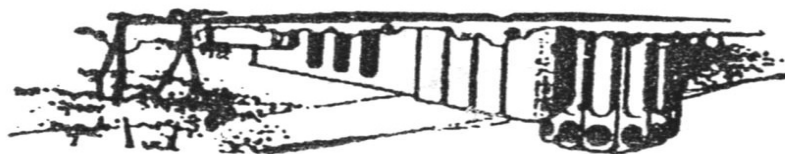


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March 2011  
Vol 8, No. 9

## THE BULLETIN

Adar I/Adar II 5771  
Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon  
Cantor Mordechai Dier

### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR MARCH

Friday, March 4  
Candle Lighting Time. . . . . 5:31 P.M.  
Saturday, March 5 - Parashat Pekudei/Shekalim  
Shabbat Mevarchim  
Shabbat Services. . . . . 9:00 A.M.  
Shabbat Ends. . . . . 6:42 P.M.

Friday, March 11  
Candle Lighting Time. . . . . 5:39 P.M.  
Saturday, March 12 - Parashat Vayikra  
Shabbat Services. . . . . 9:00 A.M.  
Shabbat Ends. . . . . 6:49 P.M.

Thursday, March 17 – Fast of Esther  
Begins – 5:41 A.M. . . . . Ends 7:49 P.M.

Friday, March 18  
Candle Lighting Time. . . . . 6:47 P.M.  
Saturday, March 19 - Parashat Tzav  
Shabbat Parashat Zachor Service  
Shabbat Services. . . . . 9:00 A.M.  
Shabbat Ends. . . . . 7:57 P.M.

### PURIM

Saturday, March 19  
Maariv & Megillah Reading. . . . . 8:15 P.M.  
Sunday, March 20  
Shacharit & Megillah Reading. . . . . 8:30 A.M.

Friday, March 25  
Candle Lighting Time. . . . . 6:54 P.M.  
Saturday, March 26 - Parashat Shemini  
Shabbat Parashat Parah Service  
Shabbat Services. . . . . 9:00 A.M.  
Shabbat Ends. . . . . 8:04 P.M.

### A WEEK-END OF PURIM FUN

Maariv & The  
Megillat Esther Reading  
Saturday Night,  
March 19, 2011  
8:15 PM



Shacharit & Megillah Reading  
Sunday Morning,  
March 20, 2011  
8:30 AM



Purim Seudah  
Sunday Afternoon,  
March 20, 2011  
Beginning at 1:00 PM  
Song Stylings of  
Irene Failenbogen  
\$25.00 per person

### ATTENTION:

Friday evening services for  
March have been suspended  
due to continuously inclement  
weather conditions.

## SCHEDULED EVENTS

### Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup> @ 8:00 PM

Program Committee Meeting  
All Are Welcome To Attend

### Wednesdays in March

#### 10:30 AM to Noon

Adult Education Institute Courses  
Conducted By Rabbi Gerald Solomon  
"Family Relationships in the Bible"  
An in-depth study & analysis

### Thursdays: 11 AM to 1 PM

"On-going Discussion Group" is on hiatus  
due to the inclement weather

### Saturday, March 19<sup>th</sup>

#### @ 8:15 PM

Megillat Esther Reading

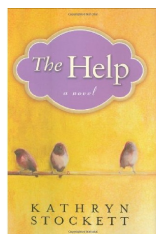
### Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>

#### @ 8:30 AM

Shacharit Service & Megillah Reading

#### @ 1:00 PM

Purim Seudah & Entertainment



### Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>

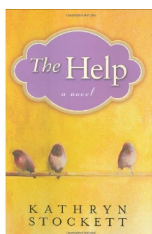
#### @ 10:30 AM

Sisterhood Book Club

*The Help*

By

Kathryn Stockett



## MAZEL TOV

**The Zuber Family** on the engagement of dear son and nephew William Adam Friedman to Sarah Mulhern. We wish the young couple much *nachas* on their future life together.

## REFUAH SHELEIMAH

We wish to extend our heartfelt prayers to all those who are confronting illness, have undergone medical procedures, and are recuperating from mishaps. Among those on our speedy recovery list are Rochelle Mendelow, Carl Rosenthal, Bernie Solomon, and Shari Weinberger.

## CONDOLENCES

Our heartfelt condolences go out to the family of Dorothy Steuer, wife of the late Julian Steuer, original member of the newly merged synagogue's Presidium. We pray that the family will be comforted along with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and may know of no more sorrow.

## KEEP ON GIVING

Hunger is a daily struggle for the indigent and is harder felt in light of the harsh weather we are encountering. Please continue to bring in canned or boxed goods so that the wintry months will be a little less cold for those less fortunate.



## ENDOWMENTS

Yahrzeit Plaque

In main Sanctuary. . . . . \$275

In Lasky Chapel. . . . . \$175

Panel in new stained glass window. . . . \$500

Endow a Siddur. . . . . \$50

Endow a Chumash. . . . . \$75

Sponsor a kiddush. . . . . \$225

Special kiddush. . . . . ask

Listing in Book of Life. . . . . \$25

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund. . . . .

