Non-profit Management and Leadership at the Hebrew University's School of Social Work. She is coordinating the establishment of The Lone Soldiers' Home – Beit Shemesh. gayle@lonesoldiercenter.com www.lonesoldiercenter.com/homebeits.

SOLDIERS AT the Beersheba Central Bus Station. Some organizations look to help soldiers without family in Israel with housing, food and laundry when they are on leave. (Illustrative/Marc Israel Sellem)





A BOY in Syria watches a video on a laptop. In the war of public opinion, Islamic State and al-Qaida are sparring with competing English-language propaganda online magazines. (Illustrative/Khalil Ashawi/Reuters)

Al-Qaida fights Islamic State in the media front

• YORAM SCHWEITZER
and ADAM HOFFMAN

Over the last year, al-Qaida's status in the world media suffered a severe setback. This fact was evident in several ways. A simple Google search of al-Qaida and ISIS in English reveals the media gap between the two jihadist organizations, in which Islamic State clearly comes on top with 240,480,000 results, compared to al-Qaida's 50 million results.

Furthermore, in a recent interview to *The Guardian*, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada al-Filistini, two of the leading ideologists of the global jihadist movement, harshly criticized the conduct of the Islamic State, but admitted that Islamic State has beaten al-Qaida in the propaganda war. Due to its sophisticated global media strategy, Islamic State manages to reach today a far wider audience than al-Qaida. Given this context, it is easy to understand al-Qaida's last propaganda move with the publication of the first issue of a new online magazine, al-Risala ("the message"). The magazine, which is produced by al-Qaida in Syria, is published in English and was recently posted in jihadist social media accounts.

Al-Risala is presented as "the official magazine of the *mujahideen* in Bilad ash-Sham [Greater Syria]" and is sleekly designed. In its high production value, in contents and design, the new magazine looks very similar to Dabiq, Islamic State's English-language online

magazine that was first published in July 2014, after the group declared the establishment of an Islamic state. Dabiq's 10th issue is supposed to be published soon, and will probably focus on glorifying the achievements of the Islamic State.

Based on a content analysis of the first issue of al-Risala and the topics it covers, it is clear that al-Qaida and its Syrian affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra, decided to fight for Salafi-jihadist global public opinion by waging an assertive media battle in the central contemporary arena that exists today in the global jihadist movement. For this reason, a considerable part of the publication is dedicated to the events in the Syrian arena, in order to present to its readers "credible and reliable news from people who actually witness the events unfold on the ground and front lines."

The magazine presents to its readers Jabhat al-Nusra's achievements, along with its partners in Jaysh al-Fath ("Army of Conquest") – a coalition of seven jihadist organizations which cooperate with each other to liberate Syria from the regime of President Bashar Assad, and work together to battle the Islamic State in Syria.

Al-Risala has a sleek visual design, with colorful headlines and high-quality images. This includes visual references to Hollywood action movies that its target audience is presumably well acquainted with, exactly as Islamic State does in its English language media products. Special emphasis is given in al-Risala to ridiculing Islamic State and minimizing its achievements, and in contrast to glorifying al-Nusra's vic-

tories in the ongoing war in Syria. For instance, Islamic State's senior leaders are presented as former members of Saddam Hussein's secular Ba'ath regime, instead of pious Muslims that are striving to implement Islam, as the Islamic State claims to be doing.

In order to highlight the global jihadist character of the magazine and its relation to al-Qaida's affiliate network, the magazine dedicates a eulogy to Nasser al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula who served as Ayman al-Zawahiri's right-hand man and was killed in an American drone strike in mid-June. The eulogy obviously emphasizes the well-known motif of al-Qaida and its affiliates of the glorification of martyrdom of its leaders, which sanctify in their deaths the struggle in the path of God (*al-jihad fi sabil Allah*) as the Koran commands the believers.

Based on the publication of its first issue, al-Risala seems to be the first sign in al-Qaida's effort to revive its reputation as the leader of the global jihadist movement. It would be no less interesting to see when Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of al-Qaida who has been silent for many months, will also make his voice heard in al-Qaida's propaganda battle against the Islamic State. ■

Yoram Schweitzer is the director of the Terrorism and Low-Intensity Warfare Research Project at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and Adam Hoffman is a PhD candidate who interns at the project.

• BARRY DAVIS

Most of us have our dreams. Some have grand ambitions, and some are of a more modest – and probably eminently more attainable – nature.

If you are among those who have long dreamed of publishing your own book, and have all kinds of stories stored away that are just begging to be transferred from your bottom drawer to the global village, then Prof. Mel Rosenberg could be of service in making your wish come true.

Until not that long ago, the Canadian-born longtime Israeli resident was more interested in what came out of people's mouths than out of their fertile imaginations. As a longtime professor of microbiology, formerly at Tel Aviv University and now at the Holon Institute of Technology – where he gives courses on creative thinking, children's book writing and the music of the '60s – he devoted many years to the diagnosis and treatment of malodorous oral emissions.

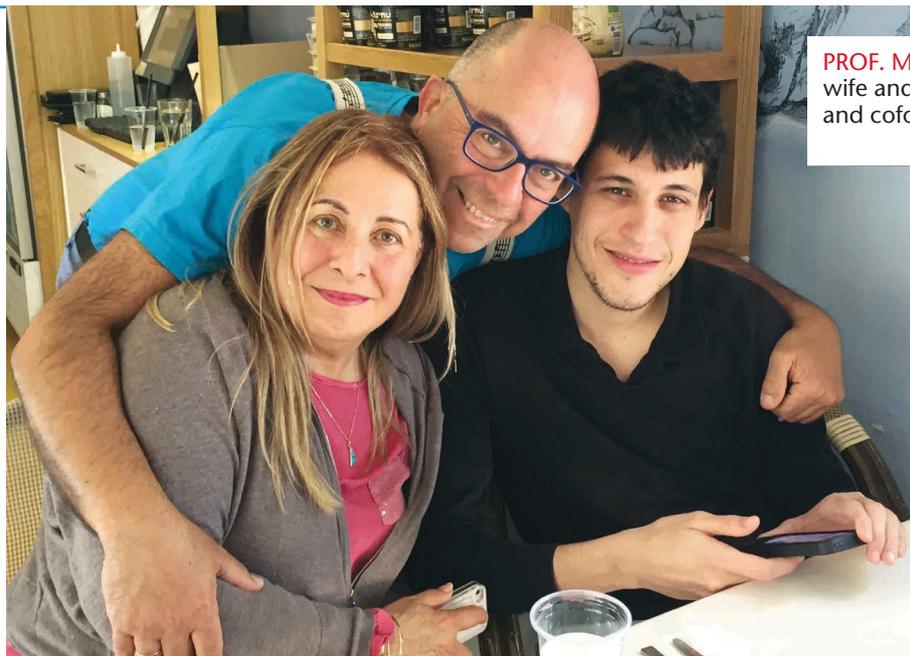
But now he devotes much of his waking time to producing new tomes, and putting the work of all kinds of people, on all manner of topic, out there for the net-surfing world to access and enjoy. All of the above, and much, much more, is ready and awaiting your mouse click at Ourboox.com, the boyish-looking Rosenberg's much-beloved baby.

