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Tammuz is the fourth of the 12 months of the Jewish calendar. The month of Tammuz begins the “season” of the summer. The three months of this season are Tammuz, Av and Elul.

The 17th day of Tammuz—a fast day that commemorates the day when the walls of Jerusalem were breached by the Romans (in 69 C.E.)—marks the beginning of a period known as “the Three Weeks.” This is an annual mourning period, when we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple and the cause of our current ongoing exile.

It reaches its climax and concludes with the fast of the Ninth of Av, the date when both Holy Temples were set aflame (423 BCE and 69 C.E., respectively). Because of this and numerous other tragedies that occurred throughout Jewish history during this period, we lessen the extent of our rejoicing during the three-week period leading up to it. Why the excessive mourning for more than 2,000 years?

G-d is our Father, and we are His children. And during *galut* (exile), we constitute a dysfunctional family. We have been expelled from our Father’s home, and our relationship is strained. This is certainly

not the way the relationship should be, and this wasn’t always the case. There was a time when we were coddled by our Father’s embrace. His love for us manifested itself in many forms, including miracles, prophets, abundant blessings, and a land flowing with milk and honey

At the center of our relationship was the Holy Temple, G-d’s home, where He literally dwelt among His people and where His presence was tangible.

All the suffering that has been our lot since the day the Temple was destroyed is a result of our exiled state.

This is why we mourn the destruction of the Temples. We believe with perfect faith and pray that the day is near when we will be returned to our Father’s home and once again feel His love.

We look forward to a brighter future, when the world will finally reach the culmination of its purpose, and be infused with everlasting peace and goodness.

IFR Mission Statement



The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

The IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

The IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education.

The IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.



Every blade of grass has an angel that bends over it and whispers, "Grow, grow."- Talmud

Ginati (My Garden) by shosh

This past year has been difficult for everyone. Every year for the past 10 years I have created an edible container garden this past year was no exception, and I am glad I did.

My edible container garden is located in the backyard patio. I use various pots I have lying around-coffee bean burlap sacks from Brazil-a wheel barrow, and a large plastic container which we once used for mixing cement.

Holes at the bottom of containers are essential (good drainage) followed by a layer of gravel and GOOD potting soil. Container gardens have to be watered more often than in ground plants, especially here in ZONE 11 South Tropical Florida, where the summer sun is fierce.

I placed all planted containers on plastic shelving we had from Home Depot with slotted shelving.

Great for watering, aeration and the shelves may be moved around easily in or out of shady areas.

Ari (my oldest son) built a raised bed of 2X4's and we filled it with top soil, mulch and a layer of gravel, we used 2 wooden pallets and placed them onto the raised bed.

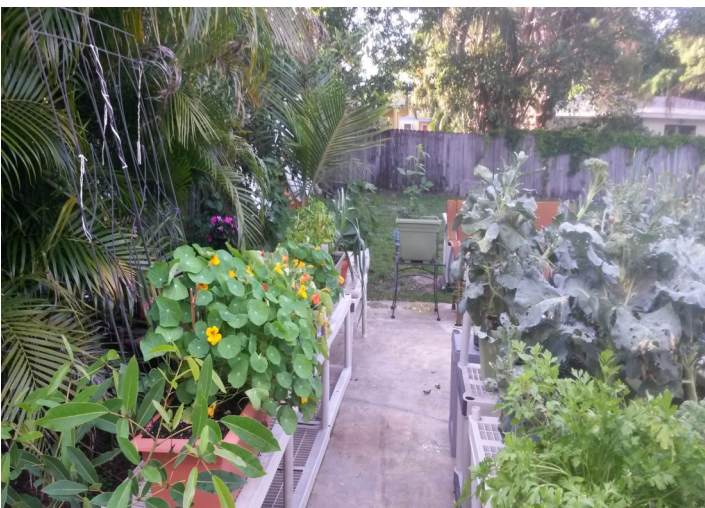
I've planted sweet potato, celery, mint, papaya, tomatoes and from seeds or cuttings. I have discovered sun sails and am able to move the shelving under the shade. Everything is elevated and in some sort of container. READ no bending!!! Perfect for a senior citizen!

Marigolds are used throughout for repelling insects. I also researched companion planting-some plants do well with others and some are natural enemies!



Ginati (My Garden)

continued from page 2



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column
featuring Jewish holiday Eats and
Treats

Ravenous Ravs



POLISH STYLE BABKA (dairy recipe)

- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 3 large eggs plus 1 egg for glaze
- 1/2 heaping teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil (traditionally Eastern Europeans use sunflower seed oil)
- 2 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons instant yeast

Mix dry ingredients in large bowl, add wet ingredients and beat on low to combine. Continue beating on high 2 or 3 minutes. Batter will be silky smooth.

Fold in 1/4 cup golden raisins, cover, and let rise 1 hour. Spoon down batter and scoop into a greased 8" loaf



Cauliflower Soup

- 1 medium head cauliflower, broken into florets
- 1 medium carrot, shredded
- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- 1 vegetable bouillon cube
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper

In a Dutch oven, combine the cauliflower, carrot, celery, water and bouillon. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until vegetables are tender (do not drain)

In a large saucepan, melt butter. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Gradually add milk. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat.



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Ravenous Ravens

ROASTED RED AND GOLDEN BEETS (from Ottolenghi cookbook)

- 1 lb. golden beets
- 1 lb. red beets
- Scant 2/3 cup sunflower seeds
- 6 tablespoons maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 1/4 cups chervil leaves, plus more for garnish
- 2 oz. baby chard, baby spinach, or arugula Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Preheat oven to 400°. Wash the beets well and wrap them in aluminum foil individually.

Bake in the oven for anything from 40 to 90 minutes, depending on their size (baby beets might take even less).

Check each one is cooking times can vary a lot, the beets should be tender when pierced with a sharp knife.



Spread the sunflower seeds out in an oven proof dish and toast in the oven along side the beets for eight minutes, just until lightly colored.

Once the beets are ready, unwrap them and peel them with a small knife while still warm.

Cut each into halves, quarters, or three-quarter inch dice.

Mix the beets with the rest of the ingredients in a bowl. Toss well and then taste.

Sprinkle with chervil and serve.



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Ravenous Ravens

GINGER SESAME NOODLES

- 1 lb. dried noodles, such as linguine or fettuccine
- 3 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame chili oil
- 6 tablespoons soy sauce or tamar
- 1 clove garlic, crushed through a press or minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 12 to 14 ounces firm tofu, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1/4 inch dice
- 4 green onions, white and green parts, cut crosswise into 1/4 inch rounds
- 3 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds (optional) Edible flowers, such as nasturtiums (optional)



Bring a large part of lightly salted water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook until al dente, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large serving bowl, stir together the sesame oil, chili oil, soy sauce, garlic, ginger, and allspice. Add the tofu and toss to coat with the sauce.

When the pasta is done, drain in a colander and rinse under cold running water to bring to room temperature. Shake the noodles dry and add them in the tofu and sesame sauce, tossing until evenly coated.

Add the bell pepper and green onions en masse again. Add the sesame seeds, if using, and toss once more. Serve at room temperature in shallow bowl work on large plates.

Garnish with edible flowers, if desired.

- from The Covenant Kitchen cookbook



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Ravenous Ravs

RUSSIAN BEET SALAD

Vinegret -винегрет

- **2 medium-large beets, cooked and finely chopped**
- **2 medium-large potatoes, cooked and finely chopped**
- **3 medium-large carrots, cooked and finely chopped**
- **3/4 to 1 cup sauerkraut, drained and chopped**
- **6 baby dill pickles, finely chopped**
- **1 small shallot, or 1/4 onion, finely minced**
- **1/4-1/3 cup sunflower oil, or any you prefer**
- **1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons white vinegar**

Mix all the ingredients, including the sauerkraut and pickles in a large bowl.

Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Pour in the sunflower oil and vinegar.

Mix to combine.



Russian Beet Salad



Rabbi Frank Tamburello's column featuring Jewish holiday Eats and Treats

Ravenous Ravens

SUMMER'S BOUNTY CASSEROLE (dairy)

- 2 eggplants (about 6 cups) peeled and diced
- 4 medium zucchini, sliced
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2 medium green peppers, chopped
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups corn (2-3 ears)
- 1 1/2 cups cooked rice
- 3 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 1/8 teaspoons pepper
- 1/3 cup melted butter or margarine
- 2/3 cup grated parmesan cheese



Place eggplant and zucchini in a colander. Sprinkle with 1 1/2 teaspoon salt. Let's stand for 30 minutes, allowing juices to drain.