Please contact office (718) 357-5100

## RABBI'S MESSAGE - MARCH 2011

### IS EGYPT READY FOR DEMOCRACY? A LESSON FROM OUR HISTORY

If you ask Vice President Omar Suleiman if Egypt is ready for democracy, the answer would be a resounding no. While democracy may become the eventual form of government for the people of Egypt, it certainly cannot happen overnight. Just talking about the possibility of democracy taking hold in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, is a good thing and should continue. The seeds of freedom are presently being planted in the minds of the Egyptians and other nations. All that is needed for the seeds to germinate is the fertilizer of education, moisture from the milk of human kindness and the sunlight of caring nations.

Thus, America, a nation that should always be interested and helpful in facilitating freedom and democracy for the “awakened from repression” nations of the world has at its doorstep, indeed the democratic nations of the world have at their doorstep, if so desired, a newborn and a new sense of urgency. That sense of urgency says: Act swiftly before circumstances revert back to previous repressive ideologies or new repressive ones. May the freedom loving nations not forgo the opportunity to influence Egypt’s direction towards freedom and democracy. Our tradition admonishes us not to abandon the opportunity to do a mitzvah. When it presents itself - seize it. Don’t let it slip away.

When our ancestors made their exodus from Egyptian bondage, they were instructed, indeed commanded to leave the enslavement, to leave the repressive atmosphere of Egypt quickly, without hesitation, without giving it too much thought because as so often happens in the human condition, too much “analysis leads to paralysis.” (“He who hesitates is lost.”) A person who spends too much time deliberating about what to do loses the chance to act altogether. Similarly a nation which has been given the chance to rise from their

enslavement, their repression, their oppression and grasp the reins of freedom should not hesitate, but move, as the Torah says (regarding the preliminary eating of the Paschal Lamb as a prelude to their stepping onto freedom’s path): “. . . you shall eat it in haste, it is the Lord’s Passover.” Abraham Ibn Ezra, 12<sup>th</sup> century biblical commentator states that “both the preparation and the eating of the Paschal Lamb were to be done hurriedly in order not to delay the departure.” Freedom must be seized quickly before it slips away.

When our ancestors left Egypt after centuries of oppression, were they ready for democracy, for self governance. Not quite. Receptivity to democratic ideas had to first be inculcated within them. G-d realized that. So what happened? They were immediately thrust into communion with G-d vis-a-vis the Paschal Lamb and the other ritual preparations for their journey to the Promised Land. They were not given a chance to gloat over their new found freedom. They did not celebrate wildly. Observing the first Passover was their subdued and dignified celebration even as Passover is observed by us today - a dignified and subdued celebration of our freedom. Additionally they were soon to be given the Ten Commandments which occurred a mere seven weeks after they had begun their march into freedom.

We thus can learn and apply the lessons from our own history to all those nations of the world which aspire to be free. Whether for Egypt or any other nation, freedom needs to be regulated by the rule of G-d’s laws.

For the Jewish People, it consists of observing the 613 commandments of the Torah. In our day, it consists of observing all the relevant commandments of the Torah. For the Gentile nations of the world it consists of observing the Seven Commandments given to all the descendants of Noah which are seven of our 613. What are those seven?

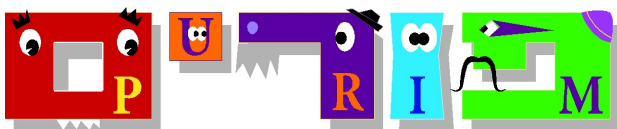
1. Prohibition of Idolatry
2. Prohibition of Theft
3. Prohibition of Blasphemy
4. Prohibition of Murder
5. Prohibition of Sexual Immorality
6. Prohibition of Eating the flesh of an animal while it is still alive
7. Establishment of Courts of Law.

When will the Egyptian people be ready for democracy? Democracy, indeed its ideals and components, for a nation which has long been under oppressive rule, as we learn from our own history and tradition, must be administered with patience and in painstaking stages. When will they be ready for a system defined as a form of government in which the people have a voice in the exercise of power, typically through elected representatives and where majority rule is evident?

The answer is relative and therefore unknown, but what is most important now is to make sure that freedom and democracy become and remain the twin goals of their aspirations, their struggles and their dreams.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim!

**Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon**



## PURIM

*In the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, on its thirteenth day ... on the day that the enemies of the Jews were expected to prevail over them, it was turned about: the Jews prevailed over their adversaries. - Esther 9:1*

*And they gained relief on the fourteenth, making it a day of feasting and gladness. - Esther 9:17*

*[Mordecai instructed them] to observe them as days of feasting and gladness, and sending*

*delicacies to one another, and gifts to the poor. - Esther 9:22*

Purim is one of the most joyous and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar. It commemorates a time when the Jewish people living in Persia were saved from extermination.