"The core of Ourboox really started about 12 years ago," explains the 63-year-old literary entrepreneur, "when [Bank Hapoalim owner] Shari Arison invited a bunch of eclectic people to a series which was like [public benefit corporation] Mahut Hachaim (The Essence of Life), which came before the actual Mahut Hachaim. It was about helping people change the world in a significant way, based on their abilities and resources."

The new activity appeared to suit Rosenberg. "There was a series of lectures, workshops and yoga, and there were all sorts of amazing people. It was amorphous – a kind of hippie thing. I was open-mouthed at the end of it all. Shari Arison went off to do her thing, and I felt I really could do anything. It was empowering; for me, intellectually, it created a feeling that I should do something meaningful."

In fact, Rosenberg appears to have managed quite a lot of significant endeavor since making aliya from Winnipeg in 1969. He completed three degrees at Tel Aviv University, became a jazz musician – saxophone and vocals – and even put out a number of polished mainstream jazz albums.

Between, Rosenberg began to write fun children's books – mostly self-published. The Arison-sponsored eye-opener got the closet writer thinking about how to get his words out there. "A couple of years after the Arison thing, I said, 'I know what I'll do. I'm going to take all of my children's books, find an amazing illustrator and make them all available for free on



PROF. MEL Rosenberg (center) with his wife and Ourboox CEO Shuli Sapir-Nevo and cofounder and CTO Ran Shternin. (Courtesy)

The virtues of going virtual

Prof. Mel Rosenberg is helping closet writers fulfill their dreams with his digital bookstore Ourboox, which features some 3,000 free titles in various languages

the Internet, in those days using Flash [technology]. I hired Rotem Omri who, over the course of about a year and a half, took her time to illustrate nine of my children's books." Rosenberg says he has written "dozens" of tomes.

The venture began to build up a head of steam and now features around 3,000 titles on an expansive range of subjects, from architecture to dental health – harking back to Rosenberg's former line of work – cooking to satire, and even business and finance, in various languages.

Trolling through the Ourboox inventory, you can come across such wild and wonderful offerings as Rosenberg's own account of how he accessed a vegan ice cream business in Dimona; a fetching-naïve-looking children's volume in Hebrew, called *The Marionettes Come to Life*; a book in Arabic which appears to hail from the scientific environs of Rosenberg's original day job; and even

an Italian-English rendition of *Jack and the Beanstalk* designed to help kids with their mathematics.

Ourboox actually follows an earlier attempt by Rosenberg to set up a virtual bookstore, which didn't go too well. He eventually received a nudge in the required direction when he set up a modestly proportioned stall at a book fair in Bologna, Italy. At the event, he was approached by a large number of illustrators who were just desperate to add their visuals to somebody's words. Rosenberg gradually realized that it was time to establish a repository of books that would not only be available to all and sundry for free, but would also generate a community feel.

"Maybe one of every 20,000 writers makes a living from their writing, and it is the same for illustrators," notes Rosenberg. "They do some illustrating for Moshe Cohen's fish shop and make a

living out of working as a graphic artist somewhere; meanwhile, they dream of illustrating books."

The die was cast. "I thought, 'How do I make these dreams come true?' The basic premise was to take Mahut Hachaim to the next level, by creating an international community and a website where anybody can self-publish for free, and we all help each other. I call it a 'mission-negaz,'" says Rosenberg, producing a neat hybrid of "mission" and "mishegas" (Yiddish for craziness). "It's basically for any Mel Rosenberg out there who wants to live the dream."

And it really is perfectly simple and user-friendly. Rosenberg quickly talked me through the basic steps of producing a book on Ourboox: You just type or paste in your text, and can even choose from some ready-made graphics of images and add video clips or sound, and – presto! – you have your very own book.

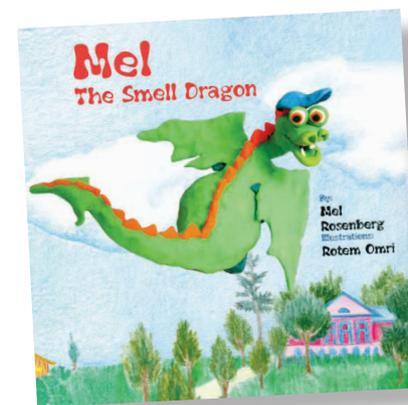
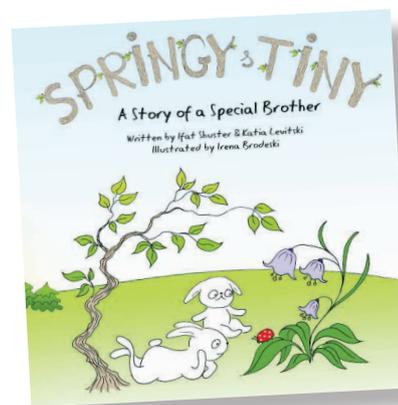
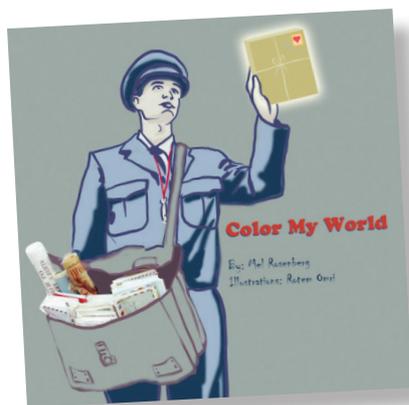
The idea appears to be catching on nicely. The national education system is getting in on the act, realizing the instructional benefits of say, learning the art of storytelling, or the value of conveying a history lesson by digging into a student's personal family history.

A word of warning: Rosenberg may help you make a long-harbored ambition become a virtually corporeal reality, but he wouldn't advise giving up your daytime job just yet. "If you love to write and produce something, then you can join the ranks of the jazz musicians who can't sell their CDs, and the songwriters and everyone else who has become enfranchised and disenfranchised at the same time, by the Internet. So, you won't make any money right now, but at least you won't lose any money – because it's all free. We have a community of 3,000 people on Facebook called Making Books Come True, and we help each other.

"If I write a book and someone illustrates it, the illustrator still owns their work. They haven't sold it and haven't given away their soul."

