To Learn and To Teach

ללמד וללמד

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In This Issue:

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Introduction to Volume II Number 2

Pesach can be overwhelming--the housecleaning, the food, the family, the matzah. When you take time to step back and reflect, you will find in this issue some articles that deepen your understanding of the festival, and some that treat its central themes. Rabbi Larry Edwards's devar Torah will inspire you to remember and contemplate the meaning of the Exodus. With seder songs lingering in your minds, you will welcome Rachel Adelstein's insights on music and the Song of the Sea.

And, while Israel is always on our minds and in our hearts, Pesach renews our engagement. At our seders we reenact the Exodus as a journey toward our promised land, and we join in singing

לשנה הבאה בירושלים!

- next year in Jerusalem! Each member of our congregation comes to the subject of Israel with a complex mixture of concerns and passions. In this issue we present just a few glimpses. Eminent economist Sam Peltzman speaks from long experience. At the other end of the spectrum, we are proud that so many of us enable our children to visit and learn about Israel. Devora Klionsky and Lev Gray are two who are there now. Through their eyes we can appreciate some first impressions.

The seder is a form of teaching and the Hagaddah quotes the Torah admonishing us to teach our children. So in this journal, dedicated to learning and teaching, it is especially suitable that we present the reflections on teaching shared by Sarah Abella with Vivian Paley.

חג סמח!

This publication may also be accessed at http://www.rodfei.org/To_Learn_and_To_Teach

Submissions and responses may be sent to crzwritings@gmail.com

Two Jewish Teachers: An interview with Vivian Paley

by **Sarah Abella**

Sarah Abella is a nursery school teacher at the Lab School. She has worked in education for 15 years, and began teaching many years ago in a small town in Israel. She sits on the executive board of Rodfei Zedek, where she has been a member since she was a young child, and serves on the board the Jewish Enrichment Center. In her free time, Sarah is also a member of the board of the Institute for the Next Jewish Future, a group founded by Dan Libenson fostering research and discussion directed toward accelerating innovation in Jewish life.

Sarah and her husband Jeff have three children, who are happy participants at Rodfei Zedek and attend the Jewish Enrichment Center.

Years ago when I was studying in Jerusalem, a teacher told me, "God has no hands and no mouth. So we must be God's hands and God's mouth." In many ways this conviction led me to teaching. In my roles at the Lab School, Rodfei Zedek, and the Jewish Enrichment Center, I feel a responsibility to help children understand their roles in creating a strong community, show them the importance of kindness and the value doing good in the world: all Jewish concepts, and all crucial in an early-childhood classroom. My Judaism informs my teaching wherever I teach. In fact, I can palpably feel my Jewish identity at work in my secular classroom.

I often wonder whether other Jewish teachers feel the same way. So I asked Vivian Paley, my kindergarten teacher 33 years ago and the single greatest influence on my teaching career: Does her Jewish identity impact her classroom work and her writing?

Her answer: yes.

The roots of her beliefs about children are based in Jewish experiences as well as text. "Elie Wiesel says God invented man because he loves stories," Vivian said. "I think God invented children because he loves stories. And God invented play of children because that is where storytelling is invented." Vivian's entire career—40 years of teaching, 13 books about children at play—revolves around children at play, and the stories that they tell as they engage with one another.

An immigrant child in a Zionist orthodox home in Humboldt Park, Paley attended her local public school and worshiped at a small shul across the street from her home. For two summers, she attended a Workman's Circle camp in South Haven, Michigan, an experience to which she attributes her strong connection to the cultural and literary heritage of the Jewish people. "That has been the defining, very important, joyful part of my life as a Jew," she says.

Vivian's family constantly "yearned for Jews to find their homeland," which led her to focus on important questions regarding children and their yearning for an identity in the classroom community. The key to that mystery? Understanding the way children play. "Play is where you learn fairness, friendship, and fantasy," Paley says. "The same three things can be said of the Torah. Fairness above all."

If you ever watch Vivian during services at synagogue—and she's often there with her husband of 65 years, Irving—you may notice a look of deep concentration. When she hears a sermon or reads a passage, her mind automatically translates it into a problem she's wrestling with in the classroom. "I read from the Torah sitting there in shul," she says, "and it picks me out, the exact parallel to the classroom. Always." For example, Leviticus 19:34: "You must regard the stranger who sojournth with you as the homeborn among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Vivian's interpretation: When children start a school year, they are strangers, but they must come to see each other and themselves as the homeborn. As they create their classroom community, they bring their experience as stranger and as homeborn to their role among their peers.

Vivian's books, which are quintessential texts for education students around the world, often draw inspiration from her time in the synagogue. Years ago, she sat in the sanctuary and read in the Torah commentary a quote from Rabbi Yehuda Nisiah: "The moral universe rests on the breath of school children." That quote led to her book, The Kindness of Children, which focuses on the overwhelming inclination of young children to be kind to each other, to see each other's pain, and to fix that pain.

Often, the pain of young children appears as tears—the most crucial element toward enlightenment in the classroom. "Tears show us something needs to be fixed and it can be

An interview with Vivian Paley - cont.

fixed," Vivian says. When she turns to psalms at morning minyan to find meaning in these tears, she learns that they can also give us hope for the future. Psalm 30: "Tears may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning." Vivian reads this message as, It seems very, very bad right now, but don't worry. There will be joy in the morning. And the morning always comes. It's a universal lesson, applicable to the youngest child and oldest adult alike, and it's rooted in a deep love for Judaism.

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Vivian Gussin Paley taught nursery school and kindergarten at the Laboratory Schools until her retirement. During her years in the classroom she observed and reflected upon children's learning, particularly the importance of play and storytelling. She described her insights in thirteen books, including White Teacher (1979), Boys and Girls: Superheroes in the Doll Corner (1984), Bad Guys Don't Have Birthdays: Fantasy Play at Four (1988), You Can't Say You Can't Play (1993), The Kindness of Children (1999), A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play (2004), and The Boy on the Beach: Building Community through Play (2010).