The story of Purim is told in the Biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a beautiful young Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raised her as if she were his daughter. Esther was taken to the house of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, to become part of his harem. King Ahasuerus loved Esther more than his other women and made Esther queen, but the king did not know that Esther was a Jew, because Mordecai told her not to reveal her identity.

The villain of the story is Haman, an arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai refused to bow down to him, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. In a speech that is all too familiar to Jews, Haman told the king, "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from those of every other people's, and they do not observe the king's laws; therefore it is not befitting the king to tolerate them." (Esther 3:8) The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman, to do as he pleased to them. Haman planned to exterminate all of the Jews.

Mordecai persuaded Esther to speak to the king on behalf of the Jewish people. This was a dangerous thing for Esther to do, because anyone who came into the king's presence without being summoned could be put to death, and she had not been summoned. Esther fasted for three days to prepare herself, then went into the king. He welcomed her. Later, she told him of Haman's plot against her people. The Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged on the gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai.

The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the Bible that does not contain the name of G-d. In fact, it includes virtually no reference to G-d. Mordecai makes a vague reference to the fact that the Jews will be saved by someone else, if not by Esther, but that is the closest the book comes to mentioning G-d. Thus, one important message that can be gained from the story is that G-d often works in ways that are not apparent, in ways that appear to be chance, coincidence or ordinary good luck.

Purim is celebrated on the 14th day of Adar, which is usually in March. The 13th of Adar is the day that Haman chose for the extermination of the Jews, and the day that the Jews battled their enemies for their lives. On the day afterwards, the 14th, they celebrated their survival. In cities that were walled in the time of Joshua, Purim is celebrated on the 15th of the month, because the book of Esther says that in Shushan (a walled city), deliverance from the massacre was not complete until the next day. The 15th is referred to as Shushan Purim.

In leap years, when there are two months of Adar, Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar, so it is always one month before Passover. The 14th day of the first Adar in a leap year is celebrated as a minor holiday called Purim Katan, which means "little Purim." There are no specific observances for Purim Katan; however, a person should celebrate the holiday and should not mourn or fast. Some communities also observe a "Purim Katan" on the anniversary of any day when their community was saved from a catastrophe, destruction, evil or oppression.

The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre. The Purim holiday is preceded by a minor fast, the Fast of Esther, which commemorates Esther's three days of fasting in preparation for her meeting with the king.

The primary commandment related to Purim is to

hear the reading of the book of Esther. The book of Esther is commonly known as the Megillah, which means scroll. Although there are five books of Jewish scripture that are properly referred to as megillot (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of the Megillah. It is customary to boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle groggers (noisemakers) whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman."

We are also commanded to eat, drink and be merry. According to the Talmud, a person is required to drink until he cannot tell the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordecai," though opinions differ as to exactly how drunk that is. A person certainly should not become so drunk that he might violate other commandments or get seriously ill. In addition, recovering alcoholics or others who might suffer serious harm from alcohol are exempt from this obligation.

In addition, we are commanded to send out gifts of food or drink, and to make gifts to charity. The sending of gifts of food and drink is referred to as *shalach manos* (sending out portions). Among Ashkenazic Jews, a common treat at this time of year is hamantaschen (lit. Haman's pockets). These triangular fruit-filled cookies are supposed to represent Haman's three-cornered hat.

It is customary to hold carnival-like celebrations on Purim, to perform plays and parodies, and to hold beauty contests. Americans sometimes refer to Purim as the Jewish Mardi Gras.

Purim is not subject to the Sabbath-like restrictions that some other holidays have; however, some sources indicate that we should not go about our ordinary business on Purim out of respect for the holiday. It is in keeping with the spirit of the holiday to enjoy the company of family and friends at a special Purim festive meal called a Purim Seudah.

**WHAT ISRAEL FEARS IN EGYPT****The Washington Post****Sallai Meridor****Wednesday, February 9, 2011**

One might expect that Israelis, who live in the only democracy in the Middle East, would turn out in the squares of Jerusalem and the gardens of Tel Aviv to show solidarity with the demonstrators in Egypt. The protesters, after all, are seeking to overthrow an authoritarian regime. . . It is not a democratic Egypt that Israelis fear but the prospect of Egypt being hijacked by enemies of democracy, of Israel and of the United States. Within every revolution are some who hope to use democratic processes to establish oppressive regimes. This was, to a large extent, what triumphed in Iran in 1979 and what happened in Gaza only five years ago. Many Israelis wonder why it would be any different in Egypt, which is home to the world's most powerful and popular Islamist movement.

Should the government of Hosni Mubarak be replaced by one not truly committed to freedom and peace, the consequences for Israel could be devastating. As Egypt struggles toward an internal balance that appeases all forces, including the Muslim Brotherhood, peace with Israel could be the price of an Egyptian compromise. And the risks are worse if the Brotherhood, an organization deeply hostile to Israel, America and the West, gets to call the shots.