That may sound idealistic, but it works. "Ourboox is a virtual global kibbutz," relates Rosenberg. "At my young age of 63, I've become a *yazam* (entrepreneur). It's fun." ■

For more information about Ourboox: www.ourboox.com



MEL ROSENBERG has written dozens of children's books. (Courtesy)

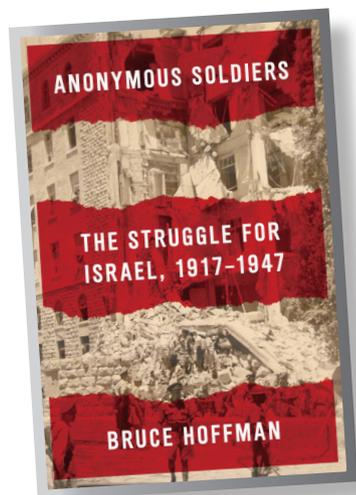
Armed struggle



THE KING David Hotel after it was bombed in 1946. (Wikimedia Commons)

ANONYMOUS SOLDIERS

By Bruce Hoffman
Alfred A. Knopf
640 pages; \$35



Inside the years of the British Mandate, and the Jewish organizations that embarked on a violent campaign to end British rule

• SETH J. FRANTZMAN

September 18, 1944, was a typical, warm day in Cairo. Five Jews sat chatting at the Astra Café on what is now Tahrir Square.

It could have been a typical scene in those days of British rule in the Middle East, where cosmopolitan cities gyrated to the current European tastes and music and pondered the progress of the war.

But not all was normal that day. The five Jewish coffee-drinkers were plotting the killing of Lord Moyne, the British minister of state resident in Egypt and a close friend of Winston Churchill.

The subsequent assassination in November 1944 would send shock waves throughout the empire. How did a small group of extremist Jews from Mandate Palestine decide that gunning down a British colonial official would help their cause? Prof. Bruce Hoffman, an expert on terrorism and insurgency who is the director of the Center for Security Studies at Georgetown University, seeks to examine the Jewish violence in Palestine as a case study into whether terrorism is effective.

“The political violence that plagued Palestine when it was ruled by Great Britain presents an ideal case with which to examine and assess terrorism’s power to influence government policy and decision-making,” he argues in *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917-1947*.

This 600-page tome, however, is not the inaccessible, dowdy academic work one might expect on analyzing terrorism’s role. The opposite: It is a colorful tale of derring-do, about men in the shadows with revolvers and the British forces sent to track them down.

To start out, Hoffman sets the stage by outlining how the British Mandate in Palestine, which began so fruitfully at the end of the Second World War, became a bloody zone of terror. He glosses over the Arab struggle against the British and against Zionism, devoting only a few dozen pages to the 1920 disturbances, the 1929 riots and the Arab revolt of 1936 to 1939. It’s not that he is not being even-handed, but his focus is a case study of the Irgun Zva’i Leumi and the Stern Group. His approach is very clinical and nonjudgmental; he doesn’t draw moral conclusions about these organizations’ tactics.

The Arab attacks against the British and the Jews in Palestine, which resulted in hundreds of deaths, are mentioned to frame the Jewish response. In April 1937 the Irgun, a Zionist paramilitary organization that would eventually be led by Menachem Begin, issued a statement defining their goals: “We believe in the sacrifice of battle and the sacrifice of the Israeli youth that sets as its goal the strength and independence of the core of the Hebrew strength.”

Their leader at the time, David Raziel, argued that the time for “passive defense,” preferred by many mainstream Zionists, was over and that “active defense” must begin. “He who does not want to be defeated has no choice but to attack.”

But the British defeat of the Arab rebellion and the outbreak of the Second World War derailed the fantasies of the Jewish armed struggle against both the British and the Arabs. More than two-thirds of Hoffman’s book is thus devoted to the period after 1944, when Lord Moyne was killed by an offshoot of the Irgun called the Stern Group (Lehi).

The problem is that these stories are well-known. There is no shortage of books on this subject, not least of which are Menachem Begin’s own book *The Revolt*, and 1996’s *Terror Out of Zion*. There are whole books devoted just to the killing of the Lehi leader Avraham Stern, or to the Irgun blowing up the King David Hotel in 1946.

So what is new here? Some of the most interesting information Hoffman presents relates to British policy and British reactions to the terrorist acts of Jewish fighters. He notes that during the struggle against the Arab rebellion, the British not only detonated homes as retaliation for Arab terror, but that they authorized the use of 20-pound bombs against Arab rebels. “Machine-gun fire from aircraft could only be directed against armed rebel bands sighted in open country,” he writes. The British even lost three planes to the Arab fighters.

Against the Jewish terror, the British were hamstrung. First of all, the Irgun and Stern Group operated primarily in the cities. They choose their targets carefully and looked for weak points in British security to strike at officers’ clubs or kill individuals. “We were never allowed to hit back at the terrorists,” claimed Roy Farran, a British soldier implicated in the murder of a 16-year-old Stern Group member. The British forces knew how to use artillery or blow up houses, but chasing down terrorists was not easy for a ham-handed military.

Of course, the British had dealt with insurgents before, in India, Ireland and elsewhere; in Palestine, though, the British were flustered. After an attack on the Sixth Airborne Division in Tel Aviv, in which a half-dozen British soldiers were killed, the British officials considered retaliating by imposing a collective fine on all of Tel Aviv. Other theories of how to respond included demolishing the buildings around the area that had been attacked, imposing a curfew on roads, or making Tel Aviv a no-go zone for British soldiers – in short, a series of responses that would not help defeat the armed resistance.

Hoffman concludes that “the Irgun’s success in attracting attention to itself and its cause and most significantly both hastening and profoundly affecting government decision-making demonstrates that... terrorism can, in the right conditions and with the appropriate strategy and tactics, succeed in attaining at least some of its practitioners’ fundamental aims.” So terrorism can win, if everything is perfectly ordered to suit it.

The reader may be left unconvinced of this larger model, but certainly will not be left unmoved by a well-written and interesting account of the last decade of the British Mandate. ■

STEVE STERN tries to warn critics against his book, but they seem to give it positive reviews nonetheless. (Sabrina Jones)



• BETH KISSILEFF

Steve Stern likes to disarm his readers.

One is never quite sure whether the mystical flights and descents of the holy Shpinker Rebbe, Eliakum ben Yahya, and his coterie of hangers-on, the tightrope-walking of a heroine, a boy swallowed whole by a fish and the manic graphomania of a hero and writer should be taken as satire, allegory, magical realism or all of the above.

In his newest novel *The Pinch*, based in the Memphis neighborhood well-known to fans of his earlier work, Stern plays with the idea of life and text, reality and illusion, creation and destruction, big manic themes experienced by the Jewish, African-American and Ku Klux Klan members of the small, ever-dying neighborhood the author has made his own patch of sacred ground zero for his fables and the foibles of his characters.

And to disarm critics. He makes sure we can't get to him, writing things like this to take away any sting that might have been planned: "It didn't happen overnight, but against all reasonable expectation Muni's [a character in a book also called 'The Pinch' in Stern's book of the same name] book struck a chord with the reading public. There was, apparently, still a reading public. The reviews, such as they were, were mixed: the favorable, perhaps influenced by the psychedelic ethos of the day, praised the kaleidoscopic nature of the narrative. Some said it evoked a kind of folk consciousness, and even delighted in the book's refusal to conform to a specific genre.