Vivian has been awarded many honors and receives speaking invitations from around the world. In 1989 she received a MacArthur Fellowship (Genius Grant). In 1997 her Girl With the Brown Crayon won the Harvard University Press Virginia and Warren Stone Prize for outstanding book about education and Society. In 2004, the National Council of Teachers of English named her Outstanding Educator.

For many years Vivian and her husband Irving have been members of Rodfei Zedek, and Vivian has presented talks here.

Views of Israel. An Outsider's Perspective of the Israeli Economy: An Interview with Sam Peltzman

by **Erica Benton**

Erica Benton (PhD, 2006, University of Chicago) is an economist at The Greatest Good, an economic consulting firm in Chicago. She has been a member of Rodfei Zedek since birth. Erica, her husband Tim and children, Charlie, Naomi, and Isaac, live in Hyde Park.

When most people think about the future of Israel, the first concerns that come to mind are security and defense. While these are important, another concern should be Israel's evolving economy, according to Sam Peltzman. And Sam Peltzman has particular expertise in this area. Many Rodfei Zedek members know Sam as an active Rodfei attendant of Shabbat and holiday services and others might recognize him as the gentleman who wears the colorful suits. In addition to these distinctions, Sam Peltzman is also a renowned economist who began teaching at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business (now the Booth School of Business) when he moved back to Chicago in 1973. This marked a homecoming for Sam, as he first came to the University of Chicago as a graduate student in the fall of 1960. As Sam explains it, "you could draw a 100 mile circle around Brooklyn and I'd never been out of that circle until I got off the train downtown and that was the first time I had been anywhere else. I was 20 years old." In 1964, Sam left Chicago to teach in the economics department at UCLA. During this time, he also spent a year working in the government and a year back in Chicago as a post-doctoral fellow. But in 1973, he came back to Hyde Park and never left. Sam became a member of Rodfei Zedek around 1980. Eight years ago, Sam officially retired, became professor emeritus and "never looked back."

I grew up in Hyde Park, the child of two economists, and so I don't remember the first time I met Sam Peltzman nor the moment I realized he was a fellow member of Rodfei Zedek. However, I do remember when I first discovered Sam Peltzman's work as an economist. It was during my first year as a graduate student in the economics department at the University of Chicago. And it was because of this work that I jumped at the chance to interview Sam in his home on Harper Avenue, where he's lived for over 30 years, to discuss his thoughts on the past, present, and future of the Israeli economy.

EB: What is your connection to Israel?

SP: I'm very interested in Israel and I feel committed to it. I visit frequently, averaging a trip every two to three years, usually giving talks. I like Tel Aviv a lot because it is a lively city and I enjoy spending time there by the beach. My longest stay was as a visiting faculty member at Hebrew University in 1978. With two other American economists, we were invited to participate in a program with other Israeli economists. I stayed for 6 months and was able to tour around all of Israel and it was wonderful.

EB: What are some of the big changes in the Israeli economy that you've seen since you first started visiting?

SP: There have been vast changes in the economy since when I was first there. In that sense, it is a completely different country. In 1978, it was the end of the beginning. The country had been founded by socialists that had a vision of a new Jewish state, but also as the vanguard of something new, with ideas of many unique collective programs, such as the kibbutzim. It was a highly regulated socialist country with a lot of government ownership executed under a seamless web – you didn't know where the non-government economy ended and the political system began. The residue of that still exists today. And while I may have my biases, objectively I think it worked for a long time.

EB: What do you think worked?

SP: A socialist economy can function by concentrating on a few things and throwing resources at these things to get them done. Israel had a few things it needed to accomplish initially and fast, such as the assimilation of millions of immigrants and the building of a defense system. It had to do these things quickly and it was successful in doing that. But it ran its course.

EB: When did this system stop working?

SP: When I was there in 1978, the economy was already showing signs of struggle. For example, the inflation rate was 40% a year. At the same time, the government, and not the market, was in charge of allocating capital in the economy, by providing credit called directed credit. On these loans, the government charged an interest rate of only 20% per year – so it was essentially handing out gifts of 20% of the value of the loan per year. This led to people competing for subsidized credit. I became interested in studying which firms were receiving these loans. So a colleague and I found the person at the Bank of Israel who processed the applications and he let us look through his files. It turns out that the people who received this credit fell into three categories: (1) exporters; (2) people who were going to build factories in a development town (towns that were outside the main centers – such as out in the desert or near the frontier, which was an early experiment in nation building so to speak); and (3) connected individuals. As a result, the brightest minds in the country at the time were focused on getting directed credit. The government role had become so great and there was an enormous deficit being financed by a compliant Bank of Israel.

EB: That's not how Israel functions today; what changed?

An Interview with Sam Peltzman - cont.

SP: After 1978, things actually got much worse. In the early 1980s, the deficit grew to 20% of GDP and the inflation rate was 200%. That was the end of that economic policy. In 1986, there was huge macroeconomic reform precipitated by Michael Bruno, a well-respected Israeli economist, who was appointed that year as governor of the Bank of Israel. He was a son of the founding generation and grew up on a kibbutz, but he could see the economy was going off the rails. To his great credit, he told the Cabinet that he wasn't printing any more money and they should immediately cut the government budget by 20% tomorrow. This took enormous courage and you know what? They did it. It was the end of directed credit, which at its peak had led to government spending that was more than 100% of the GDP. That is, the amount of checks going through the government system exceeded the GDP. Since the time of this reform, Israel has gone in a completely different direction. The government budget has come down steadily. In the steady state it had been 70% of GDP and now if you exclude its defense spending, it is equal to the US. Tax rates have come down and they have signed a number of free trade agreements. Today Israel is "open for business" but it is still a mixed picture – it is really two economies.

EB: What are the two economies?

SP: There is a new economy that has developed since the reform in the 1980's that is very high-tech. It's a 21st century economy that is heavily concentrated in technology and R&D. Every major firm from Silicon Valley has opened an Israeli research center and it attracts a lot of venture capitalists from Israel and the U.S. Israel is a leader in software and bio-tech development. I believe it's been so successful for two reasons. First, Israel is a great resource for human capital. Second, Israel tax policy is such that these firms have a lot of operational freedom because of the lack of confiscatory marginal tax rates.

