



IFR News Kislev 5766

Volume 2 Issue 10

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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.

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

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

IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.



The Realities of Time and Place in the Jewish and Arab Muslim World

Rabbi Dr. David Rabeeya

Many Arab Muslims look at the concept of "time" not only as a theoretical entity that can be divided accurately into precise units of reality, but also as an infinite process based on divine control and manipulation. Often the two aspects of "time" can be intertwined, subject to the power of the latter more than the former. This priority can offer individuals an incredible patience and endurance to overcome continuous suffering and difficulties. The Arabic language, with its two grammatical aspects (perfect and imperfect) can demonstrate that the speaker is not interested in the exact time of the action (past, present and future) but only if it has already been accomplished or if it is still in progress (present and future). This perception of time can have serious implications in rationalizing religious, political, and cultural occurrences in Arab Muslim societies. This intertwined combination of "abstract time" with "actual time," as well as the division of time into "past happenings" vs. "things in process," can somehow provide some ideas about human encounters with Arab Muslim individuals and groups.

The concept of space is often projected as the territorial entity of the group. One conclusion that can be conceived is that a Muslim territory cannot be surrendered to non-Muslims. Sanctification of the physical entity of the land had often become an important factor in territorial struggles between Muslims and non-Muslims, making the non-Muslims subject to the Muslim idea. This idea is ingrained in traditional Islam, making the fight over territories a fight within a religious scheme. While only God can fill "all space" and "all time" because He is outside any human reality, people need to share only what the Divine endowed upon them, unable to reach the completion of real time and space. Living within these limited space and time dimensions can often also open the gates of radical interpretations, but

can also offer a stable mental capacity in the minds of many.

Indeed, the sanctification of "time" is sometimes essential in the collective memoirs of many Arab societies and individuals. Remembering the deeds of opponents and enemies is often placed in the "infinite time" category, incorporating the pain of the past in its present and perpetuating it to future graduation of "times." It is possible that the concept of "settling scores" and "revenge" by some members of the community can be attributed to the above psychological process.

In the collective Jewish psyche, the concept of time was used to sanctify mythological and historical concepts and events as a tool of survival in a hostile world. The ceremonies of the life cycle from cradle to death have become a crucial tool in the process of adjustments and survival. Nevertheless, "abstract time" was not able to escape "practical time," since disasters and victories in past religious Jewish history were often superimposed on the life of individuals who could not escape the mythological communal past. While post-Biblical Hebrew has omitted the grammatical aspects and adopted the concept of tenses, the new system can continue to clash with the "time" of the Torah, with its perfect and imperfect aspects.

Furthermore, perceiving divine time within the limited time of human perceptions can often lead to communal and individual frustration and difficulties in the reconciliation between the mythological time of the Creation and the millions of years of the Earth's existence. The lack of space in Judaism during their exile outside the territory of the Holy Land has often caused them to cling to the open space of the divine, unable to strike roots in actual

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earthly reality. Consciously and unconsciously, many Jews continue to wander in the world, even in modern times, despite the establishment of a Jewish state. Indeed, Jewish history is filled with examples in which "time" has overcome "space," opening the unending cycle of destruction and redemption.

The concept of peoplehood has also been influenced by the realities of time and space in both religions and cultures. Islam has always emphasized the surrender to the divine, individually and collectively, to the omnipresent God, while Judaism demanded dialogues and confrontation with the metaphysical energy, unable to ignore its presence in the mind and heart of the people.

In conclusion, further exploration of the perception of "time" and "space" in the Jewish and the Muslim religions and concepts, and the influence of these concepts upon Jewish-Muslim interactions is needed. Understanding the similarities and differences may finally offer an opportunity for serious dialogue between these incredible historical forces.

After 500 years, Passover returns to southern Italy

By Rabbi Barbara Aiello

This article first appeared Venice Gondolier Sun (FL)

When the long arm of Chief Inquisitor Torquemada reached into Southern Italy, humiliating, torturing and killing the thousands of the Jews who had already fled similar persecutions in Spain, finding any Jews in Sicily or Calabria would be nothing short of a miracle. But miracles are things that we Jews have experienced over and over again throughout our history. Pesach 5765 was no exception. Maybe it wasn't as dramatic as the parting of the Sea of Reeds, but it seemed so. After 500 years, Passover seders returned to Sicily and Calabria.