"Soberer judgments – and these were in the majority – suggested that *The Pinch* was the product of a puerile sensibility, and dismissed it out of hand. There were those, too, who complained that the surplus of 'tribal' content was off-putting and exclusive.

"But somehow, a gradual groundswell of word-of-mouth sentiment began to create a stir in various quarters, and the book – like an awkward dance step that turns out to be liberating – started to catch on."

Sorry, Mr. Stern, much as you fear it with your constant self-deprecations, I am giving you a positive review. The awkward dance step has caught on for this reader, with the exception of one or two subplots, but in a book that takes place over a half century in a sprawling neighborhood, it is to be expected.

Now that we're done with that, we can tell readers what's to like. For one, the lovely Yiddish-inflected English of Avrom Slutsky, proprietor of the Book Asylum (in both senses of the word, as in haven and loony bin), *The Pinch's* all-purpose bookstore. Slutsky tells his assistant in his opening statement, "So don't believe everything you read."

The warning comes in relation to a book called *The Pinch*, which the assistant opens only to find... he is a character in a book written before his birth! This turns out to be less a gimmick than the informing principle of the work, namely that writing has the power to create worlds and control fates.

For Lenny – who lives in the neighborhood during the fateful sanitation workers' strike in 1968, which Dr. Martin

Don't believe everything you read

In Steve Stern's new novel 'The Pinch,' his version of Memphis is starting to catch on

Luther King came to assist with and was then assassinated – the book gives him a chance to read "with that intensity that obliterated the distinction between being inside and outside the book."

In addition to his labors at the Book Asylum, Lenny delivers the psychedelic products procured by his landlord, which gain him entrée into the world of bars and bands, such as Velveeta and the Psychopimps, and their leader Elder Lincoln. His main concern is pursuing a girl, the engaged Rachel Ostrofsky, slumming in Memphis "on a grant from the MidSouth Folklore Center to research the roots of the Southern Jewish community."

But the world of the book Lenny reads, *The Pinch*, contains the story of Muni Pinsker, who escapes from a Siberian prison to come work for his uncle Pinchas in The Pinch, and falls in love with a young lady who walks a tightrope at night. Their love proves so passionate that... well, it is hard to summarize but it moves the earth, let's keep it at that.

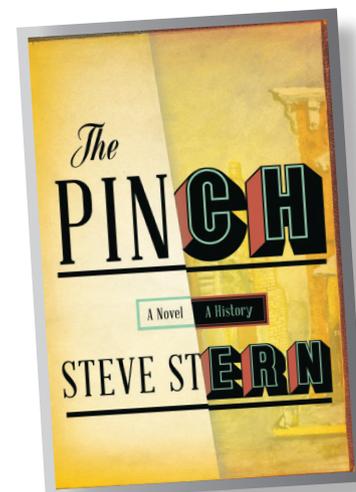
And Pinchas loves his Irish wife, Katie Keough, so much he goes with Rabbi Eliakum ben Yahya to the underworld to retrieve her ghost, and enables Katie's ghost to give birth to a son, Tyrone, who becomes the illustrator of Muni Pinsker's book. And Tyrone, as an American sent to Europe during the cataclysm of World War II, meets Slutsky – when he liberates the camp the future bookstore owner has been interned in. And Slutsky is so fascinated with Tyrone's stories that he makes his way to *The Pinch*, where he is in place to give Lenny the book about himself.

In the world of this work are stories of circuses and camps (concentration that is), wonder rabbis and Irish drunks, a musician who "reads the stripes on the backs of former slaves and makes from them his musical compositions," as well as the rockers and druggies of the 1960s. It is a populous world, but one that hangs together with the act of Lenny's reading, since as he reads, "I was conscious of also approaching a rendezvous with myself."

"In the beginning was the book," Stern writes in the opening sentence. Genesis it's not, but despite authorial warnings, the text has its own power, that of the imagination to create a parallel universe high above the quotidian one most of us inhabit.

But don't believe everything you read – open the book for yourself. ■

▶ **THE PINCH**
By Steve Stern
Graywolf Press
368 pages; \$26



PICTURE FROM THE PARASHA

“It was after the plague, that the Lord spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the kohen, saying: ‘Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from 20 years old and upwards, following their fathers’ houses, all that are fit to go out to war in Israel.’” (Deuteronomy 26: 1-2)

(Painting by Yoram Raanan;
www.yoramraanan.com;
www.facebook.com/RaananArt)



PARSHAT PINHAS
SHLOMO RISKIN

Jewish law and women leaders

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘the daughters of Zelophehad spoke correctly; you shall surely grant them the acquisition of an inheritance together with their father’s Kinsmen. You shall transmit the inheritance of their father to them...’” (Deuteronomy 27:6-7)

During this last joyous period of institutional graduation ceremonies (from elementary schools to universities), there has also occurred a number of unique celebrations for the awarding of *semicha* (the authority to enter the halachic discourse and render halachic judgments) to women. I am proud to say that our Midreshet Lindenbaum (Susie Bradfield Institute for Women’s Leadership) was the first to grant such ordination – two of our “*musmachat*” have already published a book of halachic response – and it is more than coincidental that on June 29 we held a special memorial *siyum* for Belda Lindenbaum, of blessed memory, who (together with her husband, Marcel) was largely responsible for making such advanced women’s learning possible worldwide.

Our women’s *semicha* program is taught by Rabbi Shuki Reich, the same *kollel* head who prepares our men to pass the examinations given by the Chief Rabbinate; our women’s requirements are no less exacting and rigorous than are those for our men. Hence our women are no less qualified than our men to give halachic decisions on all areas discussed within the pages of our religio-legal Codes of Law (*Shulhan Aruch*). They are granted the title of “*Manhigot ruhaniot*” or spiritual leaders.

Nevertheless, the rendering of such ordination to women is not without controversy. Indeed, the orthodox Rabbinical Council of America is having a special panel of rabbis discuss the issue at their annual convention taking place a I write these lines. However, it is important to note that there is a great precedent to accept women as instructors in Jewish Law.

We have already seen in our previous commentary to *Shlah*, how the daughters of Zelophehad referred to by the Talmud as being wise, analytical and righteous (B.T. *Baba Batra* 119b) stood up before Moses in a Talmud class and asked a question which illuminated a halacha (of inheritance) of which Moses was ignorant and God Himself declared that they were correct.

In this way the *Shulhan Aruch* states clearly that “any scholar who has reached the ability to render halachic decisions and does not do so is preventing [the spread of] Torah and placing stumbling blocks before the

multitudes” (*Yoreh De’a*, 242:14).

The Rema adds, “The rabbinical ordination which is customary in our time is a way of informing the nation that the ordained individual has attained the ability to give halachic direction, and is giving instruction with the permission of his master who ordained him” (*ibid*).