But there is a second economy that is a residue of the old days. For everyone who wants to open up a grocery store around the corner, if you don't get finance from your family you have to deal with the same banks that were charged with handing out the directed credit. It's a very closed system and it doesn't take many risks. Most importantly, it somehow manages not to have a lot of competition from outside. There is an aspect of the Israeli economy that is typical of small economies generally, where you don't know where the official rules end and the unofficial rules begin. There must be formal and informal barriers. I don't know what they are, but there is no reason that there isn't more competition in the capital market. For example, Citibank came into Israel and left. I don't understand because the opportunities to come in and finance ordinary businesses in a growing economy are great.

EB: Do you think the country recognizes that one part of the economy is not thriving like the other? Is Israel concerned about this disparity?

SP: Absolutely. The government has become concerned because of recent restiveness. For example, in June 2011 there were demonstrations in the streets about the increase in the cost of living. The trigger was the increase in the price of cottage cheese, which is a staple in the local diet. At this point, the entire founding vision of an egalitarian society is gone. The people who make it in the high tech industry do very well, the people at the very bottom who have little education do very poorly, and the people in the middle don't do all that well – very much like US in the inequality. Israel came into existence as a beacon of egalitarianism and is now like the US in income inequality. So there is a lot of restiveness. Both the bank of Israel and the government got concerned, but for different reasons. The Bank of Israel is concerned because the way the old economy is structured, through concentrated ownership that employs a corporate structure made up of leveraged holding companies, makes the banking system more risky. The government is worried about the unrest in the streets. For the first time, the government has just passed legislation that limits the number of subsidiaries that a holding company can hold. It's not much, but it's a small effort to de-concentrate the economy and prevent a meltdown of the banking system.

EB: Will the government have to do more?

SP: I don't know how it is going to play out but that is the challenge that the government faces. It's a world-competitive economy in part grafted on a structure that still inherits a lot of the rigidities of the past. A big issue is that the middle class people are paying high prices for things like food and housing. Housing is a big problem in Israel because there is a very small rental market – most individuals own their homes and land is entirely controlled by the government. If you want to construct housing and you don't have a connection to get the land permit, you are facing an uphill battle. It has to be government policy to release the land. And I understand that Israel feels it has to control the land for defense reasons, so one could argue about that. Nonetheless you have housing that is very expensive. For transportation you still have luxury taxes on cars, so they are twice the price. Just those two things alone, put aside the food and other things, make it hard for the middle class and it's a problem. And trying to finance subsidies to the middle class by taxing the rich people is just going to make the rich people leave. So in a way Israel is stuck – fundamentally they can't go back to the founding socialist vision. Going forward, they have to find ways of reducing these various taxes on the middle class.

EB: Aside from this issue of the middle class, are there other economic issues going forward for Israel?

SP: Going forward, two real big problems are the Arabs and Haredim, both because of human capital issues. The Arab Israeli citizens are 20% of the population and earn approximately 50% of the income of the average Israeli. They are in an interesting situation, because they don't feel necessarily connected to Israel as a Jewish state, but they don't want to be part of an Arab state for practical reasons, as they are still better off than they would be otherwise. But they aren't fully integrated into the Israeli economy and they are

An Interview with Sam Peltzman - cont.

discriminated against. The Haredim are a different issue. They have open-ended subsidies for study and historically were exempt from the draft (although this changed with a 2012 decision by the Israeli Supreme Court). This has bred resentment from the secular population. They are a small share of the population, a little over 10%, but they are growing. There is a lot of poverty among this population as men can essentially study on the government dime until they are 35. At that point, they are left without marketable skills. The return to education in this community is the lowest ever recorded, even negative – because the smart individuals tend to study more and longer. The female Haredim usually earn more than the men because they don't study and smart businesses are trying to incorporate them into their economy. Nonetheless, these subsidies will cost the country a lot of money if you project the demographics of this community and there will have to be a day of reckoning. The solution has to be limiting the subsidies for studying. So those are the two big issues going forward, in addition to making the economy more competitive.

EB: How do you feel about the future of the Israeli economy?

SP: In America when I was a kid, Israel was viewed as an important place, a beacon for the Jewish people, and it was our responsibility to subsidize. Even then I couldn't understand why the need for subsidizing. When you look around, Jews are successful in every other way – why couldn't Israel be a self-sustaining successful economy? It can. It's now successful, but it still has some rough edges. I predict that in 10-15 years it will be a more outward looking economy. Israel's economy has gone in a direction from which it can't retreat. But many great experiments have been able to adapt to stay alive. And I'm an optimist.

Sam Peltzman (PhD, 1965, University of Chicago) taught at the U.C.L.A. and, from 1973, at the U. of C. School of Business. Now the Ralph and Dorothy Keller Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Economics, he has served as senior staff economist for the President's Council of Economic Advisers, editor of the Journal of Law and Economics, Director of the George J. Stigler Center for the Study of the Economy and the State at the U. of C., and member of the editorial boards of several academic journals and the Council of Academic Advisers of the American Enterprise Institute. Sam and his wife Nancy are long-time members of Rodfei Zedek.

Views of Israel. Notes from Our Youth: Haifa

by **Devora Klionsky**

Devora (DD) Klionsky is a junior at Walter Payton College Prep but is spending this semester at the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa. She and her siblings attended Akiba-Schechter and the whole Rosenberg-Klionsky family has been involved in Rodfei Zedek in some way over the years.

You're Doing WHAT?

"Your parents aren't Israeli? Where's your Hebrew from? You're not here with your family? You're only here until June? Wait, you're doing WHAT?"

When it was first suggested that I spend the second semester of my junior year in Israel, I thought, "That'd be cool-- if it worked out, which it won't." It sounded too crazy to seriously consider: go alone to live with family friends (many of you know the Bartom family from their time in Chicago) in Haifa for 6 months and attend a regular high school without a special program for non-native speakers.