Consider what an Egyptian official once told me: "There is no war without Egypt." From 1948 to 1973, Israel had to fight four wars against coalitions of Arab armies. Since the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, however, there has not been even one war between Israel and Arab states. The lives of many Israelis and Arabs have been saved over the past four decades, and the security burden on Israel's economy has become more bearable. Yet if the peace with Egypt dissolves, the risks to the Jewish state and its citizens cannot be overstated.

The implications for the region could be massive. If Israel's western neighbor turns hostile, where would that leave our eastern neighbor, Jordan? Would it remain at peace with us? What would be the impact on other pro-American regimes? How many weeks, or days, would the new alignment of interests between Israel and most Arab regimes last against an aggressive and nuclear-armed Iran? If there is a negative outcome to the events unfolding in Egypt, the world will be living with a new Middle East, but it will be very different from the one we all aspire to.

Meanwhile, Israelis are uncertain about some positions of the U.S. administration. They remember how, after the 2009 presidential election, the Obama administration refused to support courageous Iranians who demonstrated against the oppressive "hate to America" regime in Tehran. People are understandably puzzled when news reports show an ally of America - even an authoritarian one - abandoned while U.S. rivals are honored with state dinners in Washington, despite their gross violations of human rights. In this highly charged region, Washington's actions are carefully watched. Israelis are looking at the results of U.S. policy in Iraq, the recent loss of Lebanon to Iran and how American pressure on Israel led to a "democratic" takeover of the Palestinian Authority by Hamas terrorists. Israelis live every day with the results of the U.S. administration's blunder that made already-difficult negotiations with the Palestinians impossible.

Israelis have learned the hard way that Israel cannot shape internal developments in our neighboring Arab states. While they wish America could responsibly engage in this process and ensure a positive outcome, they also doubt whether even America can prevent events from proceeding toward, and down, a slippery slope.

It is said, and is possibly true, that worry may be in the Jewish genes. With our history, having paved so many roads with good intentions only to see them lead to destruction, and having experienced



how democratic slogans and processes have been abused again and again by murderous dictators, it is hard not to be concerned.

The future of Egypt is uncertain: Is it a hostile Islamist tyranny, using democracy as a fake ladder, or a compromise at Israel's expense that may be about to occur? The fear of war and death is on Israelis' hearts and minds.

But if a real democracy, committed to the values of freedom and peace, were to emerge in Egypt, Israelis would overwhelmingly support it.

*(The writer was Israel's ambassador to the United States from 2005 to 2009.)*



### **EGYPT'S MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD? GAZA'S HAMAS?**

**LEBANON'S HEZBOLLAH?  
DALAL MUGHRABI PROVES  
FATAH IS NO DIFFERENT!**

**Moshe Phillips**

*NewsRealBlog, February 14, 2011*

Much ink has been spilled over the last several weeks over questions about the Muslim Brotherhood. How powerful is it? How extreme is it? How dangerous is the group? Are they sponsors of terrorism? No doubt now that Mubarak has relinquished power these questions will continue to be debated. And let's be clear, these are vitally important questions for Egypt, for the U.S. for Israel and for the entire Middle East.

But, the things being asked about Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood must be asked about [Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas'] Fatah Party as well. They should have been asked a long time ago.

Fatah is the largest component of the PLO. It was led by Yasser Arafat until his death in 2004.... Fatah is the Palestinian entity that the U.S. State Department groomed for leadership of the Arabs in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) beginning in 1988 when Arafat supposedly renounced terrorism. We are expected to believe that Fatah is different. We are told to believe that the PLO has changed. There are just a few problems with that--the big one being that they really have not changed. The Palestine National Covenant continues to call for the destruction of Israel and Zionism. . .

When Mubarak's predecessor Sadat forged ahead and negotiated with Israel, Fatah struggled to find a way to stop the negotiations. They chose violence. Violence against non-military Israeli targets.... Fatah sent a unit of its terrorists into the heart of Israel. On a quiet coastal road north of Tel Aviv they hijacked a bus full of civilians. On that terrible day of violence and terror 38 were murdered. Thirteen were children; 77 were injured. The first victim was an American citizen named Gail Rubin.

Dalal Mughrabi, the female leader of the terrorists, shot Rubin in the head at point blank range.... Rubin was a nature photographer from New York and she was taking pictures on the beach when [Mughrabi] found her. She was 39 years old. . .

That was March 11, 1978. It was the deadliest attack against civilians in Israel's history up to that time.... In the intervening decades, the attack was seldom mentioned in the world media. But Fatah never forgot it. They never forgot their hero Dalal. They turned her into a martyr.

In 2010 the Palestinian Authority government named a town square in El Bireh after this murderer. In Jericho, a summer program for students was named for her. Just last week the U.N. was exposed for supporting Fatah's efforts to honor Mughrabi.