There are precedents for accepting the halachic teachings and decisions of women, even over the decisions of men. For example, the Tosefta brings an example of a debate regarding the ritual impurity of an oven in which the sages preferred the opinion of Bruria, the daughter of Rabbi Hanania ben Teradyon, over the opinion of his son.

Rabbi Shlomo Luria, the Maharshal, relates in his response No. 29 that his grandmother, Rebbetzin Miriam, regularly sat behind a curtain (for reasons of modesty) and taught Halacha to outstanding male students.

The mother of the first Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, was said to have halachic knowledge that exceeded that of most men, and she even adjudicated halachic questions, according to the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn.

The author of the *Sefer Hahinuch* writes (Mitzva 152): “Someone who is inebriated with wine should not enter the Sanctuary, and likewise one who is inebriated should not instruct... And the prohibition of coming to the Sanctuary drunk during the Temple period applied to both males and females. And the avoidance of giving halachic instructions [in such a state] applies to males in every place and in every era, as well as to a wise woman who is worthy of rendering halachic instruction.”

Likewise, we learn from the Hida’s Birkat Yosef: (*Hoshen Mishpat*, *siman* 7 subpar. 12) “Even though a woman is unfit to judge, nevertheless a wise woman may render halachic decisions,” and the practical halacha is brought in the *Pit’hei Teshuva* and in the *Sefer Halacha Pesuka*: “A woman may sit with the judges, to teach them the law in the cases brought before them in which she is knowledgeable, and she may teach Halacha in matters of permissibility and prohibition.”

It would seem that the only opinion that explicitly disagrees with this license for a woman to teach Halacha is the author of the *Sha’arei Teshuva*. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the great majority of authorities permit a woman to teach Halacha and render halachic decisions.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron, who was the Sephardi chief rabbi of Israel from 1993 to 2003, writes in his book *Binyan Av* (1:65): “A woman and a proselyte may serve as

instructors of Halacha, teachers of Torah and deciders of halachic rulings. All positions whose authority is determined by the abilities of those holding them and where authority derives from one’s knowledge and purity, may be filled by a woman or a proselyte.”

In conclusion, let us take to heart the words of Tana Devei Eliyahu concerning Deborah the prophetess, the heroine of this article:

“And Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lapidoth, judged Israel at that time.” What was so special about Deborah that made her [worthy of being] judge of Israel at that time, and a prophetess to God? Was not Phinehas the son of Eleazar alive at the time? I hereby testify today before the heavens and the earth: Whether an Israelite or a gentile, whether a man or a woman, whether a manservant or a maidservant, each has the divine spirit rest upon him in accordance with his own acts.”

Postscript: I intentionally have not used the terms “Rabbi” or “Rabba” in my discussion of a woman’s acceptability for rendering halachic decisions.

Two of the main functions of a congregational rabbi, especially in smaller communities, are to lead the communal prayers and Torah reading. Indeed, the initial purpose of a synagogue was to establish a proper environment for the expression of these two rituals.

Since communal prayer and Torah reading are responsibilities which the Talmud sages specifically placed upon the congregation of males, it is not halachically permissible for women to discharge this obligation and to serve as Torah readers or cantorial representatives of congregations that include men. Hence, I do not believe that a woman can serve as the sole religious leader of a Jewish prayer community at the present time.

Nevertheless, there is a great necessity for women to serve in adjunct clerical positions, especially in the modern synagogue setting, which functions more as a house of Jewish assembly than as a house of communal prayer. I also believe that there are many more halachically viable opportunities for women to actively participate in congregational prayer than is now considered de rignore, and I hope to delineate these in a forthcoming article. ■

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is founder and chancellor of Ohr Torah Stone institutions and the chief rabbi of Efrat. His latest book, *The Living Tree: Studies in Modern Orthodoxy*, is available from Maggid Books, a division of Koren Publishers Jerusalem.

What we don't know

The red heifer – its preparation, its potency and the aftermath of its use – is the most mysterious of Jewish rituals. It is considered the archetypal *hok* – a commandment that has no known reason. According to rabbinic tradition, King Solomon, the wisest of men, declared that it was beyond his ken (Ecclesiastes 7:23; Numbers Raba 19:3). According to another rabbinic tradition, Moses alone knew the reason for the red heifer; no other human being was ever privy to this information (Midrash Tanhuma, Hukat 8).

Commenting on the red heifer passage, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev (1740-1809) stated his opinion about the possibility of knowing the reasons for the red heifer and for Torah laws in general.

“The rule [is thus]: The reasons for the Torah and the commandments are hidden from humankind. Rather, a person must keep and uphold the entire Torah because God commanded the person to keep the [Torah and commandments] and to uphold them.”

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak understood that the mysterious red heifer was an exemplar for all Torah laws. Not only do we not know the reasons for it, but the reasons for all commandments are hidden from humankind. As a proof text for this reading, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak pointed to the first words of the biblical passage describing the red heifer ritual: This is the law of the Torah, as if to say – what is being taught here is applicable to the entire Torah.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak expanded on this idea by saying that in general the soul of a person desires to fulfill the commandments, yet the body is not necessarily party to this desire. On the contrary, the body often prefers a course other than keeping Torah law. This dichotomy is the result of the fact that the body cannot fully appreciate the reasons for the divine commandments.

“If the body was to know the reasons for the Torah and the commandments, it would also want to fulfill the commandments.”

Alas, only the soul is privy to the reasons, hence it is only the soul that earnestly desires to uphold Torah. According to Rabbi Levi Yitzhak, not knowing the reasons for Torah laws is a systemic necessity that results from the physicality of the world. Moreover, this lack of perception is what gives birth to the perpetual challenge of human existence: To give precedence to the yearnings of the soul over the desires of the body, and consequently to fulfill God's commandments.

If we try to classify what type of reading is offered here, we might say that this explanation is bona fide hassidic Torah. It is a captivating idea related by a famed and beloved hassidic master. Furthermore, the explanation was printed in an early and seminal hassidic work. Most importantly, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak's teaching offers a relevant and usable lesson for a meaningful Jewish life. Hassidism at its best.

Alas, classifying this approach as “hassidic” is far from clear. The student of Hassidism might be surprised to learn that a similar statement appears in *Nefesh Hahaim* – the famous work of Rabbi Haim of Volozhin (1749-1821) that presents an anti-hassidic theology.

Regarding knowing the reasons for various commandments, Rabbi Haim stated: “For the complete reasons for commandments were not revealed to any person in the world; not even Moses our master, of blessed memory.”

Thus Rabbi Haim seems to echo Rabbi Levi Yitzhak in saying that the reasons for all commandments – not just the enigmatic red heifer – are hidden. Moreover, both scholars felt that this situation was performative of the nature of reality, where lofty Torah is beyond the full comprehension of any human.

Could one scholar have copied the idea from the other? Perhaps the great opponent of Hassidism copied the idea from his hassidic contemporary who was nine years his senior? Perhaps in the last decade of his life, Rabbi Haim saw these words in *Kedushat Levi* – Rabbi Levi Yitzhak's volume on the Torah that was first printed in 1811 – and included it in his *Nefesh Hahaim* that was printed posthumously in 1824?