In a 9 x 13" baking dish combine eggplant, zucchini, remaining vegetables, rice, and parsley.

Sprinkle with remaining 1 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper. Pour melted butter evenly over vegetables. Cover with foil bake 35 minutes at 325°. Uncover and sprinkle with cheese.



IFR Rabbis News & Schmooze



New IFR members

Rabbi Dr. Robin Rubinstein

Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein



A SONG FOR GRATITUDE

שיר להודיה

What does it take to treasure each day, to give thanks for the gifts earned, to savor the whole taste of every first fruit and know that enough is as good as a feast?

It takes a lifetime to learn how to live, to sort through the stuff that fills up our days, to weigh and measure just what to claim and know that enough is as good as a feast?

So sit at nightfall with those you love and light a candle to greet the dark, clasp hands as you bless the bread and know that enough is as good as a feast.

Open your heart to the joy and the pain, the bitter and sweet of the knowledge you've gained and sweetly surrender to what you can't change and know that enough is as good as a feast.

WORDS FOR BLESSING THE WORLD

by Herbert J. Levine

Rifuah Shlemah /Mishaberech



Rabbi Brian Denker

Rabbi Galit Levy-Slater

**Rabbi Monte Sugarman
HaRav Mordecai Reuven
Ben Amalya**

**Elka Dina Bat Frieda v' Y'rachmi'el
(mother of IFR Member Rabbi Ilana Axel)**

Moshe Ben Etel

Lemore Bat Shoshanna

IFR Rabbis News & Schmooze



New IFR members

Rabbi Dr. Robin Rubinstein

Rabbi Zev Sonnenstein



On May 24, 2021 IFR Member Rabbi Foster and Vivian Kawaler celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary of FIFTY YEARS! Rabbi Foster and his bride Vivian Kawaler 5.24.71.

Mazal Tov to them both!



Mazal Tov to IFR Member Rabbi Leslie Tannenwald on the marriage of her son, again! Alan Keiter Tannenwald will celebrate his marriage to Abbie Rachel Lowenstein on Sunday, June 27th with a Jewish ceremony and reception.

The Bride and Groom were married in a civil ceremony last July but due to Covid everyone witnessed the ceremony virtually.

Mazal Tov to All!



IFR Member Rabbi Ilana Axel and her family are celebrating the upcoming July 17th, 2021 marriage of her daughter Timna Axel to Rebecca Ewert.

Mazal Tov to All!

What The Torah Teaches us about Gender Fluidity and Transgender Justice



This post is adapted from Rabbi David J Meyer's Rosh HaShanah 5779 morning sermon

For our Israelite ancestors, the most important festival of the year was Sukkot, and the most widely practiced ritual was the bringing of the first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Talmud recalls for us the pageantry, the colorful parades, the music and the feasting that lasted for eight straight days and nights. An entire tractate of Talmud, in fact, is devoted to the laws and rituals of bringing the First Fruits, detailing the ornamentation of the offerings, and how the gifts would be offered by the men and women.

During the course of this discussion, the text poses a question that many today might find quite stunning. While reviewing the differing obligations of men and women when it comes to offering the first fruits of Sukkot, the rabbis pondered the circumstances for those who fall outside the normative identities of male or female. Here's how the discussion begins:

"An androgynous, who presents both male and female physical traits, is in some ways like men and in some ways like women. In some ways, they are like both men and women, and in other ways, like neither men nor women." (Bikkurim 4:1)

This source was originally part of a centuries-long Oral tradition, finally committed to writing in the 3rd century. It is remarkable that a sacred text which is likely more than two thousand years old considers the circumstances of gender identity outside the assumed binary distinctions of male and female.

From the beginning of our Torah's imaginings of the creation of humankind, gender diversity was part of the Divine plan. We read of the creation of humanity in the very first chapter of Genesis, that when God created the first human being, God said:

Let us make Adam in our image, after our likeness.

Then, we are taught that:

God created Adam in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female God created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

The sages explain the unusual language as meaning that God created the first human being as an androgynous person, containing both male and female characteristics simultaneously.

We understand the verse, "male and female God created them" as a merism, a figure of speech in which a totality is expressed by two contrasting parts. This verse was interpreted as such by Rabbi Margaret Wenig.

For example, "old and young", as the Prophet Joel foresees: "The old shall dream dreams, and the youth shall see visions."

What The Torah Teaches us

That is to say: old, young, and everyone in between. Similarly, “near and far,” as in Isaiah’s call: “Greetings of peace to those near and far.” And those in between. So we learn that God created the human being as “male and female” -- and every combination in between.

In fact, and strikingly, our Jewish legal tradition identifies no fewer than six distinct “genders”, certainly assuming as normative the male and female, but including as well designations which we now refer to as “intersex” identities. To use the Hebrew terms: the androgynos, one who has both male and female characteristics, the tumtum, one whose biology is unclear, the aytonit, who identified as female at birth, but at puberty, develops male characteristics, and the saris, who appears as male at birth, but later takes on more typically female biology. I would suggest, based on the study of these legal texts that the Jewish understanding of gender is neither binary nor even a grid into which every person must be forced to fit. Rather, we see gender diversity as a spectrum, truly a rainbow of possibilities for reflecting the Image of God. And what of the transgender, those people whose gender identity, expression, and behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth? In fact, Jewish traditional wisdom allowed for such possibilities, and especially our mystical texts, the Kabbalah, address the notion of transitioning from one gender to another. We have opinions that suggest that Jacob’s daughter, Dinah, was conceived with the soul of a man, but through Divine intercession, was transitioned into a woman. Likewise, the kabbalah teaches that Abraham’s son, Isaac, was ensouled as a woman, but born as a man for the purpose

of carrying forward the family’s unique covenant with God. Our mystical traditions speak of gilgul ha-neshamot, the “cycling of souls”, essentially a form of reincarnation, through which it happens that the soul of a male will enter a female body and vice-versa, a circumstance which may be remedied as a transgender.

I recently participated in a documentary film that explored how religious communities of faith have treated gender non-conforming individuals, particularly the intersex, such as the androgynos described in our First Fruits text. The film’s personal narratives were primarily about Christian churches and communities, but some Jewish experiences are included as well. The testimonies of widespread rejection, dismissal, and even shame are heartbreaking. From my point of view, how tragic it is that anyone would walk into a community which carries God’s name and be made to feel that their humanity, their identity, their inner dignity have to be checked at the door. What we see in so many Jewish texts which recognize gender fluidity as part of the human condition is helping society to assure that no one is left out, left behind, or left over. The fact that these circumstances are addressed in our sacred texts is surprising to many.

And I have to think that by looking into our sources, someone who identifies outside of the male/female categories might declare to those who would disregard, exclude or reject them, “See - I’m in there! They’re talking about me!”

What The Torah Teaches us

Last year at this season, I urged my congregation to affirm our long-standing policies of being welcoming and affirming to all who seek to share in our community. I appreciate the efforts of so many volunteers that enabled us to be honored now as a partner congregation of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project. Part of that vision has been to make the efforts assuring the full equality, inclusion and acceptance of people of all gender identities and gender expressions – a goal we’ve been pursuing for many years. This is not always easy, and in fact, because we are talking about human beings, creating an inclusive congregation and community can be difficult and at times, complex. But because we’re dealing with human beings, the effort is nothing less than holy work, *avodat kodesh*.

Towards this vision and moral value, we have provided a gender-neutral restroom for nearly two decades, and it’s in the prominent location in the main hallway closest to the Sanctuary and offices. For many years, we have aimed to utilize gender-neutral theological language in our prayers and rituals.

We encourage members – especially our teens, to feel comfortable in non-conforming gender expressions, and call them by the names they themselves desire. And towards this goal, we’ve made some simple changes that send a powerful message. In the little box on the membership form that asks “Gender”, we’ve replaced the check-off boxes “Male and Female”, and now simply leave the space blank, for people to fill in however they choose. And as another example, we no longer assign to our Confirmands blue robes for boys and white robes for girls – the kids choose on their own, based on their own sense of expression.

Admittedly, we are still learning how to be fully welcoming and affirming. And that’s

not always easy, because both the Hebrew language and Jewish culture, as I mentioned, are geared towards a binary – male and female – cultural norm. So for instance, on Friday nights, when we recite the blessing for our children, we include the traditional formula for boys – “May God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh”, and for girls, “May God make you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.” And then we now add: “And for all of our children” – specifically to include those who identify other than male and female. To all of our children, we ask God’s blessing: *Y’varech’cha Adonai V’yishm’recha* - “May God bless you and protect you.”