But no matter what Fatah does, Israel and the U.S.

seek to keep them at the center of Arab-Israeli politics. Of course Fatah is very different than Hamas.... But that does not mean they don't share many common goals. And the destruction of Israel is the most important one of those goals. . .

This State Department game (that too many successive Israel governments have participated in) of pretending that Fatah will ever be a peace partner must end. Fatah remains what it has always been, a violent criminal organization with a Nazi-like hatred for Jews at its core. The United States undertook a policy of de-Nazification in Europe after World War II to insure that its victory would not be in vain. . . It is past time for the de-Fatahification work to begin.



## Dorothy Steuer – In Memoriam



On February 9<sup>th</sup>, our beloved member, Dorothy Steuer passed away. She was the widow of Julian Steuer, who served as President and Co-President of the Flushing Jewish Center and the Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center for more than thirty years

Dorothy Steuer's beautiful smile, kind spirit and open heart brought joy to all who knew her.

Dorothy was born on Sept. 30, 1922, and grew up in The Bronx, N.Y., with her parents Rose (Glantz) and Samuel Hauser and her brother, Milton. Her

parents, immigrants from Poland and Russia, worked in New York's garment district, her father as a cutter and her mother as a dress designer. Rose was a survivor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Company fire that claimed the lives of over 140 of its workers and was pivotal in the improvement of working conditions in New York's sweatshops.

Dorothy attended Washington Irving High School and began a career in the fashion industry, but then chose to pursue other work.

Dorothy married Julian and they moved to Queens as newlyweds. While raising their children, she volunteered with the USO, transcribed Braille for the Jewish Braille Institute, and worked tirelessly at the Flushing Jewish Center, where she was, among other things, the most popular of all the Bingo callers. After her children were grown, Dorothy returned to work as a counselor at the New York State Department of Unemployment Insurance.

Dorothy and Julian moved to the Easthampton when their failing health made being closer to family a necessity. While they deeply regretted leaving our congregation, they were welcomed by the Congregation B'nai Israel in North Hampton as valued members. Julian died in 2007 and those of us who knew them still miss them.

Dorothy had a beautiful mezzo-soprano singing voice and was a talented pianist. As a young girl, she performed in vaudeville as a singer and dancer, entertained soldiers through the USO as a young adult, and for many years sang at weddings, bar mitzvahs, and other occasions in her community. She loved music and particularly enjoyed her time singing with the Queens College Choral Society in their annual performance of Handel's "Messiah." Her greatest love and devotion, however, was to her family. She will be sadly missed but will be remembered with love and admiration by her son, Allen, and his wife, Catherine, of Grand Rapids, Michigan; her daughter, Shelley Steuer; son-in-law, Dr. Jeffrey Korff and her grandsons, Noah and David Korff.



## QUEENS COLLEGE SPRING LECTURE SERIES

1. Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 7:15 PM LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

### **“Jewish Politics in Postwar America and the Rise of the Neoconservatives”**

Discussant: Professor Nancy Sinkoff, Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History at Rutgers, and Chair of the Department of Jewish Studies. Author of *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands*, a study of the Jewish Enlightenment in late eighteenth-century Poland. The lecture will explore the impact of East European Jewish history on the political culture of post-war American Jews.

This lecture has been made possible by the Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz Endowment Fund.

Free and Open to the Public.

2. Sunday, March 13, 2011, 1:30 PM STUDENT UNION, 4TH FLOOR

### **“Toward a Jewish Theology of Pluralism”**

Discussant: Dr. Arnold M. Eisen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Dr. Eisen is one of the world's foremost experts on American Judaism, and prior to becoming Chancellor, he served in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. Dr. Eisen will be joined by a panel of Queens College students from the Center of Ethnic, Racial & Religious Understanding.

Free and Open to the Public. Coffee and kosher refreshments will be served.

3. Thursday, March 24, 2011, 7 PM LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

### **“Israeli–Palestinian Peace: Solution or Delusion.”**

Panel: **Dr. Moshe Halbertal**, renowned Israeli scholar of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at Hebrew University and Gruss Professor at New York University School of Law. Currently a visiting Professor at Harvard Law School, and a recipient of the Bruno Award of the Rothschild Foundation and the Goldstein-Goren Book Award. **Ghaith al Omari**, Advocacy Director at the American Task Force on Palestine (ATF), former Director of the International Relations Department in the Office of the Palestinian President; and lead Palestinian drafter of the Geneva Initiative. **Robert Danin**, former member of the White House/National Security Council, Director of the Levant and Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

This program has been made possible by the Ernest and Marta Schwarcz Endowment Fund

Free and Open to the Public.

4. Sunday, March 27, 2011, 2 PM LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

### **“VARIETY SHOW”**

Starring comedian/author Joel Chasnoff, and singing sensations Esty Tzabar Crisona, Dmitri Shevelev, and Kreshnik Zhabjaku.