These explanations are highly unlikely. Moreover, the specific passage in *Nefesh Hahaim* includes an invective against those who claim to be privy to divine knowledge – presumably an attack on hassidic masters. This would hardly be the appropriate context for citing an explanation that appeared in *Kedushat Levi*.

There is a more plausible explanation for the confluence. Simply put, both scholars were participating in a conversation that has vexed Jewish scholars for time immemorial. The Talmud records a dispute between two Second Temple sages, regarding whether the reasons for Torah commandments should serve as sources of law.

In the medieval period, great rabbis – most famously Maimonides (1138-1204) – discussed possible reasons for various Jewish laws. In fact, the great Barcelonan scholar Rashba (1235-1310) voiced a position similar to that of Rabbi Haim and Rabbi Levi Yitzhak.

This discussion reminds us how challenging it may be to delineate the innovations of Hassidism. Just because an idea is voiced by a hassidic master, or just because a position is explicated in a hassidic work – does not necessarily mean that it is a new reading that should be attributed to Hassidism. Even if an idea seems to reflect notions that are popularly perceived as “hassidic” – we should not be hasty in classifying them as such. Hassidic masters did not read the classic texts of our hallowed tradition in a vacuum. They opened these tomes – as do we – with a background of a lengthy and rich tradition of Jewish scholarship. They participated in centuries' long discourses that continue to animate our thoughts and discussions. Not everything they said and taught, and not everything they printed, was necessarily an innovative hassidic idea.

A final word: Despite the gulf between Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev and Rabbi Haim of Volozhin, these two scholars meet in the timeless intellectual realm of delving into our tradition. ■

The writer is on the faculty of Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and is a rabbi in Tzur Hadassah. He is currently a post-doctoral fellow in Tel Aviv University's Faculty of Law.

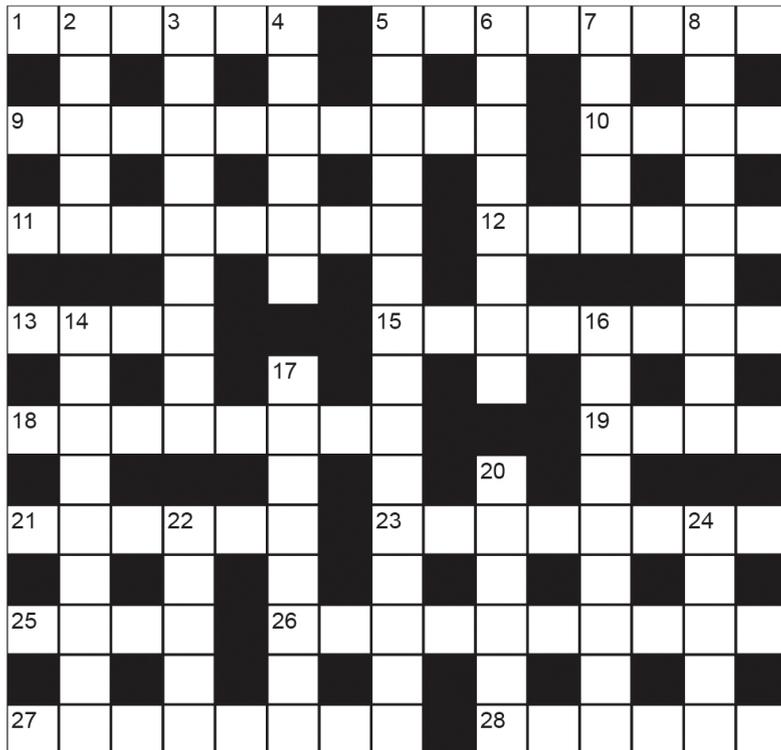


‘AND THE priest will take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.’ (Numbers 19: 1, 2, 6) (Yoram Raanan)

► FRIDAY CROSSWORD

Across

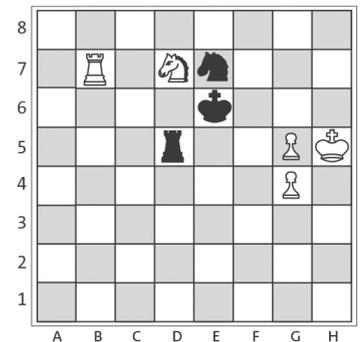
- 1 Good ear features – they are rounded (6)
- 5 Left-winger with frivolous warning (3,5)
- 9 Not against old lover having enough say (3,7)
- 10 Beginning or end of dream in corporate bedroom (4)
- 11 'Footballer has quiet time' – where might you see that? (But not here!) (4,4)
- 12 Country that could trouble USA, sir! (6)
- 13 Go away from fire wasting little time (4)
- 15 Eastern objects, about a hundred artistic items (8)
- 18 Most open row interrupting celebratory party (8)
- 19 Worry when vehicle has sign of no petrol? (4)
- 21 Skilled in poetic style (6)
- 23 What can indicate disapproval, love, anger? All in a teacher's role (8)
- 25 Still gripped by magical moments (4)
- 26 No cost ever worked out for motorists' temporary requirements? (5,5)
- 27 Holly had these insects (8)
- 28 Having a band, Salvationists must have basic accommodation (6)



Down

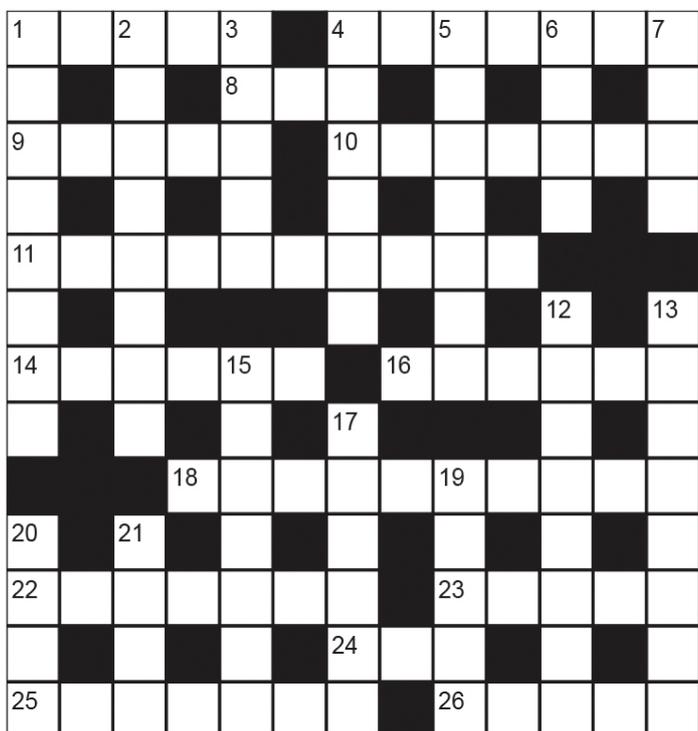
- 2 Drug supplied by naughty lad outside work (1-4)
- 3 Stop working in short holiday away from Oxford? (5,4)
- 4 Army prisoner could undermine this ultimately? (6)
- 5 MPs perhaps disturbed by inveterate press (15)
- 6 Actress has choice of food that's full-flavoured (8)
- 7 River business – try to escape from it (5)
- 8 Messenger is alcoholic almost, one inclined to overindulgence (9)
- 14 Dispose of a shire right here! (5,4)
- 16 Run up debts, showing no concern to learn? (9)
- 17 Principal dealt with a rebellious fighter, a source of worry (8)
- 20 Supplies rushed aboard ship (6)
- 22 Tot caught hugging a tree (5)
- 24 Birds emerging from these anns the wronn way (5)