And yet - here I am, sitting on a couch in a house in Haifa, 15 minutes from my school, an hour from Tel Aviv and 2 from Jerusalem, 6,000 miles from Chicago. I've been here a little over a month, and what I've learned is that routines emerge quickly: I know what time to get up every morning (there are 5 alarms that go off in the house and they range from 6:08 to 6:44), what's the latest bus I can catch a #37 (or #30 or #37A) and still get to school on time (though "on time" depends on my schedule, which is different each day), what I like to order when I get food from the cafe on my school campus (something delicious called toast bulgari)… but if that makes it sound like my life is without excitement, I'm giving you the wrong impression!

To begin with, my first two weeks were full of bumps of all shapes and sizes: my suitcase didn't arrive until my 5th day here, my phone didn't work until a day later, my computer was stolen, and I got so sick I didn't leave my bed for 4 days.

Whew. That makes it sound worse than it was; each of those experiences, though I wouldn't have wished for them to happen, was a valuable one. I learned that it's a bummer but certainly not the end of the world when your computer's stolen. I learned that it's hard to be sick when you're not at home, but that if you're lucky wherever you are there are people who call to check in and make you glorious honey tea concoctions. I learned, too, that you should always have a toothbrush and a change of clothes in your carryon bag, just in case you need something to change into after a full day of traveling and your suitcase gets lost somewhere between O'Hare and Vienna.

What else? I learned that when I sleep for 14 hours I can walk for 8 the next day, which is what I did in the 24 hours after my arrival. I learned that Chicago is REALLY flat- and Haifa isn't (I climb close to 200 stairs every morning to get to my bus stop). I learned how to say attitude (gisha) and pituitary gland (hipofiza) and discrimination (aflaya) and tons of other things, and that even if I don't know a specific word, I can always communicate what I need to communicate.

And I learned that, for better or for worse (mostly for better), and no matter how different the specifics are, teenagers are teenagers are teenagers anywhere in the world. The school I'm going to is called The Reali School. Foreign students are pretty unprecedented there (though there is a language class for immigrants, all of them spoke Hebrew at home before they came to Israel, which they all did in the past four to six years), especially ones who are in Israel for only 6 months and aren't with their families. The administration at Reali had no idea what to do with me… but despite (or because of) that has been wonderfully accommodating, curious, and nice. The high school system here is pretty different- in 10th grade, the first year of high school, everyone chooses one to three majors to go along with the required classes. My two are art and medical biology- both of which are great classes! To my own surprise, I really love the biology class. It's an incredible challenge, with both material at a higher level than I was learning biology in Chicago and everything in Hebrew, but so far I'm really enjoying it. Besides art and biology, I'm learning math, citizenship/government, history, literature, Tanach, and language-- all in Hebrew! I'm also learning English. Well, I wouldn't say I'm learning English, but it's really interesting to see how it's taught here. And right now they're reading Romeo and Juliet!

I'm now entering my fifth week here. The first week, filled as it was with new things in every nook and at every bus stop, went by at a normal speed, but since then time has flown, as it is wont to do. My first Shabbat was spent in Haifa with the Bartoms, fending off jetlag by wandering around the city for the whole day. For week two, I took a bus to Jerusalem to see some members of the Hyde Park Diaspora (actually, I'll be in Jerusalem again next week on a 3-day school trip with my grade). Week three was in Haifa again… and a week after that I spent Shabbat at a campsite in the middle of the Negev Desert, which is where the Bartoms and I camped and hiked for three days after spending two in Eilat (I went SCUBA diving! Under-the-surface sparkles brilliantly in every direction). This past week, I went to Haifa's Conservative shul, Kehilat Moriyah. Actually, it wasn't too different from Rodfei, which was a

Haifa - cont.

welcome taste of home. And this coming week I'm planning to spend Shabbat with a good friend of mine in Tirat Yehuda, near Tel Aviv. I'm so happy that I get to see so many people whom I haven't seen in so long—old friends from Akiba whose families were in Chicago for a few years, camp counselors, family friends… it transforms them into part of my current narrative.

What else? Cats! Cats everywhere. And no cream cheese. A beautiful school campus. Taking advantage of a phone plan that includes unlimited calling to the US. Learning very quickly that some words have colloquial meanings completely different to the literal meanings I was familiar with. And lots and lots and lots of getting lost. Notable occurrences of this last include: wandering around on my third day here for an hour and a half because I couldn't find my way home… which turned out to be five minutes away; intending to go to the beach last week and taking the bus in completely the wrong direction; and asking six people for directions over the course of a 1.5 kilometer walk to join Aryeh Bernstein for Kabbalat Shabbat services when I was in Jerusalem.

I love being here. It sounded so ridiculous when it was first suggested - and actually, it still does: sometimes I'll be sitting in biology, taking notes in Hebrew and joking with tablemates, and suddenly it will all seem so normal that it's surreal, and I'll take a step back and consider what I'm doing. I'm sitting at a desk. I'm taking notes in Hebrew. I'm in biology class in a classroom at Reali Beit Biram Campus on Aba Khoushy St., which is in Haifa, which is in Israel. It is crazy when I think of it like that, and still: I love being here.

Views of Israel. Notes from Our Youth: Bedouin Excursion

by **Lev Gray**

Lev Gray is spending five months in Israel and volunteering with Rabbis for Human Rights. He attended Akiba Schechter and graduated from Walter Payton College Prep. He plans to attend Yale University next year. Lev, his parents, Cathy Bowers and Hillel Gray, and his brother Tamir have been active at Rodfei Zedek since 2002.

On an overcast Sunday, I drive with three rabbis down to the Negev. In the warmth of the car I drift in and out of sleep. I will soon be awakened by the black coffee of hospitality and bitter tastes less literal.

Our first stop is Umm El Hiran, an unrecognized Bedouin village. There are 35+ Bedouin villages that are unrecognized by the Israeli government. The villages get no resources and are forced to move into settlements (read: reservations). Umm El Hiran's designated settlement is called Hura.

We are greeted by Abed, a 49-year-old father. We drink coffee in Dixie cups. He has lived here his whole life and he points to where he was born. Umm El Hiran has no running water or electricity. Nearby, a Jewish couple live alone. They have electricity. The two of them get electricity. Abed smiles grimly. His fate, the fate of his village is in the hand of the court. The Israeli court. He's not optimistic.