Tickets on sale for \$15 at the  
Kupferberg Box Office: (718-793-8080).

Group discount (20 or more) \$12.50.

All attendees invited to a special reception following the performance, sponsored by Elsi Levy.  
Endowed by Elsi Levy and the Levy Family.

## "THE BEST IS YET TO BE"

by Dr. Yehuda Shapiro

First published in the Flushing Jewish Center

Bulletin – February 1999

One of the most distinguished personalities in an era of Jewish history that boasted many distinguished personalities - the Golden Age of Spanish Jewry (900-1200) - was the great sage Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, popularly known more simply, as the Ibn Ezra (1092-1167).

Of the Ibn Ezra historian Solomon Grayzel has written:

"He was as poor in worldly goals as he was rich in wit and learning. Wandering all over Western Europe, he stimulated scholarship wherever he spent any time, whether in Italy, the Provence or England. He wrote books on grammar, philosophy, religion and astrology. His chief work, however, was his commentary on the Pentateuch and many other books of the Bible. The difference between his commentary and that of Rashi reflects not only the difference between the two authors, but also that between French Jewish culture and Spanish Jewish culture. Ibn Ezra lacked Rashi's simplicity, his piety and directness. But his commentary is more profound and philosophical; it goes into questions of grammar and rational interpretations. It is therefore more difficult and is not meant for the beginner in scriptural study. Its influence has been more limited than that of Rashi, but it has served to exemplify the attitudes of Spanish Jewish culture to the Jews of other Western lands, both in his own and later generations."

Among the Ibn Ezra's many talents was writing poetry. Literary critic Meyer Waxman has observed:

"A poet of great note was the famous commentator of the Bible, grammarian and astronomer, Abraham Ibn Ezra. This remarkable man whose intellect was all encompassing brought to his poetry besides a feeling heart also a very keen penetrating mind. He can well be compared to

Browning in the tone of his poetry which raises man to an intellectual height from which he surveys the world and life. His is a lyrical genius which draws inspiration from a complete understanding of nature and man. He observes the nature of G-d, His power and creation, and the relation of G-d to the world. He also penetrates into the intricacies of the human soul, the constant, struggle between flesh and spirit, and all his observations he expresses in his poems. Some of them are of a didactic nature and help man both to understand the forces of nature and the soul of man but many of them raise man to an ethical height. Ibn Ezra, in spite of the fact that his life was spent in wandering and suffering, doesn't complain bitterly like Moses Ibn Ezra, nor does he rise above existence and soar in heavenly spheres like Gabirol, but expresses in his poems a quietude of soul which arises from a true understanding of the world and its happenings, and brings us to a conception of their necessity. Such a conception brings one to a restful state of the soul."

The following selections from the verse of Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra exemplify several facets of their author's poetic genius. The first two poems, "Luckless" and "I Have a Garment," reveal the Ibn Ezra's biting, self-deprecatory sense of humor; the third, "On the Death of His Son, Isaac," is a moving elegy on the premature death of his last surviving child; and the last two, "When I Hunger" and "In Thee-" show the poet in his most characteristic stance: as a fervent worshiper of God.

### LUCKLESS

#### I

The planets and spheres in their stations changed their order when I first drew breath. If I were to be a seller of lamps, The sun would not set till after my death!

#### II

The stars in my heaven have ruined my life. I cannot succeed however I strive. If I were to be a seller of shrouds, No one would die while I was alive!

### I HAVE A GARMENT

I have a garment. It is like a sieve.  
 Used for sifting barley or wheat.  
 At the dead of night I spread it out like a tent  
 And the stars of heaven put through it their light.  
 From within it I see the moon and the Pleiades,  
 And, when it is bright, there peeps through Orion.  
 I get tired from counting all its holes  
 Which seem like the teeth of a saw in profusion.  
 A piece of thread, to sew up its rags,  
 Both warp and woof, would be superfluous.  
 If a fly landed on it with all his weight,  
 He, like a fool, would soon grumble and curse.  
 My G-d, make good the repairs which it needs.  
 Make a mantle of praise from these tattered weeds.

### ON THE DEATH OF HIS SON, ISAAC

Father of the child, draw near to mourn,  
 For G-d has taken away from you  
 Your son, your only son,  
 The son whom you love, Isaac.

I am the man who has seen  
 Destruction, whose joy has fled.  
 Alas, I have lost the fruit of my loins,  
 And it never came into my mind;  
 For I thought that in my old age  
 He would be well and strong.  
 But I have labored in vain,  
 I have begotten a son, to dismay me.  
 For how can my heart be glad  
 At the death and departure of Isaac?

I shall lament and weep each minute,  
 And raise a plaintive cry,  
 When I remember how three years ago  
 He died in a foreign land;  
 How he journeyed from place to place,  
 My soul yearning after him,  
 Until I brought him back to my home,  
 While I wept night and day.  
 How many sorrows befell me!  
 These are the generations of Isaac!