► CHESS By Leonard Barden



Vladimir Kramnik v Pavel Eljanov, Corus Wijk 2008. Former world champion Kramnik battled for many hours to squeeze a win out of a small endgame advantage, but today's position two pawns up still looked difficult. If White tries to prepare the advance of his g5 pawn by 1 Kh6, escaping his king from the black rook's pin, then comes Ng8+! and if 2 2 Kg7/h7 Rxf5 when Black has good drawing chances. In fact, the endgame is one move and you're dead. After Kramnik's next turn, Black had to surrender. What was White's knock-out punch? Ilford stages its traditional open-to-all Whitsun congress next weekend (24-26 May) at Redbridge Institute, Gants Hill. Anybody can enter, the field is likely to include experts and masters, and there are special sections for weaker players. Call Joe Rosenberg at 020 8554 2232 if you would like more details.

► QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Narrow passage (5)
- 4 Legwear (7)
- 8 Rower (3)
- 9 Easily scared (5)
- 10 Painkiller (7)
- 11 Lack of discipline (10)
- 14 Withdraw (6)
- 16 Group of seven (6)
- 18 Men's toiletry (10)
- 22 Former pupil (7)
- 23 Part of small intestine (5)
- 24 Supernatural being (3)
- 25 Metal works (7)
- 26 Reception area (5)

Down

- 1 Selflessness (8)
- 2 Short amusing verse (8)
- 3 Sing in a certain way (5)
- 4 Insecure knot (6)
- 5 Dead end (7)
- 6 Nobleman (4)
- 7 Drop down (4)
- 12 Long-term plan (8)
- 13 Long thin flag (8)
- 15 Not working (7)
- 17 Hot spring (6)
- 19 Light boat (5)
- 20 Raised platform (4)
- 21 Crossbreed (4)

► CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS



Across: 1 Bawl, 3 Buoy, (Ball-boy) 9 Ovine, 10 Hearth rug, 11 Hoick, 12 Impromptu, 15 Tender, 17 Stanza, 18 Equivocal, 21 Comic, 23 Underdone, 24 Ascot, 25 Echo, 26 Debt.

Down: 1 Baha'ists, 2 Wrapping, 4 Unripe, 5 Yoghurt, 6 Fiji, 7 Deck, 8 Otto, 13 Anecdote, 14 Earliest, 16 Execute, 18 Purdah, 20 Vary, 21 Coal, 22 Mira.

SUDOKU

VERY EASY

7		3			1			4
	9		5		8		7	
		8		2		9		1
9	3			1			4	
		2	4		5	3		
	8			3			2	6
3		9		6		5		
	4		1		2		3	
1			9			4		8

MEDIUM

3			8		5			7
				7				
	7	6	1		4	8	3	
	2	3				9	7	
	9	4				5	1	
	4	8	9		1	7	5	
				8				
1			6		7			2

EASY

		6	4	1				
		3	9		5		2	
	5					3		
6	1					5	4	
7	9						6	3
	8	4					1	9
		7					3	
	3		1		8	4		
				5	7	1		

HARD

	2							
			4					7
4	6	1		5				
9			7		6			2
7	1						4	9
	3		8		1			6
				7			6	8
8					2			
								9

BRIDGE

The most important card

• MATTHEW GRANOVETTER

What is Stayman spelled backwards? Namyats, a conventional bid of four clubs or four diamonds, showing a good hand with a long solid heart or spade suit. The convention was popularized in America by the late Sam Stayman, whose name is more familiar for the two-club response to one notrump. The bid is used to distinguish a good opening four-heart or four-spade bid from a weak one. Most people play that the bid promises an outside ace or king. Lynn Baker, a professor at the University of Texas Law School in Houston, and Karen McCallum, a writer and bridge teacher from Vermont, agreed to play this way. But when Baker picked up the North hand in a team event, she couldn't resist opening four clubs. "I treated the queen of diamonds like the king."

North dealer
Both sides vulnerable

North (Baker)
♠ 6 4
♥ A K Q 10 8 7 6 3
♦ Q 5
♣ 3

West	East
♠ -	♠ K Q J 10 3
♥ J 9	♥ 4 2
♦ J 10 4 3	♦ 9 7
♣ A K Q 8 7 6 2	♣ 10 9 5 4

South (McCallum)
♠ A 9 8 7 5 2
♥ 5
♦ A K 8 6 2
♣ J

West	North	East	South
-	4C	pass	6H
			(all pass)

Opening lead: ace of clubs

McCallum, sitting South, jumped to slam in hearts, hoping that her three top tricks and singleton club would be enough for slam. All this left West in the cold, because she was never able to bid her nice club suit. But she did have a chance to shine on opening lead. She considered leading the eight of clubs. If she could get her partner on lead, she'd receive a spade ruff to set the contract. But after thinking about this, she decided not to risk it, and instead led clubs from the top. McCallum leaned over and claimed the next 12 tricks. "Unless East is ruffing something," said McCallum, "I have the rest. Looks like your queen of diamonds, partner, was an important card."

"Darnit," said West. "I had to underlead my clubs and then I could get a spade ruff."

But when McCallum noticed that West held the ace, king, and queen of clubs, McCallum comforted her. "Not so. Look. I would have made an overtrick if you led a low club. The most important card on this deal wasn't my partner's queen of diamonds. It was my jack of clubs!"

Matthew Granovetter is a world champion and the author of more than 20 bridge books. He can be reached at mattg@bridgetoday.com

5x5

5x5

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

2760

S		R		P
	R		D	
R		G		S
	N		P	
P		L		S

2759 SOLUTION (other combinations may occasionally be possible)

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CHESSE ANSWERS

Chess: 8639: 1 Nf8+ Resigns. If Kd6 2 Rd7+ and 3 Rxe7. If Kf7 2 Ng6 again wins the knight.