We’ve come to recognize that not all our students fit neatly into either of the options “Bar Mitzvah” or “Bat Mitzvah”, so taking a cue from another Jewish rite of passage, we have created for those who wish to use the gender-neutral term “Brit Mitzvah” – to celebrate the covenant of adult responsibility. And even the name by which one is called to the Torah can be adapted beyond the limited, binary choices of Bat, “daughter of” or Ben, “son of”. If preferable, we can use the gender inclusive formulation “mi-bet” from the house of, or the family of one’s parents.

My impetus for talking about matters of gender identity during Rosh HaShanah morning services is motivated by a ballot initiative here in Massachusetts this November. Proposition 3 has been introduced which directly affects the freedom and dignity of transgender persons.

What The Torah Teaches us

The goal of the proposition is to repeal a public accommodation law passed in 2016 that prohibits discrimination on account of gender identity, thus protecting transgender people from discrimination in public spaces such as businesses and hospitals. Voting “No” would say that the law is no longer the will of the people of the Commonwealth. That is why I stand as a supporter of the Freedom for All Massachusetts campaign urging a Yes vote on 3, in order to uphold the law protecting the dignity of everyone.

Opponents of the non-discrimination laws who have promoted this initiative justify their willingness to deny transgendered individuals their rights do so, I believe, on the basis of ignorance, and perhaps even fear. And it's a lot of talk about bathrooms. They claim that sexual predators will take advantage of public accommodations laws in order to assault women and children in bathrooms. But in fact, anti-discrimination protections covering gender identity have been around for years, and there is no evidence they lead to attacks in public facilities. In fact, law enforcement agencies see no correlation whatsoever between public accommodation protections and an increase in bathroom assault. Far more common, civil rights groups say, are reports of transgender people being assaulted in bathrooms that don't match their gender identity.

Our neighbor state of Maine, which has had gender identity protections in its state civil rights law for more than 11 years, has not even a single reported incident. As one official remarked, “I know there is a lot of anxiety associated with this issue, but it seems to be based on fear rather than facts.”

Others may claim that being transgender is not a valid condition; that transgender people are mentally ill and should not be af-

forded the same legal protections or health-care guarantees as gay and lesbian Americans. But in fact, mainstream medical and psychiatric authorities agree that being transgender is not a concocted fantasy or mental illness. It's simply a valid state in which one's gender does not match what was assigned at birth. For many, simply being transgender does not cause dysfunction -- it's the social stigma and barriers to expressing one's identity that cause problems.

Our Reform Movement's Religious Action Center is encouraging congregations to raise awareness about this opportunity to defend transgender equality in Massachusetts, so that our friends and families can continue to live without risk or fear in our public spaces. We are joining with other organizations to spread the word about voting Yes on 3, and to show up to vote come November. I believe that voting Yes on 3 is a public expression of a core, congregational principle, and fundamental value of the Jewish faith and tradition. It is part of our avodat kedesh, our holy work. Thousands of years ago, at this season of the year, our ancestors gathered as one in Jerusalem, to offer their finest gifts, their first fruits as an expression of thanksgiving and joyful celebration. And they went to great lengths to assure that everyone would be included in their most important holy season. In our day as well, we recognize that every human being has his, her, and their own unique gifts to bring to the service of God and humanity. Let us continue to work towards the day when the dignity, safety, and respect for all is a hallmark of our community, Commonwealth and nation.

Reclaiming Shabbat - Rabbi Barbara Aiello

For Harvey it was the sweet smell of the challah. “I’d come in the door and, Oh, that smell! When I think of Shabbat it’s my mother’s challah that always comes to mind.”

“It might sound silly but it was the newspaper on the floor. It meant that Mama had washed the floor for Shabbat,” said Clare, while Carl remembered “The white shirts. Ironed and hanging on the door. For my brothers and me those fresh pressed white shirts said “Gut Shabbos!”

The sweet memory of Shabbat has become, for many Jews, their only connection to what our tradition tells us is the most important of all the Jewish holidays and celebrations. And the recent Pew Report documents what most of us already know. The Pew study found that “US Jews are less likely than the overall U.S. public to say religion is “very important” to them (21% vs. 41%). While slightly more than half of Jews say religion is “not too” or “not at all important” in their lives.”

In the intervening 20 years since the last US Synagogue Survey, researchers found that “nonorthodox congregations are closing and merging. The Reform movement has downsized by 180, and the Conservative by over 350. In addition the study found that just 14% of US Jews are members of Reform congregations while a scant 11% maintain membership in a Con-

servative shul.

Couple these statistics with the words of cultural Zionist, Ahad Ha’am who said “More than Jews have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews,” and we wonder, could this be true?

Incredibly following the destruction of the second Temple, when animal sacrifices ended, it took some time but we Jews brought the “light of the fire” into our homes. At the family table we continued to renew and refresh ourselves as we observed an at-home family Shabbat.

That was then. Today, when it comes to Shabbat, where do we Jews stand? Harvey, Clare and Carl who shared Shabbat memories described their connections to Shabbat today.

Harvey says “I don’t know. Shabbat got away from me. My wife passed on and I put the candlesticks away. And nowadays there’s always something else to do on Friday night.”

Clare agrees. “There was a time when the US had the Blue Laws. Stores were closed on Sundays for the Christian Sabbath. Sunday wasn’t our day but we Jews were reminded that every week has a day of rest.”

Carl chimed in. “What we’ve been through lately, with Covid and all, I needed something to hang on to. So I started lighting candles on Friday night and saying the blessings.

“My candlesticks were mismatched.

Reclaiming Shabbat - Rabbi Barbara Aiello

They came from the Dollar Store. I didn't have challah but I had my rice crackers so I made HaMotzi with the cracker. I looked through some storage containers and found the Kiddush cup I got for my Bar Mitzvah. I shined it up and bought some Manischewitz, I made the bracha and ordered a pizza .

Later I watched a Jewish film. I shut off the computer and all the craziness on the news and took a walk. At first it felt awkward and strange. But now I look forward to Friday nights. Sometimes I invite my kids or ask a friend over. I turn off the world and get back to basics. It makes me feel good."

In a recent article by Iranian-American columnist Sohrab Ahmari ("What We've Lost in Rejecting the Sabbath," The Wall Street Journal, May 7, 2021) the author writes that "Setting aside one day a week for rest and prayer used to be an American tradition. In an age of constant activity, we need it more than ever."

Mr. Ahmari also reminds us of the words of one of Judaism's foremost thinkers, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel who cautioned Jews to recall that "Shabbat guarantees our 'inner liberty' and that a society without a Sabbath could easily descend into

tyanny and barbarism."

Herschel went on to characterize Shabbat with these words; "It is one of life's highest rewards, a source of strength and inspiration to endure tribulation, to live nobly . . . The Sabbath is the inspirer, the other days the inspired" (A.J. Heschel, The Sabbath, 22).

Could it be that Carl is on to something? As a wise rabbi once said, "When it comes to Shabbat it is better to do something rather than nothing." Notwithstanding mismatched candlesticks, rice crackers and pizza, Shabbat is God's gift, just waiting for us to embrace it, enjoy it and grow.

This article first appeared in Times of Israel, June 6, 2021

Rabbi Barbara Aiello's Friday Night Sabbath Service 23 Oct 2020

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2413131322327937>

**IFR News Editors
Rabbi Barbara Aiello
Rabbi Frank Tamburello
Layout: shosh**

SHOAH EDUCATION - Jewish - Christian Dialogue

The Shoah as a Shadow upon Jewish-Christian Dialogue and as a Stimulus to It.

by Professor Massimo Giuliani

Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
November 16th, 2004

Prof. Massimo Giuliani teaches Jewish Studies and Philosophical Hermeneutics at the University of Trent, Italy. He has authored several books and articles on contemporary Jewish thought and the Holocaust.

I do not believe it is excessive to claim that the *Shoah* or Holocaust (the term used to indicate this event in the English-speaking world), inasmuch as it represents the climax of a centuries-long history of discrimination and persecution against the Jewish people in the West, constitutes the most painful issue and the most unsettling problem among those Jews and those Christians who are involved in serious and sincere interreligious dialogue. This pain, however, which flows from a historically enlightened memory, and this anxiety that emerges in our consciousness – and in any ethically formed consciousness – are already an integral part of the dialogic commitment. In other words they are already constitutive and constructive elements of that readiness to listen and to interact with the other, without which no dialogue, no encounter is possible. Indeed, in the reciprocal attention of Christians and Jews the memory of the pain that-

was *inflicted* and was *endured* during the *Shoah*, and the anxiety induced by the gradual realization of the first and the more remote causes that made that tragedy possible, truly represent necessary conditions to ensure that our attention is authentic and the dialogue is sincere.