Organized in Milan by the members singoga Lev Chadash, the first Progressive (Reform) synagogue in Italy and led by me, the first Progressive and first woman rabbi in Italy, the seder experience proved to be a fascinating combination of ancient Sephardic traditions shared by people who joyfully celebrated the rebirth of their Jewish roots.

Monday evening, April 25, 2005, is Italian Independence Day, and what better way to honor the ideals of freedom and unity than to welcome Jews and friends of the Jewish community to Sicily's Passover seder. Held high on a mountain at a restaurant in the small village of Piano Battaglia, tables were set with traditional seder plates, along with the "Haggadah," or traditional story of the Jews' exodus from Egypt, and, of course, baskets of unleavened bread called matzah.

Older members of the Jewish communities of Palermo and Messina delighted in seder symbols they had heard about as children. In addition to the shankbone at the leader's table, individual seder plates use the "bietola," (blood-red beet) to symbolize the lamb's blood on the doorposts that saved the firstborn in Jewish families. There were other examples of Sephardic Jewish influence, which differs from what is generally found at the American Ashkenazic seder table. Romaine lettuce (more bitter than the American variety) replaced horseradish as a symbolic reminder of the bitterness of slavery. Pieces of celery stalk, rather than parsley, serve as "karpas," or greens, dipped in vinegar, rather than saltwater, both symbolizing the tears shed by our people. The traditional egg on the Italian seder plate is a rich brown in color because it has been roasted for hours with onion skins, vinegar and saffron.

The seder meal begins with a "primo piatto" of rice steamed with vegetables, because, in the Sephardic tradition, rice as well as other legumes are considered kosher for Pesach. Roasted lamb is a must along with "mina," a layered lasagna-type meat and matzah pie.

As rabbi and service leader, it was Four Cups, For Questions, Four Sons and Four Seders, the last of which was held in Serrastretta, the small Calabrian village where my father, Antonio Aiello (of blessed memory) spent his childhood. Two buses, "Pullman" as they are called by the locals, brought Calabrian Jews from as far away as the villages of Palmi and Goia Tauro. Here, at the beautiful restaurant at Parco Pingitore, an interfaith group including not only Jewish families, but Catholic and Protestant church members, joined in the seder celebration.

Pesach traditions, Italian-style, continued with the passing of the matzah plate shoulder to shoulder among the guests, a symbol of the heavy burden of slavery. The singing of the traditional Dayenu included "whips" of green onions, used to mimic the beating of the Jewish slaves. Pentecostal choir members demonstrated their gratitude and their love for Israel, by singing a beautiful selection of Jewish melodies, all in Hebrew.

Thanks to dedication and generosity of my local Jewish community, I was able to pack a giant suitcase filled with more than a dozen boxes of matzah. For some Jewish families, who trace their roots back to Jewish grandparents or great grandparents, the Milanese matzah was their first taste of this traditional Passover staple. Following the seder, there was enough matzah to give to individual families so they could continue the tradition by keeping kosher for Pesach in their own homes. For most of these families, it was their first opportunity to obtain "local" kosher food.

Journalists from local newspapers and a crew from RAI 3 Italian TV, documented the festivities. News articles that appeared several days before the seder included an interview with Professor Vincenzo Vilella, author of a new and extremely important book for Italian Jews. "La Judeca di Nicastro, e la storia degli Ebrei in Calabria" (The Jews of Nicastro and the history of the Jews in Calabria), recounts the history of many Jewish families, my own ancestors among them, and emphasizes the little known and

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less appreciated fact that, prior to the Inquisition, more than 40 percent of the entire populations of Sicily and Calabria were Jewish. Professor Villella also included an exhaustive list of Italian-Jewish surnames, along with ideas for discovering and documenting an Italian Jewish family tree.

As I stood before the 62 Calabrian participants, I found myself whispering a prayer of gratitude for what was the most emotional experience in my rabbinic career. Recalling my own family's history, I was able say, "When my Nonna carried candles to the cellar to kindle the lights of Shabbat, I realized that fear and prejudice nearly extinguished our heritage."

This year, in Calabria and in Sicily, we Jews who were nearly robbed of our religion and our traditions, brought the light of Pesach out of the cantina and into the hearts of fellow Jews, who, after 500 years, now have a new opportunity to do as Torah commands and be "a light unto the nations."