My friend, take your leave of me  
 If you console me, you grieve me.  
 Do not recall my soul's beloved,  
 Do not compel me to hear his name.  
 The small fire that was left to me  
 Fate has quenched. Can it harm me more?  
 It has overwhelmed me with eternal disaster.  
 It has taken the delight of my eyes.  
 My flesh and my heart have reached their end,  
 Together with the ending of Isaac.

G-d, in Whose hand is all,  
 Who do Your will with all Your creatures,  
 Speak to the distressed heart of a father,  
 Who has feared Your name from the day of his  
 youth.  
 Rouse Your spirit of consolation for him,  
 And enter into his divided soul.  
 He taught his beloved to fear You,  
 To walk in the way of his forbears.  
 You dictated, while he was still young,  
 The way for Your servant, Isaac.

### WHEN I HUNGER

When I hunger to praise Thee, I'm sated;  
 When to worship I thirst, I am drunk.  
 Then my heart is secure, when I fear Thee  
 When in terror and awe I am sunk.  
 When I bow to Thee low, I am lifted;  
 When I fall in Thy presence, I rise.  
 I am free when I serve, for Thy name's sake,  
 My oppressors who Thy name despise.  
 All suffering is sweet to my heart,  
 When I know that my G-d Thou art.

### IN THEE

In Thee, my G-d, is my desire;  
 In Thee my passionate love and fire.  
 To Thee my reins, to Thee my heart;  
 To Thee my soul and spirit dart.  
 To Thee my hands, to Thee my feet;  
 From Thee doth come my form complete.

My blood, my bones, they all are Thine,  
 My body and image divine.  
 To Thee belong my eyes and thought,  
 The form and pattern Thou hast wrought.  
 To Thee my soul, to Thee my might;  
 Thou art my trust and my delight.  
 To Thee, to Whom there is no peer,  
 I give my soul, to me so dear.

"It is primarily due to him," notes poet David Goldstein of the Ibn Ezra, "that schools of poetry began to flourish in Italy and Provence." But it was not only his contemporaries - or his fellow Jews - whom the Ibn Ezra inspired. Nearly seven hundred years after his death, the great English poet Robert Browning paid tribute to the Ibn Ezra's universal message of faith, hope, and spiritual optimism in his 1864 poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra," with its often recited first stanza:

"Grow old along with me!  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made:  
 Our times are in His hand  
 Who saith, 'A whole I planned,  
 Youth shows but half; trust G-d: see all nor be  
 afraid!'"

In 1167, on the first day of Adar (which this year falls on February 17th), Rabbi Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra passed away at the age of 75. It is recorded that on the very last day of his life he called up the strength to write one final poem, a testament to his never-ending faith:

"My honor rejoices in the Rock of my courage and  
 strength,  
 He has rewarded me above that which I deserved,  
 In his kindness He has taught me His ways  
 And has let me live until I know that which I want,  
 And if that which remains of me is finished with  
 my soul,  
 G-d is to me the Rock of my courage and  
 strength."

## **A Fascinating but Forgotten Chapter of Jewish Immigrant History**

By Mike Silver

Question: What sport has produced the most professional Jewish athletes? I have no doubt the answer will surprise you. It is not baseball, basketball, football or tennis. Not even close. All but forgotten today is the fact that more Jewish athletes have competed in boxing than all other professional sports combined.

From the early 1900s to the 1930s upwards of two thousand Jewish professional boxers were active in this country. Tens of thousands more donned the gloves as amateurs.

Between 1901 and 1938 twenty-eight Jewish professional boxers won world championships—no easy task at the time considering there were only eight weight classes and generally one champion per division.

Champions such as Benny Leonard, Barney Ross, Battling Levinsky, "Slapsie" Maxie Rosenbloom and Jackie "Kid" Berg became folk heroes in Jewish neighborhoods and powerful symbols of ethnic pride and aspiration. Their success as boxers also challenged negative stereotypes of the Jew as physically weak and unable to defend himself.

Today, except for the occasional mega-fight, boxing is more or less of a fringe sport, especially in America. But during the first five decades of the twentieth century it rivaled baseball in popularity.

Boxing's rise as a major spectator sport began in the 1890s and coincided with the influx of millions of new immigrants into rapidly industrializing American cities. This impoverished immigrant population—the majority of whom came from Eastern and Southern Europe—was able to work at

low wage jobs, in factories, or in garment trade sweatshops.

For many second-generation Jewish boys growing up in crowded tenement neighborhoods boxing provided an alternative way to earn a living. Entrée to the sport was not difficult. Arenas and gyms dotted the landscape of every city. Boxing had great appeal as a quick path to economic advancement and as a way to gain fame. It was common knowledge that champion boxers and popular contenders were the highest paid athletes in the world. But even a preliminary fighter could make more money in one four-round bout than a sweatshop laborer could earn in an entire week. For these sons of immigrant parents the monetary rewards outweighed the inherent dangers of the sport.