Q. Are you worried?

A. Yes. Every day the kids go to school and they always look behind them; they don't know if their houses will be knocked down when they get back.

The government finds it inefficient for Bedouins to be spread out. This stance treats Bedouins as a homogenous group; the government doesn't recognize tribal differences. Abed says that there were 10 murders in Hura last year, including one right in front of a government building. "Right under a security camera!" he says. Houses in Umm El Huran look impermanent. An urban slum in the middle of the desert. Bedouins don't agree with the government's opinion of what's best for them.

We drive down the road to a demolished village. The IDF came and knocked down two buildings. The village relented, knocked down the rest of their homes and moved. I only see a trash dump.

We meet up with two women (one Israeli and one Bedouin) who work in a coexistence group. They bring us to a hilltop with a view of the surrounding villages. Cold desert winds chills through us. The landscape is vast, flat, and un-green. The Bedouin woman in our group covers her hair and wears pants. Her round face has a friendly smile. A match was made for her at 14, but as she grew up she decided to break off the engagement. She started studying, much to the chagrin of her traditional parents. Since then, she has reconciled with her family.

In Be'er Sheva we meet Fadi, with a slick mustache and thin beard. His hair is pulled back tight into a ponytail and he speaks perfect English. Fadi works for the Bedouin Council for Unrecognized Villages, which began in 1997. It seems superfluous to mention that the Israeli government does not recognize the Council.

Fadi is upset when he hears people discuss The Problem Between the Bedouins and the Jews. "There's no problem!" he says, "We're friends. The problem is The Government and the Bedouins. This is propaganda." The propaganda doesn't end there, says Fadi. Israelis see maps of the Negev with imposing red dots of Bedouin populations and hear Bedouins-Are-Taking-Over-The-Negev rhetoric. 5% of the land in the Negev is occupied by Bedouins.

The last village we visit is Al-Araqeeb. The only houses in Al-Araqeeb are within the bounds of the cemetery. Every week or two, the IDF comes to Al-Araqeeb and knocks down any structure it sees. Except for the cemetery, which has immunity. The village has been demolished and rebuilt 61 times. After the bulldozers leave, the Bedouins rebuild their tents. Two weeks later, destruction returns. Right on schedule. The village is led by a charismatic and vigilant elder, Sheikh Sayah al-Turi.

This incredible perseverance is not a choice, but a necessity. Arik explains: "Al-Araqeeb is the little boy with his finger in the dike. Once this village falls, the rest of Negev will fall, too."

Today the village is mourning the death of an elder. A black tent of mourning sits alone outside the cemetery. We enter and shake hands with significant elders. I'm given black coffee that is unfathomably strong; it's the sort of thing I'd drink quickly if I wanted to make myself vomit. Men expertly smoke cigarettes. A man comes around with a plate of dates. I eagerly take one and the sticky sweetness relieves my mouth. The tent quiets as a man stands and eulogizes for fifteen minutes in Arabic.

Shadows lengthen and storm clouds brew above. Outside of the tent, we speak with Aziz, the son of Sheikh al-Turi. Unlike the meek pessimism of Abed or Fadi's intellectual persuasion, Aziz is upset. "I do not want to move. My father is fighting, but once he dies what will we do? I am a grown man. I'm tired of fighting. I won't move into the settlements." His words struck a chord with me. After years of negotiating and fighting, he's tired. He doesn't filter his words to sound composed: this is his

Bedouin Excursion - cont.

gut reaction to injustice. He's upset and desperate, like a child who's treated unfairly. Now I feel like a child, too, and the unfairness makes me want to cry. All the politics, and court cases, and arguments…forget it! I'm standing in Al-Araqib and I know that something is wrong. THIS ISN'T FAIR. The effort of being eloquent and leveled is tiring, and we're left with raw emotion.

"You know, I don't hate the Jews. You guys are the light of the Jewish people. You remind me that Jews are not mean, it's the government and the army. There are good Jews, too. I teach my children not to hate the Jews. There are good Jews, too. So thank you."

We drive back north and it starts to rain. The water rolls down the windows of the minivan. The rain falls on the desert and the tents and the city of Jerusalem. The rain falls on the strong coffee and the soldiers and the undisrupted cemetery and the Jewish couple with electricity.

Remember and Keep Watch

by **Rabbi Laurence Edwards**

Rabbi Laurence Edwards has been serving as rabbi-in-residence for Rodfei Zedek since the High Holy Days. In addition to conducting some Shabbat and holiday services, he has worked to strengthen the daily minyan, has conducted a weekly Talmud class, offered a class on "Turning Points in Jewish History," and led a series of discussions of Yiddish and Hebrew short stories in translation. The following is based on a dvar Torah delivered at Congregation Rodfei Zedek on Shabbat Bo, January 4, 2014.

Today's key words are: *Zakhor* and *Shamor*. Six times the Torah commands remembrance: *Zakhor!* The first appears in this week's *Parasha:*

> *Zakhor et ha-yom hazeh asher y'tzatem mimitzrayim mibeit avadim*… Remember this day on which you went out from Egypt, from the house of bondage (13:3; see also Deut. 16:3).[1]

With memory comes perspective: we see the longer view, get the bigger picture. We might also consider this the other way around: perspective affects memory. We remember based partly on the way our own life experience shapes what we see.

Certainly the Torah shapes our remembrance of the Exodus, as do the rituals of the seder. But memory is selective, and we well know how it can play tricks even on the most careful observers. So it is important to be aware of our own perspective, and useful to take into account the perspectives of others. As Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi puts it in his classic set of lectures, *Zakhor: Jewish History & Jewish Memory:* "What is remembered is not always recorded and…much of what has been recorded is not necessarily remembered."[2]

The Book of Exodus is not a straightforward history. It is told artfully, and describes a series of events each of which might be believable in and of itself, but as the plot unfolds, the totality of happenings certainly stretches the credulity of modern readers. Leading to this week's climax of leaving Egypt – through the entire narrative of the plagues -- there are literary patterns which tell us that there is both less and more going on here than meets the eye.