The seder concludes with the traditional wish, when we say, "Next year in Jerusalem." For me and for the nearly 100 returning Jews who shared Passover together, we add, "Next year in Sicily," and "Next year in Calabria," too.

Rabbi Barbara Aiello is the rabbi of sinagoga Lev Chadash, in Milan, the first Progressive synagogue in Italy.

For more information, visit rabbibarbara.com or write to her at rabbi@rabbibarbara.com

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IFR Board meeting minutes can be viewed on the IFR web site www.intfedrabbis.org

Enter the protected portion and click on the IFR Board minutes located on the menu on the left side.

IFR News Editor

Rabbi Suzanne H. Carter

rabbis@bellsouth.net

IFR DUES 2005-2006

Now is the time to renew your membership in the IFR. Please make your check for \$150.00 payable to:

The International Federation of Rabbs

You may also pay your dues in two payments, \$75.00 now and a postdated check for \$75.00

Send your check (s) to the IFR treasurer

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IFR Rabbis News & Shmooze



IFR rabbi in Augusta Ga, Rabbi David Sirull and his wife Stacy on the birth of their third child, Sidney Isaac Sirull born June 21, 2005.

Bruchim Ha'Baim to new IFR members

Rabbi Arthur Rosenberg

Rabbi Dr. Raphael Pazo Jr. Ph.D.

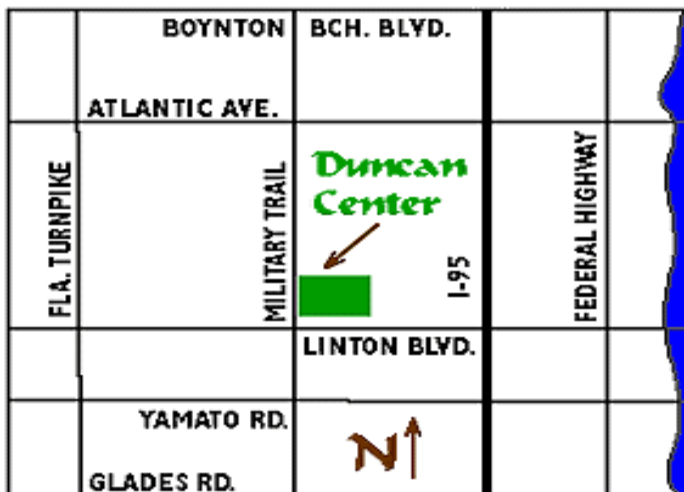
Rabbi Dr. Harris Brody

Rabbi Anne White

It's official!

IFR Conference will be Tuesday April 4-Thursday April 6 2006 in sunny Delray Beach, Florida

Lets see how we have all "changed" and grown since 2000 & 2001! (photos below)



IFR Conference 2001 Duncan Center-Delray Beach



IFR Conference 2000 Duncan Center-Delray Beach FL.

Finding the Ideas of Forgiveness with the Act of Giving

Rabbi Jeffrey Lipschultz

The month of August has left us and for many it is the end of summer lightheartedness. We put away our summer clothes and file away our summer memories and begin thinking about the important elements of the New Year which will be coming shortly. As we enter September we begin preparations for the new ideas within the shift from easy going life of summer to the seriousness of the coming year. We do this by putting our minds into the mode of forgiveness. We establish this by saying the *slichot* prayer which begins on September 24th when our minds and hearts try to cling to the ideas of forgiveness and hope for a change in heart as we prepare for Rosh HaShannah.

Slichot prepares our mind and soul for the inspiration and initiative to change so we can stand with God on Rosh HaShannah. The change comes from hope and also actions of our relationships to one another. On *Slichot* we recite the beginning of the High Holiday liturgy and look to the words we recite in hope that it can prepare us for judgment. The prayers signal for us to search within our heart and give of ourselves not only to God, but to our fellow human beings searching for our inner quality of forgiveness.

On September 24th we begin the liturgy of the High Holy Days in which we search introspectively within our daily actions at our relationships to others. On both on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur there is a prayer which concludes, "Repentance, prayer, and charity or *tzedakah* may avert the evil decree."

Our tradition teaches that *tzedakah* has a significant impact. The Talmud in Yurasalmi Peah tells us that *tzedakah* is the equal of all of the commandments of the Torah combined. That is a strong statement if one looks at all the laws, including the ones relating to God and man; it is the charity of man to man that seems to outlast everything. All seems to come down to the word *tzedakah*, the Jewish concept of giving.