It is of course true that the Jewish-Christian dialogue does not have to focus only on this memory, nor stop in front of this anxiety. Nevertheless, in this dialogue Christians “begin” from this memory, well expressed by the document of March 16th, 1998 called [*We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*](#), signed by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: “While bearing their unique witness to the Holy One of Israel and to the Torah, the Jewish people have suffered much at different times and in many places. But the Shoah was certainly the worst suffering of all. ...The fact that the Shoah took place in Europe, that is, in countries of long-standing Christian civilization, raises the question of the relation between the Nazi persecution and the attitudes down the centuries of Christians towards Jews.”^[1] The honesty of raising this question and in assessing all those attitudes implies a readiness to subject oneself to the judgment of the historians, if not of history, and effectively it has meant working on oneself, on one’s own Christian self-consciousness, which has in turn led to suffering and anxiety. More than

SHOAH EDUCATION - Jewish - Christian Dialogue

one voice, in fact, has questioned the belief that 'history,' even that entirely written in lower-case letters, can be used as a criterion to evaluate faith, or to assess the behavior of the Christians in the past, taking away from God the right to read human consciousnesses and to judge all events. To answer this objection, which is legitimate but excessively spiritualistic, one must reflect on the unique character of the Shoah and the meaning of the witness to which both Jews and Christians have been called by God at different times and in different ways.

1. *Cheshbon Ha Nefesh*: examination of conscience and historical assessment

Christian wisdom has always taught the value of the so-called "examination of conscience," the pious practice with which the Christian, until not so many years ago, used to close his days as if, finding himself in front of God, he had to give an account of his own actions and omissions, in the certainty that his conscience was a sufficiently authoritative tribunal to evaluate and to judge, as if indeed he were facing God. But what would be the value of listening to our conscience if we ignored the words of warning and the judgments upon our conduct coming from our neighbor? It is a commonly accepted psychological-hermeneutical truth that we are and that we grow thanks

to the acknowledgment and the constant dialogue with our family as well as with our social, professional and political environment. Our life is constantly under the judgment of our parents, of our superiors, of our colleagues, of our dependents... and for a believer, our life is constantly under the judgment of God, already at this very moment. That which eschatological theology calls "the day of judgment" is effectively anticipated in every prayer, or is celebrated in liturgical form at different moments of the religious year.

Once more, let us take as our paradigm the experience of Israel. In Judaism, the ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are called *hayamim ha-nora'im*, the "days of awe," during which every Jew feels called to judgment and thus must give an account of himself and undergo *teshuva* (return/repentance). This calling to judgment, however, does not merely have an individual value. It is even more evident at the level of the community, through the experience of the fasts that recall the collective tragedies (the destruction of the two temples, the threat of Haman...), in other words the acts of God's punishment and mercy. The mission of Israel is constantly under the judgment of God, but in an equally constant and urgent way it is also under the judgment of the nations, which are the ultimate benefici-

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aries of Israel's mission (Gen 12,3: "In you [Abraham] all the families [the nations] of the earth shall be blessed"). This is Israel's universal vocation, the deepest meaning of its testimony, and it is what Hitler intended to uproot: the memory of Israel's election and its duty of witness. Now, this condition of being under the constant judgment of the nations is almost existential, an examination that never ends, the price of its very election. Called to be "light to the nations," (Is 42, 6; 49, 6), Israel must in a certain sense give an account of itself – it ought to be responsible, as Levinas says; the director of human resources (to echo the title of the latest novel by Abraham Yehoshua, *Shlichuta shel hamemune al mashabei enosh*) must respond to the rest of the nations who look towards Israel as one looks towards the East in search of light. What does this mean? Perhaps that the testimony of Israel must "pass the exam" of the nations? No, because the source of this witness is God's summoning Word. Nonetheless, Israel is not free to avoid this exam since the fixed gaze of the nations preserves the very truth of that mission and is the cross-check of the value of that testimony. In the Biblical and rabbinical conscience, God does not hesitate even to use the nations against Israel, to remind the *bnei' Ysrael* of their calling, and to call them back to their responsibility.

Some contemporary thinkers have even applied this traditional paradigm to the Jews who lived under Nazi rule and saw in Hitler an instrument of God's punishment. This is not the place to discuss or to question this theological paradigm, but this shows the distance to which the consciousness of being constantly under the two-fold judgment of God and of the nations can go – today we would say of God and of history. In other words, the truth about us is not and cannot be merely self-referential, but it becomes a "call to our truth" to the extent to which we open ourselves to the Other. We accept his perspective and agree to remain under his gaze. Simply put, we become ourselves when we accept that the other looks at us and thereby passes his judgment upon us. The self-consciousness of Christians and in general the testimony of the Churches are no exceptions. Their truth is not mere self-reference but openness to divine alterity and to responsibility towards those who are destined to receive this truth. Why then should we be surprised if the words and the acts and the omissions of the Christian community are observed, scrutinized, judged, critiqued, and sometimes even marginalized or ridiculed? Is this not the order of things, the order of that *diakonia* that offers without imposing [its point of view], which gives without worrying to receive a compensation, which scatters seeds on every

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soil despite knowing that neither the growing of fruits nor their gathering ultimately depends on us? The request of pardon made by John Paul II after having recognized that the Jews were discriminated against and persecuted in the name of the cross of Christ is emblematic of this “maturity” of the testimony and the consciousness of the Christians, who do not fear the judgement of history, but, on the contrary, deliberately subject themselves to it to get rid of their self-referential excesses and to deepen their understanding of the truth about themselves. This gesture, whose climax was the visit to the *kotel ha-ma’aravi* (the Western Wall) of Jerusalem and which is one of the highest symbols of the message of the Jubilee in the year 2000 of the Christian era (5760 of the Jewish calendar), is a major event in the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue, together with the Conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate* (1965), the visit of the Pope to the Synagogue in Rome (1986), the official establishment of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and the Holy See (1993), and the already mentioned document *We Remember* (1998).

2. Shoah: Bankruptcy of Christian teaching?

It is in this readiness to live under the gaze of the Other, subject to his judgement, that Christians can and must listen to the critique of Christianity that some important thinkers of contemporary Judaism have developed in

light of the tragedy of the Shoah. These critiques, unlike the polemics about the “silence” and the alleged “sins of omission” of Pius XII, are not very recent but date from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when, among many Jews and Christians, in Israel as well as in Germany and in the rest of Europe, people preferred not to talk of the tragedies that had taken place out of a deep-seated need to forget the horrors of the war and the hell of Auschwitz. I shall only quote a few authors, beginning with Emmanuel Levinas, who in 1950 wrote without any anti-Christian feeling but with a detached sense of European history:

“Amidst many other horrors, the extermination of six millions defenseless human beings, in a world that two thousand years of Christianity have been unable to improve, subtracts from our (Jewish) eyes much of the prestige enjoyed by Christianity in virtue of its having been able to conquer Europe. Certainly, we shall never forget the purity of the individual acts of those Christians- a very impressive number- who saved our lives –the lives of survivors- in those terrible years. Neither shall we forget the courage of the French [Catholic] hierarchy. But one cannot fail to see the utter failure of Christianity from the political and the social point of view.”^[2] And two years later, in 1952, speaking about the “poor” 19th century, when “a European social consciousness truly existed,” he defined it

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in opposition to the 20th century as “a happy time when centuries of Christian and philosophical civilization had yet to display, in the events of Nazism, the fragility of their achievements.”^[3] Even harsher is the critique of the Orthodox Jewish thinker Eliezer Berkovits, who goes as far as talking about “moral and spiritual bankruptcy of Christian civilization and of the Christian religion”. In the 1979 volume *With God in Hell*, Berkovits writes,

After nineteen centuries of Christianity, the extermination of six million Jews, among whom there were a million and a half children, carried out in cold blood in the very heart of Christian Europe, encouraged by the criminal silence of virtually all members of the churches (including the infallible Holy Father of Rome), was the natural climax of this bankruptcy. A direct line leads from the first act of oppression against the Jews and against Judaism in the 4th century to the Holocaust in the 20th century.^[4]