If, after all, this were just a simple historical narrative, why is the Pharaoh not named? He is not named because the Torah is not interested here in recording history as such. He is not a particular Pharaoh who came to power and forgot about Joseph and that whole story. This Pharaoh is a symbol of all rulers who think of themselves as a god, and who arrogate to themselves absolute power of life and death.

All of this has to do with the complex ways in which we remember. And what of our other key word, *shamor*?

The night of the tenth plague was a "night of watching," – *leyl shimmurim*. What was, or is, this "night of watching"? Our classical commentators take different views (my translations):

> **Rashi**[3]: Night of watching. The Holy One watches and expects to fulfill ("keep," *sh-m-r*) His promise to take them out of Egypt. This very night – the night on which He told Abraham that He would redeem His children. Watching for all Israel through the generations…
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> **Ibn Ezra**[4]: Night of watching for Adonai – the plain (*peshat*) meaning is, you must remember this night. Then it says, "Watching for all Israel *l'dorotam* – through their generations. Apparently because God watched over their houses so the destroyer would not enter, He commanded that this should be a night of "observance" – *shemirah*) for all Israel, meaning eating the *Pesach*, *Matzah* and *Maror* on this night…
>
> **Ramban**[5]: This is the night that is to be kept for God by Israel through the generations – they observe – *shamor* – it and serve God by recounting the miracles, praising God's name… Rabbi Eliezer says the meaning of *Leyl shimmurim hu l'Adonai* is that God guarded them and did not let the destroyer get them. This is not right [says Ramban]

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[1] The other five, by the way, are:
(2) Receiving the Torah at Sinai (Deut. 4:9-10); (3) Amalek's Evil Attack (Deut. 25:17-19); (4) The Making of the Golden Calf (Deut. 9:7); (5) Miriam's Punishment (Deut. 24:9); (6) Shabbat (Ex. 20:8). See **The Six Remembrances** **Rabbi Jack Abramowitz** http://www.ou.org/index.php/torah/article/the_six_remembrances/#.UsB39bTwqSo

[2] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken, 1989; original edition: Stroum Lectures, University of Washington, 1982), pp. 5-6.

[3] France, 1040-1105.

[4] Spain, 1089-1167.

[5] Spain-Israel, 1194-1270.

Remember and Keep Watch - cont.

because it says specifically, *l'hotzi-am mei-eretz Mitzrayim* – [not to protect them, but] to bring them out.

Sforno[6]: God was watching and waiting, but the people were not ready or deserving of redemption until that night. Even then they weren't ready, but our Sages say, God knows the end of things. As God watched and waited to redeem them from exile in Egypt, so God watches and waits to redeem Israel in the future…

This night of watching is so resonant, so full of interpretive possibility, that it has not remained Israel's alone. It is a night that is to be remembered by all future generations of Israel, yes, and it is a story full of meaning for many peoples in many times and places.

A "night of watching" was observed in many African American churches on New Year's Eve, as reported by Religion News Service:

'Watch Night' services

Hundreds of churches across the nation, many of them African-American, will host "Watch Night" services to usher in the New Year. Though John Wesley originated the late night service more than a century earlier, the tradition gained greater significance in African-American churches in 1862, when many parishioners stayed up at church to welcome the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863.[7]

Perspective is rooted in both personal and historical experience. One of the amazing things about the carefully crafted story of our Exodus from slavery is how it echoes across time and space, and continues to reverberate in the experience of so many others. (If you want to know more about that, I recommend Michael Walzer's book, *Exodus and Revolution*.[8])

This great story of liberation is our story, and it has been our great honor to share it with the world. So where do we stand, each of us? Inside the story, or outside? Are we actors in our own history, or curious spectators? Who has been included, and who has been left out?

We are all part of the story - certainly those who embrace it fully, who understand themselves through it, like Emmanuel Levinas: "The traumatic history of my slavery in Egypt constitutes my very humanity, a fact that immediately allies me to the workers, the wretched, and the persecuted peoples of the world."[9]

And also part of the story are those who, for whatever reason, feel themselves on the farthest periphery of the story, perhaps with only a vague recollection of the unpleasant taste of *Matzah* and bitter herbs. But who will say that God cannot find a way to move history through the margins/marginalized as well?

At the beginning of this week's portion (Bo), Moses warns Pharaoh of the coming eighth plague, locusts. Pharaoh's courtiers are beginning to break, and recommend that Pharaoh let the notables go. But Moses insists on everyone going: "We will all go, young and old…" (10:9). The Women's Torah Commentary translates this phrase, "We will all go, regardless of social class…" explaining that this is a "merism," a figure of speech that states the extremes in order to indicate that all are included.[10] All are included.

The "mixed multitude" who left with the Israelites (12:38) are sometimes blamed for future incidents. But they are also those who saw Israel's chance as their chance. They exhibit a great deal of faith, beyond any promise. They too were watching for their moment. Bringing along their own experiences and perspectives, they attached themselves to the arc of history that we, who are called pursuers of *tzedek* must help bend toward *tzedek*.

So once again, we are invited not just to read the story, but to be in the story, to live it, to add our indispensable piece to the continuing tale. To push it toward a good ending. All are included in this story. Our memory of the Exodus shapes our perspective on what it means to be Israel. May we continue to be shaped by it – and to shape it anew in our own time – by remembering, by watching, by telling, by doing.

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[6] Italy, 1475-1550.

[7] http://www.religionnews.com/2013/12/31/best-dressed-pope-bad-book-covers-muslim-informants-tuesdays-religion-news-roundup/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Best+Dressed+Pope++Bad+Book+Covers++Muslim+Informants++Tuesdays+Religion+News+Roundup&utm_content=Best+Dressed+Pope++Bad+Book+Covers++Muslim+Informants++Tuesdays+Religion+News+Roundup+CID_48827dd43d8c960ff9386774a07ba5f9&utm_source=Campaign%20Monitor&utm_term=Continue%20Reading

[8] New York: Basic Books, 1986.

[9] Emanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), P. 26.