Boxing has always been an intensely ethnic sport. Promoters often exploited ethnic rivalries by mixing and matching Irish, Jewish and Italian boxers. Opposing fighters with the Star of David or Shamrock displayed on robes and boxing trunks often clashed in sold out arenas filled with working-class partisan fans. But Jewish fighters were so numerous and popular in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago that on many occasions those with established local or national reputations would fight each other. In 1923 New York's great lightweight champion Benny Leonard defended his title against Philadelphia's peerless southpaw, Lew Tendler, before a crowd of 63,000 fans in Yankee Stadium. The Leonard vs. Tendler fight was just one of ten championship contests in which Jewish boxers fought each other for a world title.

Activity reached its peak in the late 1920s when nearly one third of all title contenders were Jewish. The decade yielded a bumper crop of outstanding fighters—Louis “Kid” Kaplan, Benny Bass, Jackie Fields, Al Singer, Charley Phil Rosenberg, Jack Bernstein, Sid Terris and Abe Goldstein, to name just a few. Some of these fighters are rated among the greatest of all time.

From time immemorial it is poverty that drives people into professional boxing and the lack of it that has kept them out. In the years leading up to World War II, as the hardships of the Depression eased, the number of Jewish boxers began to decline. A booming post-war economy, coupled with the G.I. Bill (guaranteeing a free college education to returning veterans), further eroded the numbers of available boxers.

By the early 1950s the golden age of the Jewish prizefighter had passed. The end came about because of the successful integration of America's Jewish citizens into the socio-economic mainstream.

During their time in the limelight a generation of Jewish boxers contributed enormously to the colorful saga of this ancient gladiator sport and at the same time brought honor and respect to their people. It is a remarkable chapter of our immigrant history that should make us all proud.

Mike Silver, an internationally recognized boxing historian, is the author of “The Arc of Boxing: The Rise and Decline of the Sweet Science” (McFarland Publishers, 2009).



Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center  
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## SUNDAY MORNING BREAKFAST CLUB

APRIL 3, 2011

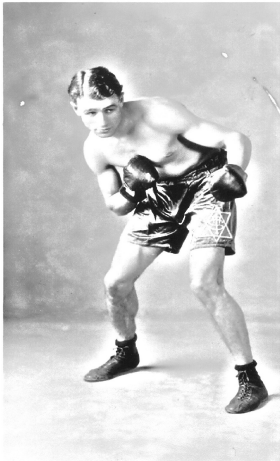
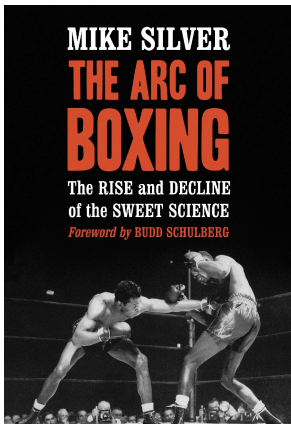
BREAKFAST: 9:45 AM (nominal cost)

LECTURE: 10:30 AM

GUEST SPEAKER: MIKE SILVER

NOTED BOXING HISTORIAN

AUTHOR OF THE ARC OF BOXING:  
THE RISE AND THE DECLINE OF  
THE SWEET SCIENCE



WILL SPEAK ON THE PREVALENCE  
OF JEWISH BOXERS DURING THE  
FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY





Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

# MARCH 2011

## ADAR I – ADAR II 5771

1<sup>25</sup>  
Adar I2<sup>26</sup>  
Adar I3<sup>27</sup>  
Adar I4<sup>28</sup>  
Adar I5<sup>29</sup>  
Adar I

Pekudei/  
Shekalim  
Shabbat  
Mevarchim



5:31

6<sup>30</sup>  
Adar I7<sup>1</sup>  
Adar II

8

9

10

11

12<sup>6</sup>  
Adar II

Rosh  
Chodesh  
Day 1

Rosh  
Chodesh  
Day 2



5:39

Vayikra

13



Daylight  
Savings  
Time  
Turn Clocks  
Ahead 1 hr.

14

15

16

17<sup>11</sup>  
Adar  
II

Fast of Esther

Begins 5:41 AM  
Ends 7:49 PM

18



6:47

19<sup>13</sup>  
Adar II  
Tzav/Zachor

Megillah  
Reading  
8:15 PM

20<sup>14</sup>  
Adar II21<sup>15</sup>  
Adar II

22

23

24

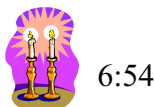
25

26<sup>20</sup>  
Adar II

Megillah  
Reading  
8:30 AM  
Seudah  
1:00 PM



Shushan  
Purim



6:54

Shemini/  
Parah

27

28

29

30

31

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## THE BULLETIN

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