And even the philosopher Emil L. Fackenheim, who never failed to emphasize the courageous actions against Nazism on behalf of the persecuted Jews by Christians such as the Pastor Julius van Jan of Württemberg, or Canon Bernhard Lichtenberg of Berlin, or the theologian of the Confessing Church Dietrich Bonhoeffer, could not, despite everything, stop himself from asking: what could Christians have done? His answer

was: maybe in 1942 it was too late, but it was not too late in 1935: ... when the Nuremberg Laws attributed the status of ‘Aryan’ to everyone, except the ‘non-Aryan’ Christians, and the Church accepted this at the cost of abandoning the ‘non-Aryans’ to their *vogelfrei* destiny. Truly – if the term *kairos* designates for the Christian those moments when faith is at stake – truly 1935 was an authentic *kairos*. But the Church missed it.^[5]

These judgments, harsh, but morally legitimate if one accepts a dialogical view of interreligious relations, show how the Shoah has been perceived from the very beginning as the emblem of the failure and of the bankruptcy of the Christian message and how the memory of such an event – which the Pope has called “indelible stain” and “unspeakable iniquity”^[6] – can become, at a psychological, but also quite often at a more religious level, an obstacle to a balanced relationship between the two communities of faith, as well as a hindrance to the dialogue. At the same time, however, the growing awareness of this obstacle has been the occasion of a profound change in Christian praxis and doctrine, a change that led to an effective epochal transformation. Before dying, this was acknowledged even by Fackenheim himself with words that launch, so to speak, a way in which both Jews and Christians can look at that event. According to

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the German-Canadian-Israeli philosopher: after the neo-pagans had perpetrated such an assault upon our two faiths, Judaism and Christianity, it was unavoidable that whatever had divided us in the course of almost two millennia had to come to an end. A new Jewish-Christian reality had to be born, a new link between the two covenants, the Jewish and the Christian one, between what, decades later, the Protestant theologian Roy Eckardt would call the elder and the younger brother.^[7]

Today, as if by a miracle, we live this new reality – a different historical relation between Judaism and Christianity – a reality that has been shaped by the growing awareness of the moral and religious meaning of the Shoah, and that has been able to transform that tragic event from the supreme obstacle [to amity] into, so to speak, a privileged instrument to understand what had to be changed and what had to be emphasized and appreciated anew. It is almost impossible in a brief space to summarize the various, different and complex stages of this process of transformation (caused largely by the Shoah) that, using religious language, we call a Christian "path of *teshuva*." So as not to pass over everything in silence, I shall select a few passages that I believe are among the most significant, and that, if read collectively, can justify the summative phrase of Francesco Rossi De Gasperis, S.J., one of the living

protagonists of Jewish-Christian dialogue and a guide of this agenda of *teshuva*: "never before" in the church, in the different churches of the Christian *oikumene*, "have people talked in this way" of the Jews and of Judaism. In fact, "the hard work, the slowness and the effort of the journeys followed by the different Christian communities to correct their path and once more to discover, appreciate and acknowledge with gratitude their *holy root*, testify how far we have departed from the previous two millennia of Christianity"^[8]. Would the Shoah have taken place if such self-correction in the institutions and in the Christian consciousnesses had begun earlier? *Mi yodea'* – who knows?

3. "Never before have people talked in this way."

To document the general impact of the Shoah on Christian self-consciousness in general, and, in particular on the theological reflection that accompanies it, one ought to give a critical assessment of the entire history of recent Jewish-Christian relations, especially from the 1980's onwards. It is during these decades, in fact, that special attention towards the tragedy of the Jews in the Second World War developed worldwide. It is in those years that a debate takes place concerning the uniqueness of that event in relation to history in general as well as to three-thousand years of Jewish history. It is at that

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moment that all churches – including the Catholic Church – begin to include the Shoah in the agenda of colloquia, conferences, or study days devoted to Jewish themes. I am not saying that previously the issue of the Shoah was not considered at all, but only that in the 1980s, it becomes the central theme of Jewish contemporary self-consciousness, and as a consequence, acquires a crucial role in the religious and cultural relations between Jews and Christians, especially in North America and Europe. I would like to mention here a number of emblematic episodes that took place in the Catholic Church, and I apologize for the arbitrary nature of my samples, which I hope however shall be historically illuminating. In August 1987 John Paul II wrote to the President of the American Bishops Msgr. John L. May on the eve of his trip to the United States, stressing how “the sufferings of the Jewish people and the Shoah are today before the eyes of the Church, of all peoples and of all nations, as a warning, a witness, and a silent cry...[showing] what can be the consequences of lack of faith in God and a contempt for humanity created in His image”^[9]. At the same time, the Protestant Churches also become more ready to re-assess their own “theologies of Judaism,” with very innovative documents and positions. In the United States, in addition, the foundations had been laid not long before for the new Holocaust Memorial Museum, which,

thanks to its position on the Mall in Washington, D.C., effectively includes the Shoah among the elements of the pluralist *civil religion*^[10] typical of American society. These seeds of reflection on the Shoah would mature at pastoral, as well as at more properly theological levels in the course of the 1990s when a number of Catholic episcopal conferences made similar pronouncements concerning the question of the Shoah (thereby effectively obviating the failure of the newly printed *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to refer to this tragedy). From these points, one ought to remember the special determination of the text composed in 1994 by the Hungarian bishops and signed by them together with the Ecumenical Council of the Churches of Hungary, where the Holocaust is defined “an unpardonable sin” – an expression that ranks among the harshest ever used by the Catholic hierarchy to condemn the Shoah. In 1997 it was the turn of some members of the French episcopate to make a “declaration of repentance” towards the French Jews at the memorial of the Drancy camp. In this declaration one can read something that, in an ecclesiastical context, is both unprecedented and remarkably brave:

Today we confess that this silence was a fault [on our part]. We also acknowledge that in those years the Church in France did not fulfill its vocation, which is also that of educating the consciences [of the people], and for

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that reason, together with the Christian people, it bears the responsibility of having failed to lend its help from the very beginning, when protest and protection were possible and demanded, even if later there were innumerable acts of courage. This is a fact that today we acknowledge. The weakness of the Church in France and its responsibility towards the Jewish people are a part of its history. Today we confess our guilt.

If there were not this multiplicity of acknowledgements of responsibility, some less emphatic, like that of the Polish episcopate, some more explicit, as the one just mentioned, the very words of the Pope would be less credible and the solemn request of God's forgiveness made on March 12th, 2000 would appear merely perfunctory. On this occasion, John Paul II, in the name of the whole Church, declared his sorrow "for the behavior of those [Catholic Christians], who, in the course of history, made these sons and daughters of yours [the Jews] suffer," thereby making a request of forgiveness that was immediately followed by a commitment to work towards "genuine fellowship with the people of the Covenant."

How can we not hear in these words an echo of the equally brave reflection of the Protestant pastor Martin Stoehr: "We Christians shall never be able to leave Auschwitz behind, nor shall we go beyond Auschwitz alone, but only in the company of the victims"? Truly, never before in the two-

thousand year long history of the Church, or better, of all Christian Churches, had such things been said. The fact that the magnitude and the gravity of the Shoah, made explicit in an irrefutable array of documents and historical studies, are here reflected in public gestures and pronouncements on the part of the Catholic Church, clearly signals the truth of what Levinas had written as early as 1950: "The religious magnitude [of the Shoah] is destined to mark the world forever"^[11]. In the context of an interreligious symposium of representatives of Judaism and different Christian communities held in Jerusalem in 1994, similar words were used by Cardinal Ratzinger, who claimed that "Auschwitz represents a point of no-return for any contemporary reflection on the relations between Jews and Christians"^[12]. This idea is also taken up by the Cardinal in another authoritative document, the *Preface* to the text of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on "[The Jewish People and Its Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible](#)," published in the summer of 2001. Here, the Cardinal remarks that the Shoah has also modified the traditional Christian approach to biblical exegesis and Scriptural hermeneutics: The drama of the Shoah has placed the whole question [of Christian Old Testament hermeneutics] in another light. [The Pontifical Biblical Commission] faced two main problems: *After all that has happened*, can the Chris-

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tians continue in their untroubled claim that they are the legitimate heirs of the Bible of Israel? Can they continue with a Christian interpretation of this Bible, or should they rather, respectfully and humbly, abandon a claim, which, *in the light of all that has taken place*, necessarily smacks of presumption? And here we also find a second problem: Is it perhaps the case that the presentation of the Jews and of the Jewish people in the very text of the New Testament contributed to the creation of a hostility against this people, *which favored the ideology of those who wanted to suppress it?* (italics added)[13]

These are questions, therefore, that induce Christians – provided they have understood the deep significance of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, and in virtue of the link that spiritually and forever ties the people of the Bible and the Talmud to those baptized in the name of Jesus Christ – to rethink their very identity and their own interpretation of revealed Scripture, and thus to rediscover “the holy root that supports us,” that Israel “after the flesh” (in other words, in history), which the Apostle Paul discusses with the highest theological and existential *pathos*. The Shoah, from being an *obstacle* to Jewish-Christian dialogue, has become not only a *stimulus* to rediscover and to reappraise Israel, its texts and its traditions, enabling Christians to dialogue with the Jews, but also a *sting* and a *key* for an analysis and

a “work on oneself” that somehow encompasses all components of Christian identity: from the hermeneutics of Scripture to Christology, from ecclesiological reflection even to liturgy.