[10] Tamara Cohn Eskenazi & Andrea L. Weiss, eds. *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: The Women of Reform Judaism, 2008), p. 358.

Song, Memory, and the Transmission of Tradition

by **Rachel Adelstein**

Rachel Adelstein is an ethnomusicologist with scholarly interests in contemporary Jewish liturgical music, memorial music of the Holocaust, women's agency in music and Jewish feminism. She wrote a dissertation, "Braided Voices: Women Cantors in Non-Orthodox Judaism," and earned a Ph.D. at the University of Chicago with Philip Bohlman. She created and taught a mini-course "Jewish Music, Jewish Cultures" through the Spertus Institute. Rachel lives in Hyde Park and sings with shape-note singers. The following is excerpted from a talk presented on the occasion of Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath of Song.

Today, we read *Parasha Beshalach*, a dramatic Torah portion that contains, among other things, the first scene of music-making in the Bible. And it's quite a scene. We have the full text of the song of Moses and Miriam, and we have the lovely image of Miriam leading the Israelite women in an ecstatic dance accompanied by the pounding rhythms of their hand drums. That must have been a party for the ages! And with good reason, too. If there were ever a reason to throw a celebration of literally Biblical proportions, an exciting and miraculous escape from slavery would surely be it. It was a party so grand that we named the entire Sabbath after it.

Except that we didn't. We call this Shabbat "*Shabbat Shirah*," the Sabbath of Song. And I wonder, why did we single out song in particular? Certainly the song of Moses and Miriam is an important part of the text. It's the first full song text that we have in the Bible, and we still sing it today, to hundreds of different melodies, all over the world. But the song is not the only thing in the parasha. It's not even the only element of the celebration of freedom. Why do we not refer to this day as the Sabbath of Dance, or the Sabbath of the Timbrels, or even simply the Sabbath of Music? Why is this day specifically the Sabbath of Song?

It seems to me that there must be something different about song that sets it apart from other forms of communication. It is both music that partakes of speech and speech that partakes of music, inhabiting a border between these two realms. Especially in the West, we tend to think of song, of music produced by the human voice, as something special. We revere opera singers, rock gods, and crooners, we look to pop singers for an indication of the moral compass of our culture. Almost all religious traditions use song to address the Divine. Many Jewish traditions consider a woman's singing voice to be so powerful that it must be strictly contained behind the rules of *kol isha*. There is no question that song is enormously important to human beings, and that it has great power in human cultures. As important as vocal music is, it is not the whole of what we honor on this Shabbat. The word "*Shirah*" in "*Shabbat Shirah*" is very often translated as "Song," and many synagogues advertise their programming for this week as celebrating "the Sabbath of Song." But the Hebrew word "*Shirah*" also means "poetry," a word that, in English, refers to a written or a spoken text. In English, a poem and a song are two separate, though possibly related, things. But in Hebrew, poetry and song are one and the same. There is more that we can learn about the power of song if we consider the text along with the music and the instrument, as an integral part of the whole, as the double meaning of "*Shirah*" suggests to us. As well as engaging us physically, song draws on so many parts of our brains that it becomes a natural teaching tool, one of the many ways by which we absorb and come to understand ideas. We use song to pass on the greatest and most important parts of our history, our culture, and our traditions. It is song and chant that helped to bring about the world's myths and epics, the great stories that cultures tell to explain themselves to themselves and to the rest of the world.

The Torah is one of these epics. It stands along with the Qur'an, the Scandinavian Eddas, the Hindu Vedas, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, the Finnish Kalevala, Homer's Odyssey, and many others. These works stand out both for their broad scope and for their cultural specificity. They use episodic, heroic narratives to proclaim and teach to their audiences, "Here is what it means to be a member of this, our culture. Here are our traditions, here are our laws, here are our heroes and villains, here is our history." Each of these epics contains the keys of its culture's sense of itself as a separate entity. And each of them comes from an oral tradition.

When we think of medieval bards passing along incredibly long and complicated epics, many of us immediately think of spoken recitation, since our first encounter with most of these texts is often in a printed text. However, most national epics, including the Torah, are chanted rather than recited. Different cultures vary on the question of whether they consider this kind of chant to be "music" – Islamic scholars famously do not consider Qur'anic chant to fall under that category – but as my colleague and dissertation advisor Philip Bohlman has written, this does not mean that it is not part of the broader tradition of sung vocal performance (Bohlman 2002: 12). The melodies in these cases are not intended primarily as entertainment, although they can be beautiful and elaborate. The melodies of sacred chant are a teaching tool. It is the melody, and the practice of singing or chanting rather than speaking the text, that allows these lengthy works to be transmitted through the generations.

Recently, I took part in a discussion among cantors over the advantages of teaching b'nei mitzvah students to chant their Torah portion or simply to read it. Several of the participants in this conversation made the observation that chanting the

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Torah helps students to learn their portion, which is exactly why it is chanted. Song and melody may be old teaching tools, but they are so powerful that we still use them today.

This is why we chant the Torah. It is not to preserve the tradition of chanting – it is the tradition of chanting that preserves the Torah! On that note, the motives of Torah chant are among the best-preserved melodies in Jewish tradition. As those of you who have seen Torah scrolls will recall, the motives are not spelled out pitch for pitch in Western staff notation. Rather, they are suggested by shorthand marks, or neumes, called *ta'amei ha-mikrah*. While there is no unified pan-Jewish interpretation of the *te'amim*, there are only a few different interpretations, especially relative to the enormous number of Jewish communities in the world. This is because the melodies that allowed Jews to remember and transmit the Torah, our story of who we are as a people, were themselves preserved so well and with such minor variation that it is possible to trace the ancestry of a Jewish community simply by analyzing the melodies that that community uses to chant the Torah. The musicologists Israel Ross in 1978 and Johanna Spector in 1985 both used the cantillation of the Cochin Jews of Kerala, on the southwestern coast of India, to trace the history of that community. By comparing the contours, intervals, modes, accents, and ornaments, Ross and Spector were able to verify the Cochin Jews' claim of descent from millennia-old Yemenite and Kurdish Jewish communities. As they each explored various elements of the songs of the Cochin Jews, they discovered traces of the entire history of the community, from its origins in the Middle East and the Arabian peninsula, to the influence of Portuguese traders in Kerala and the Vedic chant emanating from the temple of the Rajah, which was located within easy earshot of the Cochin synagogue (Ross 1978: 54; Spector 1985: 10).