WORDBUILDER

WORD-BUILDER

2760

D	C	A
L	E	

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How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - 9 Excellent - 15 Amazing - 19

SOLUTION 2759: due, duel, eld, led, leu, lud, lur, lure, lured, red, rude, rue, rued, rule, ruled



THE END of the rainbow is discovered at a waterfall on the Golan Heights. (Zev Rothkoff)



SILLY SKATER, as a K-9 hits the streets of Jerusalem. (Marc Israel Sellem)

The week in photos

• From readers

We are looking for your photos showing what you did or saw this week. Send submissions to JpostMagPhotos@gmail.com with your name, where you're from and when the picture was taken.



IT'S THE summer of travel as one Israeli documents urban art in Budapest. (Miriam Marcus)



NO FEAR of rainy days in Jerusalem, with the umbrella installation on Yoel Salomon Street. (Keren Preiskel)

Restoring a Jewish grandfather's legacy

• RIVKAH LAMBERT ADLER

When Traci Newmark was growing up, her non-Jewish mother taught her that, “Jews were the chosen children to God. Jews had a special place. I never learned anything about Israel as a young person. I thought the Golden Dome was a Jewish symbol. I knew that Jews and the Land of Israel had a role in the end of days, but I didn’t know anything about Jewish people.”

Joel Willis grew up on a Christian family compound where he attended church in his great-grandmother’s house, along with his extended family.

“I learned Bible stories. The only talk about Jews in my family always had something to do with end of days. I learned that someday, God will wage war on behalf of the Jews in the Land of Israel. I didn’t know any Jews personally. In Oklahoma City there was a Reform temple with giant bronze tablets of the Ten Commandments outside. As a kid, I thought they were awesome.”

After their first child was born in 1994, Joel (now Yoel Keren) and Traci (now Yael Keren) went looking for a spiritual home. They tried, and rejected, a number of churches, including a Hebrew-Christian congregation.

“The more Hebrew I learned, the more I read Jewish books, the more I had a lot of questions that the Messianics couldn’t answer,” Yoel recalls.

When Yael was 24, she learned the truth.

“I was very close with my grandparents. I asked my grandfather, ‘What religion were you raised in? And my grandfather said, ‘Jewish, of course.’ He opened up a whole new world to us. There were lots of things he remembered that should have set off Jewish clues. But I had no Jewish education and I didn’t pick up on them.”

That conversation would eventually change the course of their lives. Yael’s grandfather very much encouraged their conversion and eventual aliya with the words, “You go. You go to Israel. You’ll be a good Jew. Not like me.”

Eventually, the couple underwent a Conservative conversion in Oklahoma City. For Yoel and Yael, immigrating to Israel was an extension of their conversion process.

“The Jews we knew in Oklahoma were good people, but we just didn’t believe the same things they do. I knew there was something missing in the Judaism I experienced there,” Yoel reflects.

Conservative Judaism wasn’t the right fit, and making aliya began to seem like the logical next step.

In an attempt to keep them local, the Jewish community in Oklahoma offered them multiple inducements, including a house within walking distance of the synagogue and cantorial training for Yoel.

“It was tempting,” admits Yoel. “For the first time, there was a question if we were doing the right thing by leaving for Israel.”

Why was making aliya a necessary part of the Kerens’ story?

Yoel says, “It’s my personality. I was raised to be a fundamentalist. That’s still with me. I take things literally. When the Bible tells me that God gave me a place to live and it’s called Israel, I had to live there. I wanted to have a sense of Jewish community. I want-

ed to eat kosher food. I wanted to mean everything I say in my prayers. For an Oklahoma boy, the Jewish communities on the East Coast were just as foreign as Israel. If I was going to move ‘back east,’ I was going to move way back east.”

Yael adds another dimension, “My family was so respectful of our conversion.”

Paradoxically, that made the transition to Judaism harder.

“We had to go elsewhere to establish ourselves as Jews.”

The Jewish Agency wouldn’t approve their aliya until one of them had at least been to Israel, so Yoel came alone on a Solidarity Mission in 2001. He stayed an extra week and wandered around Jerusalem. In essence, that was his pilot trip.

Yael recalls, “There were no blogs and no aliya support groups back then. In a way, it was easier to come without any information. It was a little shocking, but I had no anxiety because I didn’t know what to expect. We had lived as Jews less than a year before making aliya and we made aliya during the second intifada. We told our family we weren’t able to leave Israel for three years, so we would have a chance to get settled.”

“Before we came, we knew we’d have to have a halachic conversion. Our original plan was to become kibbutznikim but we didn’t qualify for any kibbutz programs. So we spent five months in the *merkaz klita* [absorption center] in Ra’anana. We enrolled our son in school, did *ulpan* and started learning for our halachic conversion.”

Shortly after Yoel came back from his makeshift pilot trip, he met Benny Kashriel, the mayor of Ma’aleh Adumim, in synagogue.

“When you make aliya, I’ll get you jobs,” Kashriel promised.

When the pair finished *ulpan* with no job prospects, “We had his business card and we called him. There was no *Nefesh B’Nefesh* yet and Americans didn’t qualify for *sal klita* [absorption basket] back then. Benny was our only hope.”

He came through and they moved to Ma’aleh Adumim. The *beit din*, or rabbinical court, arranged local Jewish foster families and the Kerens didn’t eat Shabbat meals at home for a full year.

Looking back, Yael says, “It feels like I got on a train and it was effortless. There was no fear. I never get upset. I’m very easy-going. It’s not my personality to get frustrated. I find a lot of it entertaining.”

“Our son going in the army was the biggest transition to considering ourselves real Israelis. Our daughter being born in Jerusalem was also huge. And I still feel like a kid in a candy store every day here. It never ends. Every day I see something I haven’t seen before. I go to so many different kinds of shuls and experience as much as I can,” Yoel muses.

“I accomplished a lot of things that I wouldn’t have done in America. I don’t speak Hebrew well at all. It never bothers me. With anything I’ve had to deal with in Israel, my attitude has always been, ‘Be a duck. Just let it roll off your back,’” Yael comments.

Yoel has since mastered Hebrew.

“I had a great desire to learn the language as soon as I could. My first job was with Russian immigrants in SodaStream. They put me alone in a room with an old Moroccan employee. I picked up Hebrew really fast in this custom-made, personal *ulpan*.”

“After we made aliya, Yael’s grandfather saw me with beard and kippa. He said, ‘I look at you and think, What in the hell happened to me?’”

Reflecting on their lives over the past 14 years, Yoel hums with satisfaction.

“With every passing day, I know with more certainty that we made the right decision. I know I did the right thing. I know my family belongs here. I know my family is part of the Jewish people.”

“An early Shabbat host said something that still resonates, ‘I’m here because this is where it’s at for the Jewish people. For good or for worse, if it’s happening for the Jewish people, it’s happening here. This is where the action is.’”

**YOEL KEREN, AGE 43
Yael Keren, AGE 42
FROM OKLAHOMA CITY
TO MA’ALEH ADUMIM
IN 2001**



AFTER THEIR conversion, the Jewish community in Oklahoma City tried to make the Kerens stay, but aliya was in their hearts. (Courtesy)