4. What are the implications of the “great *teshuva*” of the Church in the light of the Shoah?

Before pondering the theological and pastoral implications for Christians and Jews of the fact that the Shoah was the climax of the long history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism of Christian Europe, it is perhaps necessary to stop and reflect upon the religious significance of the attempt of total extermination of the Jewish people. It is only by gazing into this abyss of evil – independently of our theodicies and our philosophies of history – from the common root of our Abrahamic faith, that perhaps we can understand the radical nature of those implications. It is once more Fackenheim who helps us in this effort of “gazing into the abyss of evil” without getting lost in it, as happens to those who stare at the Gorgon for too long. In his intervention at the international symposium on “Good and Evil after Auschwitz” held in Rome in these very same rooms of the Gregorian University in September 1997, Emil Fackenheim said:

The Holocaust was an attack against Abraham’s covenant, the only truly comprehensive attack that ever took place. [...] But what does it mean to

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but also a theoretician, a critic, a theologian, in the full sense of the term, of the new relation between the living Israel and those who believe in the Gospel of Christ. In his words he castigates the theological laziness of those who fear letting themselves be questioned and who think it easier to defend the fortress of their identity; but in his words we also find the balm of true intuition, of the purified vision, of the intelligence that goes beyond itself. In the words of Cunz:

... after Auschwitz, we are like the people of Israel, who, under the guidance of the highest official of their religion (Aaron) had danced around the golden calf, in front of the Word of God shattered into a thousand fragments. Jews and Christians today must ascend Mount Sinai to encounter again the God of Israel and to rewrite the Torah, no longer written by the hand of God, but by our hands.

[\[18\]](#)

As I already discussed elsewhere, we do not have to write a “theology of the Shoah,” and not even, it appears, a “new Christian theology of Judaism” (although, perhaps, of such a theology one senses the need, exactly because it would be *new*). To put the Shoah in the agenda of every future theology does not mean adding one more theme to Christian [theological] reflection, but to adjust the whole perspective of doing theology: the encounter with Israel and with its suffering, caused by centuries of Christian anti-Jewish hostility, forces the commu-

nity of Jesus’ followers to rethink itself at the very root, or better to rethink the root itself that bears it, according to Paul’s expression (Rm 11,18). In this sense the Shoah is truly a Jewish, as well as a Christian event. It belongs to the one history of salvation of humanity which is believed, though in different ways and on the basis of different Scriptures, by Jews, by Christians, and by Muslims.

5. Towards a “religious memory” of the Shoah: some suggestions for the Christians

In recent years Europe has given strong signs of wanting to prevent the Shoah – with its burden of suffering and its warning that something similar *must not happen again* – from falling into oblivion and becoming only *one* of many memories of our past. Thanks to the testimony of the survivors, the work of the historians and the intensified “critical consciousness” of the whole Western world – a consciousness sustained by the acknowledgement of our responsibility and guilt towards that past – the Shoah is remembered every year with public ceremonies, school lessons at all levels, with articles and books. The institution of January 27th as day of memory is a fact that clearly evidences this acquired sensitivity. The Shoah is a part of our history, and its “sad lesson” is by now part of the civil identity of the citizens of Europe. But this very fact, which is so politically new and so culturally forward-

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looking, necessarily leads to the following question: is there not the risk that the civic memory obscures and removes the equally demanded religious memory of the event? Or that the necessary and universalizing cultural dimension obscures the more specifically theological dimension of this event, forgetting in the end the essentially religious –and thus Jewish – dimension of the victims of Nazism? Of course, it is not the duty of the civil authorities to remember this dimension or to work towards the development, next to the civil one, of a religious memory of the Shoah. It is instead the urgent task of the religious authorities, and especially of the pastoral and theological *leadership*^[19] of the Churches, to make sure that a new awareness is developed about the deep link between Jews and Christians in the wake of that terrible attempt to sever forever, at the root, the plant of Israel. In Italy, January 17th is a day deliberately set aside to make Jews and Judaism better known to Catholics and is thus an appropriate occasion to also remember the tragedy of the Shoah.

But perhaps there is something else that ought to be done so that a religious memory is also developed next to the civil memory, which could strengthen the link of affection and esteem uniting the diverse world of Christianity and the equally diverse world of Judaism.

In this regard, it is always useful to re-read the suggestions given, twenty-five years ago, by Alice Eckardt in an article that warned Christians of the dangers implicit in a wrong manner of constructing the memory of the Shoah. The very history of the two-thousand year old relations between Christianity and Judaism (and not the current obsession with political correctness applied to the life of the Churches) suggests that there exist appropriate and inappropriate ways of presenting and of talking about the Shoah and of Jewish suffering. After explaining how this event ought not to be separated from the return of the Jews to an autonomous national life in the land of Israel with the re-establishment of an independent state (1948), Eckardt insists that both these historical events affecting the life of the contemporary Jewish people are considered “faith-orienting experiences,”^[20] in other words experiences capable of orienting, or re-orienting, the Jewish but also the Christian faith. Keeping this in mind, what are suggestions for Christians, who, having understood its importance, are about to construct a memory – a civil, but also a religious one – of the Shoah, in the course of educational encounters and during ceremonies or liturgical acts in sacred places? In this context I would like to emphasize at least three suggestions given by Eckardt – suggestions that I believe have not lost their value with the passing of time.

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a) First of all, Christians who are constructing a memory of the Shoah must take care lest they “christianize” the event. What does this mean? Simply, to make sure not to usurp the historically and essentially Jewish character of a tragedy in which, as Elie Wiesel often reminds us, “if not all victims were Jews, nonetheless all Jews were victims.” It is easy, at a religious level, to make the memory of others one’s own for good purposes, to show that we are also involved.

True, Auschwitz was also a Christian event, in the sense we saw above: Christian anti-Judaism certainly contributed to paving the road that led the European Jews into the ghettos, into the concentration camps and finally into the gas chambers and the crematoria...and the murderers were Christians, or children of Christians. And Christians were the so-called *bystanders* [\[21\]](#), the indifferent and passive observers of that tragedy. Despite this, the memory of the Shoah remains before any other consideration a collective and inalienable memory of the Jewish people, and as such constitutes a patrimony of sacred pain that one must not violate, not even in the name of God, or even worse in the name of a different interpretation – namely, a Christian one – of the God of Israel and of His revelation. One could characterize as wise and theologically significant the decision of Pope John Paul II to ask the Carmelite nuns at Auschwitz to move their convent, so as not to “occupy,”

even if only physically, the space of the pain and the memory of the Jewish victims, who in that camp were the greatest majority. To accept the Shoah as a challenge for Christian theology means not to de-Judaize the event and to open the mind and the praxis of the church to a different relation with the people of the Biblical covenant that was never revoked, and that in fact was renewed by the Jews despite Hitler and despite the Nazi project of extermination.

b) Secondly, Christians who construct a religious memory of the Shoah ought to beware, lest they transform it into a triumphant demonstration of the truth of Christianity over Judaism. Here it is not just a question of banning every hint that the Shoah indicates that the Jews were being “punished” by God for having refused Christianity, which would be the worst possible example of theological supersessionism, and which is an even more unacceptable idea inasmuch as it constituted an “indirect cause” of the secular suffering of the Jews that culminated into the Nazi extermination camps. It is rather the need to avoid those Christological excesses for which the suffering of the Jews are considered meaningful in light of the passion of Christ, as if Auschwitz were nothing but a stage in the Christian economy of salvation. Even the memory, which in itself is fully legitimate, of the holiness of Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein, cannot obscure the general image of

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Auschwitz, where Jews were prevented not only from living, but also from dying as martyrs. A distorted usage of the story of the child hung at Auschwitz that Elie Wiesel narrates in his book-testimony *La Nuit* [*Night*] can run into this risk.

c) From this example we can derive a third suggestion, which Eckardt summarizes as follows: do not use Jewish texts to criticize them or to interpret them so as to satisfy an (allegedly) Christian perspective. Maybe this is merely an extension of the first two principles, but it is opportune to stress this explicitly in the light of the tendency, which often manifests itself even in liturgical contexts, to use symbols of the Jewish liturgy, from the *menorah* to the celebration of the Jewish Pesach by Christians or to the *tallit*...[\[22\]](#) It is necessary instead to respect the otherness of Judaism, the word of the witnesses, the meaning of their scriptures. To use the Shoah as an example to contrast love, presented as a specifically Christian value, and justice – or sometimes even revenge – presented as a positive/negative value typical of Judaism which is intrinsically inferior to love, is an erroneous manner to use the memory of the Shoah, something that in fact also offends the theological truth of Judaism as well as of Christianity. Even the use of the Bible to explain the Shoah can be dangerous, inasmuch as it becomes a clumsy and ineffectual attempt to justify the unjustifiable.