Song and melody can preserve and reinforce the tradition and history of an entire community. The physicality and the intimacy of song, of music produced entirely by the human body, make it an ideal medium for the transmission of cultural memory. When we sing a text written in the third person – "he or she did this or that" – although we are not personally implicated in the events of the story, we are implicated in the telling of it. It is our body that gives life to the events, and it is our voice that conveys the thoughts of the characters involved. And when we sing a text written in the first person – "I did this or that" – how much more are we invested! For even so short a time as the duration of the song, we embody and take on the persona of a different person, and we experience that person's story as we present it. "I will sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously." The philosopher Berel Lang, currently at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, wrote that, when considering how to represent emotionally significant past events, such as the Holocaust, "there should, it seems, be a way of mediating between the raw particular and the abstract universal" (Lang 2000: 123). Song, with its intimate connections to the body and its powerful effect on both the rational and emotional areas of the brain, can be that medium.

Song allows us to join into the grand flow of life. It allows us to remember and participate in the past, mark the present, and speak to the future. We may sing old songs with old melodies. We may enliven old poems with new melodies, or we may fit new words to beloved old tunes. We may increase the riches of the world by singing songs that are entirely new, with new words and new music of our own invention. But in whatever way that we sing, we participate in our traditions, create and reinforce memories. We continue to enrich our history, our culture, and our connections to each other as Jews and as humans.

Rebel Without a Clue

by **Jeff Ruby**

Jeff Ruby is the chief dining critic of Chicago magazine, his employer since 1997. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas journalism school and also has a bachelor's in philosophy from the University of Colorado. He is the husband of Sarah Abella, who grew up at Rodfei Zedek; and they are the parents of Hannah, Max, and Abigail.

Dusty gas station, middle of nowhere, Kentucky. Late December. Jewish girl, eight years old and on her way home to Chicago after a family road trip to South Carolina, strolls in the door with her mom to buy Doritos and use the bathroom.

The gentleman behind the counter—whose appearance fulfills numerous stereotypes of a man at a gas station in coal mining country—puts down his cigarette and smiles at the little girl. "You gettin' excited for Christmas?" he drawls.

A million American Jewish kids have heard this question a million times in a million Decembers, and most have learned to simply say yes and get on with life. This little girl does not.

"Actually, we're Jewish," she says. "We celebrate Hanukkah." She launches into a succinct four-sentence summary of Hanukkah's origins, traditions, and significance, and adds that the Jewish calendar is different from the Christian calendar, which means that, well, the holiday ended a couple weeks ago so she's "already moved on."

The man behind the counter stares. Customers stare. A dog stares.

"Have a great day!" the girl says as they're on their way out the door. "Oh! And Merry Christmas." And then they're gone and the gas station is quiet again, leaving every remaining soul wondering the same thing: What the hell was that all about?

I grew up a reform Jew in Wichita, Kansas, a city of 400,000 people, not many of who were members of the tribe. The congregation was a small, quiet group, its children not ashamed to be Jewish, exactly, but we didn't volunteer the information either. Neither did the kids at the conservative shul a couple miles away.

I carried this secrecy with me into college, where I was so detached from Jewish life that it never occurred to me the guy next door in the dorm was Jewish. His name was Mike Cohen. As for the guy down the hall from Skokie who sported a kippah and kept kosher, I had my suspicions. But I never said anything.

Even as child something in me understood it was best to keep this Jewish business to myself. Not to hide it if anyone asked, nor to broadcast it if anyone didn't. I was never certain why. It could have been the setting: In Kansas the anti-semitism is rarely overt, yet always lurking under the surface of everyday life, threatening to strike at any moment, maybe even at the hands of friends. My reticence could also have been remnants of the Jewish caution that caused my Russian great-grandfather to shorten his name from "Rubinstein" to "Ruby" when he hit Ellis Island in 1903. Or maybe, like so many other anxious Jews in a Christian country, I just wanted to blend in.

Was this good, old-fashioned assimilation—the kind of thing that religious Zionists would call an act of treason? Or was it simply a self-conscious kid with red hair and freckles who didn't want to stick out any more than he already did? I never could have had the courage to do what the girl at the gas station in Kentucky did. And she thought nothing of it.

That girl—my daughter Hannah—is not this way by mistake. I can think of a bunch of reasons why, and I give thanks for them all. For one, she happens to have a mother who has always been matter-of-fact about her Judaism, embracing it both privately and publicly without the slightest angst. Two: She goes to the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, an institution that celebrates diversity instead of fearing it. And three: she spends an awful lot of time at the Jewish Enrichment Center, the innovative and nurturing school on Rodfei Zedek's second floor. These factors all add up to something special, and something that I've spent much of my life chasing. It's a magic formula for a confident, proud Jew. And I don't know how I got so lucky.

I once thought the quickest way for a child to rebel against Judaism was to push it on her; now I realize that if you get to a child early enough, and instead of pushing Judaism you simply enfold it into your everyday life, then she will never know any other way. It's the best kind of brainwashing. My daughter is not sheltered from other religions—she knows more about Christianity and Islam than I ever did—but she understands she is special, and instead of being embarrassed by that, she's delighted. Now, I just hope I don't screw it up.

Hannah recently watched The Princess Bride with friends, and when Billy Crystal popped up, she said, "He's Jewish." (I didn't bother to tell her the director, the writer, the producers, various cast members, and all their agents were, too.) She didn't say it with the kind of awkward pride I secretly feel when I find out a baseball player is Jewish and root for him when no one's looking; she stated it as a matter of fact. He's Jewish. The subtext was: I'm Jewish, too. I know now there are a bunch of us, and we're strong and smart and funny and interesting. That's the kind of kid I want leading Jews in the future. Or at least representing us in a gas station in rural Kentucky.