To conclude, I would like to go back to the final words of the document *We Remember*, that, in its sobriety, clearly expresses also that sense of restraint – that flight from any triumphalism, as well as from theological excesses and suffocating embraces – which Jewish-Christian dialogue needs in order to grow and to become stronger at all levels, wherever the hope is expressed that “our sorrow for the tragedies that the Jewish people suffered in [the 20th] century may lead Catholics [but also I believe all Christians] to establish new relations with the Jewish people. We hope – we read in this text – to transform our awareness of the sins of the past into a firm commitment to a new future, in which there shall no longer be any anti-Jewish feeling among Christians or anti-Christian feeling among Jews, but rather mutual, shared respect...”[\[23\]](#)

The document *Dabru Emet*, the repeated visits of bishops to synagogues and Jewish communities in the world, the practical collaboration between Jews and Christians to build a true “friendship” between the two Abrahamic faiths, as well as their increasing openness to dialogue with Islam in this difficult moment of world history, are all signs of hope that say: yes, we are doing the right thing.

Truly a new spirit blows over the world: “See, I now create something new in the world” (cf. Is 65: 17).

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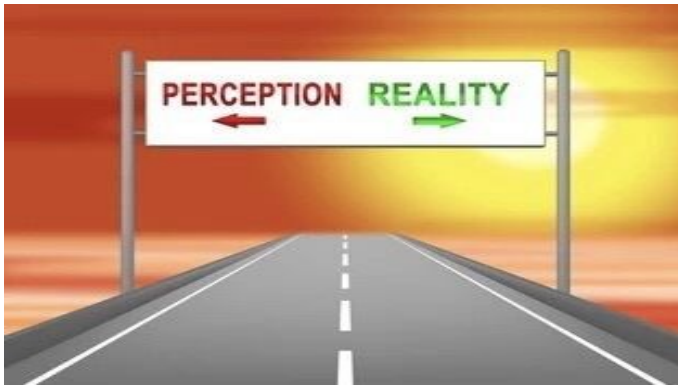
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Bologna Shoah Memorial is located on a city square in Bologna, Italy, close to the newly installed high-speed train station.

Israel: Perception and Reality



By Rabbi David Degani

The war between Israel and the terrorists in Gaza and Lebanon is viewed in the world in two different ways, reality and perception. For decades what has dominated opinions on the Israeli - Arab and Israeli-Terrorist wars has been the perception created by a completely distorted picture of the reality in the Middle East. This picture is an ugly but extremely effective propaganda. For the Arabs this propaganda is fantasy turned perceived reality which sells very well all over the world.

The ability to turn a nation constantly under relentless terror attacks into the bully is no doubt a real talent. Of course, many misinformed sympathetic news outlets around the world are a great help for the cause as well. As the Nazi propaganda master, Joseph Goebbels used to say, even the biggest lies can be accepted by the mass as truths if they are repeated long and often enough. It is called brainwashing.

That is why many around the world believe that Israel is an apartheid state who oppresses the Arab population almost to the point of enslavement. "Them Zionists" are extremely cruel killing Palestinian children, preventing Arabs from having fresh water, locking them in ghettos and violating any human rights laws in the book."

While we certainly know better, millions around the world don't.

The truth of course is the exact opposite of these ugly propaganda claims.

So what really happened several weeks ago that caused the riots in Jerusalem and around the country which was the excuse for the 4,300 Hamas missiles exploded in Israel?

As usual the Arabs claim that the Jews were trying to evict some peace loving Arabs from their legitimate homes in an Arab town called Sheikh Jarrah in which they have been living for generations in order to live there themselves.

This kind of act flies in the face of human rights. It sounds awful and it is. The Jordanians did exactly that when they forced the Jews of the Old City of Jerusalem who had been living there for hundreds of years to leave and then took possession of their homes.

Israel: Perception and Reality

This actually happened to the family of our very own teacher, Morah Sima in 1948 when she was just a child. In this case, however, nothing can be further from the truth.

To begin with, the few homes in dispute are not in the Arab village of Sheikh Jarrah but a Jewish village called Shimon Ha-Tzadik (Simon the Righteous) which is situated at the outskirts of Sheikh Jarrah but not in it. The Jewish neighborhood, Simon the Righteous which has been in existence for more than 150 years was briefly captured in 1948 by the Jordanians and the Jewish population was chased away. It was recaptured by the Israelis in 1967 during the Six Day War.

During the Jordanian possession of the neighborhood a few Arab families squatted in the Jewish families' properties and settled in their homes. They continued to live there while the legal battle over the property continued in courts for over three decades. At one point an agreement was reached and signed in which the properties would be recognized as Jewish properties and the Arab tenants would be allowed to continue staying in the properties as long as they paid rent and maintained the properties.

The Arabs then reneged on their obligation claiming that they did not sign the agreement nor do they recognize

the Jewish ownership. They refused to pay rent. At that point the Israeli Supreme Court issued an eviction notice and the trouble began.

So what does all this have to do with 4,300 missiles exploding in Israel courtesy of Hamas? Nothing really. Officially Hamas declared that they are helping their brethren, the Palestinians, in the struggle to wipe out the State of Israel from the map and starting that "process" by punishing Israel for oppressing the Palestinians by violating their human rights.

But the real story is much different. According to some Israeli generals, Iran, who is Hamas' master and who tells Hamas exactly when to shoot, needed some valuable information about the true capabilities of the Iron Dome which protects Israel from incoming missiles. They needed to see how the entire Israeli defense system works against a barrage of thousands of missiles exploding in Israel in order to reevaluate their own strategy against Israel.

While Israelis were struggling to survive in bomb shelters for days at a time the Ayatollah and other leaders of Iran were sitting in their palaces enjoying the show, literally taking notes on the Israeli military and civilian reactions to the barrage, figuring out how to inflict more damage and casualties to Israelis in the next round of hostilities.

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According to Israeli military analysis, 10% of the 4,300 missiles managed to sneak by the Iron Dome.

That means 430 missiles got to their target in Israel. In the next round of hostilities Iran will most likely activate Hezbollah in Lebanon. This is a terror organization which possesses about 150,000 missiles.

If the Iron Dome maintains 90% effectiveness (which is not clear at all considering the huge number of missiles it will have to intercept) then at least 15,000 missiles, some with heavy explosive payload, will fall everywhere in Israel.

This statistic is now well known to the Iranians who would no doubt try to improve the capabilities of their missiles to penetrate the Israeli Iron Dome courtesy of their terrorist friends in the area.

Let us all understand and remember what the Israelis are facing. Let us not pay attention to ugly Arab propaganda lies.

Most importantly, let us all pray for G-D to watch over the state of Israel as He always does, keeping her strong and vibrant. And may G-D bless Israel and the entire Middle East with Peace.

Rabbi David Degani together with his wife Cantor Lee are the spiritual leaders of Congregation Shirat Shalom in Boca Raton, which they founded in 1998. Rabbi David was born and raised in Tel Aviv, was serving in the IDF when the Yom Kippur broke out on October 6 1973.



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Layout: shosh

In Surfside: Jewish Community braces for a difficult Shabbat

SURFSIDE, Fla. (JTA) — One kind of disaster, volunteer medic Baruch Sandhaus said, has a “lot of patients” — a harrowing scene with many people and their injuries to treat. The sudden collapse of one of the residential Champlain Towers buildings this week in Surfside, Florida, [a town in Miami-Dade County with a large Jewish population](#), was not that kind of disaster.

“It was the minimal amount of patients,” he said.

Sandhaus has for decades volunteered with Hatzalah, the Jewish rescue organization, and the aftermath of this disaster remind him of another national tragedy.

“Unfortunately, you know, you have to start thinking of something else,” he added, referring to the Sept. 11 attacks, which killed close to 3,000 people.

The “something else,” the prospect that the 159 people known to be missing in the building collapse are likely dead, is not an outcome anyone wants to contemplate yet. But the idea haunts the blocks surrounding the building’s remains, where crowds of people waited and watched the rescuers working from a distance on Friday evening, an acrid stench permeating the air and smoke and dust carpeting the streets.

It has made for a somber Shabbat for the Jews of Surfside and the surrounding towns that make up a heavily Jewish area called North Beach, on the north end of Miami Beach. Together with the other towns of Bal Harbour, Bay Harbor Islands and Indian Creek, North Beach has about 14,000 residents, and more than 5,000 of them are Jews.

In The Shul of Bal Harbour, a nearby stately Chabad-Lubavitch synagogue where just 10 days earlier Gov. Ron DeSantis had signed [a bill extending first responder privileges](#) to private emergency responders (Hatzalah is the only faith-based private volunteer emergency service in the state, and the Orthodox Jewish community led lobbying for the bill),

Friday evening prayers were quieter than usual. Worshippers mumbled about the incident on their way out of the building. Chani Lipskar, whose husband Sholom Lipskar leads The Shul, said they know 40 of the 159 declared missing to be Jewish; Chabad is broadcasting their names for prayers.

Uncertainty also stalks the families waiting at a reunification center, set up a few blocks away from the building scene at the Town of Surfside Community Center. Shimshon Tzubeli, a cantor who has led Sephardic services at The Shul, walked through the crowd with a notebook on Friday, soliciting contact information from evacuees and volunteers to match families for Shabbat meals.

“Shabbat is our main priority right now,” he said Friday afternoon.

“We’re done with the questions”

Volunteers convened at the community center on Friday, called together by a WhatsApp network set up for Jewish events, said Arielle Aronson, who spent the morning Friday distributing food, bedding, and clothes to evacuees.

The tight-knit South Florida Jewish community was wired and in peak communication mode, she said.

“Our rabbis put out Instagram posts, social media, WhatsApp messages,” said Aronson, 32, a second-grade teacher at a local Jewish day school. The network was activated most recently to counterprotest pro-Palestinian groups who came out during last month’s Israel-Gaza conflict.

“I went to all the protests, Boca, Fort Lauderdale,” she said.

The mix of people who gathered on Friday — religious, secular, Latinos, Hebrew speakers — was a perfect cross-section of the area’s [diverse Jewish community](#). The Miami area has a [large percentage of Hispanic Jews](#), many of whom come from families that left countries such as Cuba, Colombia,

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Argentina, Venezuela and elsewhere. According to demographer Ira Sheskin, the area's Jewish community is 30% Hispanic.

A question is already surfacing about [how to plan for burials of people who are not yet known to be dead](#), said Jacob Solomon, the president of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation.

"It's very difficult to say it but I'm guessing that there will be a significant number of people who need help with setting up funeral arrangements," he said in an interview.

But at the community center, many families and friends still did not want to acknowledge any finality in the situation, whispering their anxieties to one another and turning away from strangers.

"My father was in the building," said Avi Cohen, 19.

"I was going to get married to his father," said Rebecca Pollack, who was standing with him. "We're done with the questions, we're done, we're done. It's very hard for us."

[Lev Parnas](#) — the businessman involved in Jewish causes who was charged in Donald Trump's Ukraine scandal with campaign finance violations in an alleged bid to help re-elect the former president — was on hand.

"This is my community, I've lived here 25 years, and when I saw what was happening I felt it was my duty to come down here and help any way I could," he said. He came across a friend whose sister, Cassandra Stratton, was among the missing, and he began consoling her.

Staff from the Israeli consulate in Miami were present, offering guidance to Hebrew speakers. The federations deployed rabbis who work as chaplains at local hospitals to attend to the evacuees.

"It's going to be a rough road and a long road," said Rabbi Jonathan Tabachnikoff, a chaplain at a local children's hospital, who approached families and asked in soft tones whether they wanted to talk. "They're going

to need counseling, they're going to need trauma facilitators and people to help because this — we don't even know who to blame or what happened yet."

Reports have emerged since the collapse that structural engineers [found damage at the complex](#), in 2018 and previously. The building management was planning to launch repairs when the building collapsed. In the immediate shock of the aftermath, some of the survivors described their experiences to TV crews who rushed to the scene. Ofi Osin-Cohen, the Miami federation's director for Jewish volunteers, lived in the building. She described on NBC's Today Show on Thursday being awoken by a loud boom, looking out the window, seeing smoke, and then opening the door to her apartment and seeing a corridor layered with debris.

"It was just surreal, really surreal," she said.

Osin-Cohen, her husband and some elderly neighbors tried to exit the building but couldn't find a way out through the debris and mounting water; they returned to their apartment and firemen extracted the four people with a ladder.

In a letter to the community, Solomon said Osin-Cohen and her husband, Barry, are staying with her son and daughter-in-law in Miami.

A Mexican-Jewish rescue team lies in wait. Despite the muted feeling helped by the air's foggy wet heat that has descended on Surfside since Thursday, the fears are occasionally made explicit.

"When the backhoes come," said a man leaving The Shul on Friday evening, "it's over." Big earthmovers throughout the scene of the incident may signal that hope for survivors has lapsed. But as long as individual searchers are still undertaking the meticulous work of picking through the rubble there is hope, however thin.

As of Saturday, passersby still search the photos of the missing plastered to a fence.

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Bursts of torrential rain occasionally stop the searching and send rubberneckers scattering for awnings or for their cars. Then, when the sun reemerges, they come out again.

A rescue organization founded in 2005 by the Mexican Jewish community, [called Cadena](#), has deployed volunteers who are specialists in finding survivors. They are standing by, awaiting permission from local authorities to join in the search.

"We have a professional rescue team, they are professionally trained in Israel. We have life locator devices, rescue dogs," said Dana Gurvich, a Cadena team leader who lives in Miami and who is originally from Mexico City. "They're not in place because we're not allowed to" help, pending permission from Miami authorities.

"But we're trying to give as much support and to be as handy as possible."

Author

Ron Kampeas JTA

Israel Defense Force members are among the hundreds of emergency workers responding to the collapse of an oceanside condominium in Surfside, Florida.

"Yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister **Naftali Bennett** offered Israel's full support to Florida, and today, at the request of some Surfside families, we welcomed an expert IDF recovery team to supplement Surfside's search and rescue efforts," Gov. [Ron DeSantis](#) tweeted Sunday.

Working to rescue survivors beneath the rubble of a collapsed 12-story structure, the IDF troops join the roughly 370 emergency workers serving amid the largest non-hurricane deployment in state history.

Rabbi Eliot Pearlson, in kippah, leads a psalm reading as he speaks to members of his congregation in the wake of the collapse



of the Champlain Towers in Surfside, Fla., June 25, 2021. Pearlson, who has a number of his congregates among those missing, is the rabbi at Temple Menorah just a few blocks from the collapsed condos. (Zack Wittman for The Washington Post via Getty Images)

"These men and women will no stop and will continue to work day and night until the mission is done," State Fire Marshal and Chief Financial Officer **Jimmy Pa-tronis** tweeted Sunday.

Sen. Rick Scott meet with the IDF Sunday afternoon. The Israeli troops specialize in engineering and social care among other proficiencies, Scott said.

"They're already hard at work," Scott tweeted. Scott also met with Israeli Counsel General Elbaz Starinsky and Diaspora Affairs Minister Dr. Nachman Shai.

"Grateful for Israel's strong support," Scott added. Israel's arrival marks the latest handshake between the Middle Eastern country and the Sunshine State.

In 2019, DeSantis led a Florida trade delegation to Israel, where he declared a positive relationship with then Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

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More recently, DeSantis in May spoke in support of Israel amid a rise of conflict between the U.S. ally and Hamas.

At least 9 people have been confirmed dead since the building collapsed early Thursday. More than 150 people, meanwhile, remain unaccounted for.

“This is going to be a rescue mission for the indefinite future,” said Surfside Mayor Charles Burket. “We are not stopping until we pull every resident out of that rubble.”

While the cause of the collapse remains unknown, a 2018 engineering report detailed “major structural damage” within the ocean-front condominium.

Among other findings, the report uncovered “abundant cracking and spalling” in certain areas of the structure. It also noted that previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage were marred by poor workmanship.

In all, an engineering firm estimated that the major repairs the building needed would cost more than \$9 million.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told Meet the Press Sunday she’s ordered an audit of all buildings 40 years and older in the area.

By Jason Delgado- covers news out of the state capital for Florida Politics. After a stint with the U.S. Army, Jason attended the University of Central Florida where he studied American Policy and National Security. Twitter at @JasonDelgadoFL.