In trying to understand *tzedakah* one needs to search in our textual history for the meaning of giving and receiving for love and forgiveness. We find that the book of Deuteronomy states, "If there be a needy person among you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand." The Hebrew begins with "*patoach tiftach*", you shall "open, open" your hand.



קול הנשיאה

Kol Hanisiya

Rabbi Suzanne H. Carter

הרבנית שושנה רחל בת מאיר הישראלית

Shalom Chevrei IFR,

I write this just less than a week after receiving back our power after hurricane Wilma roared into South Florida early morning October 24, 2005. I was hoping to take a breather and Hashem must have heard my request. I must be more specific next time as to how I want that *chofesh*.

Not having electricity for almost 2 weeks does in essence give one a *chofesh*—one does learn again how to appreciate the small things we take for granted every day in our busy lives.

The IFR is growing as new members join and former members re-join, 2006 will mark the 6th year since the IFR incorporated.

This year's conference will embrace our members—we will not be bringing in any outside people, instead we will draw from our talented ranks. This year's Key Note Speaker will be Rabbi Buzz Bogage who has over 45 years experience in rabbinics.

Duncan Center is approximately 3-4 miles from the beach and is run by the Episcopal Dioceses, their Chef John, made a point of serving all vegetarian meals, and at our next conference, we will give our attendees an option for Kosher meals or vegetarian.

During the conference the IFR Board will meet and there will be an election for new officers and Board members. Nominations for new officers and Board members will be opened up to the IFR membership in late January 2006, which will give all IFR members an opportunity to nominate a new board.

Those of you who will be attending and would like to make a presentation or lead a workshop, please contact me at rabbis@bellsouth.net or call me at 561-498-4020.

I am looking forward to meeting many of you "panim el panim".

Finding the Ideas of Forgiveness with the Act of Giving

Rabbi Jeffrey Lipschultz

The verse continues with “*naton, titayn*” you shall “give, give” saying it twice and “your heart shall not be grieved”. Opening your hand means giving from all elements of yourself, not just money but your time, even a kind word. The term is also said twice so we will give and not turn away from the opportunity to allow others to give to us.

Tzedakah is more than just giving, it is a state of mind that we put ourselves into in order to prepare for standing before God. When we approach God during the holidays we appear as a humble individual, a person pleading for justice and righteousness, but we are not always humble when we relate to others. We need to recognize our relationships with others as we prepare our hearts for the prayers of Slichot. We pray not asking for something for nothing but for a second chance, the ability to make our world and our souls better simply through our self-motivation of giving to individuals and our community. We want to change ourselves as well as the person who is affected from our gifts through the act of giving; this is how we understand the gifts that God has bestowed upon us. We allow the giving to act as a catalyst for forgiveness.

Tzedakah is rooted in a basic Jewish principle that all people are responsible for each other. We are obligated to share our physical possessions with those who are in need and we need to be proud of these actions when doing it. The righteousness of charity comes not from how much we give but the simple idea that giving is our responsibility. The notion that we are connected through our actions is what binds us as a community. We are to change our hearts when we give and thus the giver is truly the one who benefits from this action. The giver is changed by the simple act of giving.

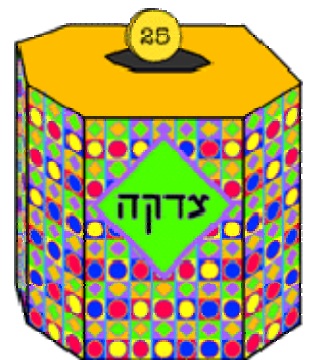
As we approach this month it is not a time for us to look at the world and say, “You are on your own, you should pull yourself out of your problems by your own will, don’t lean on me, work it out for yourself.” We should be saying that we are stronger when we are together, we lean on each other, and we are responsible for each other. That is why the prayer for *tzedakah* during the High Holidays is an essential element of our faith. We stand together because with one voice we stand with God and offer our supplication.

As we prepare to embrace God with our prayers for forgiveness we are given the opportunity to change. The acts of asking for forgiveness are to put our bodies into action and this is why giving is so important. When we embrace the love of God we see that the greatest gift that can be given is often the gift of forgiveness. Now is the time to give the *tzedakah* of forgiveness to those around us and try to start our lives with a new heart.

This year our New Year comes later than previous Rosh HaShannahs, so we have extra time to prepare our minds and hearts for the judgment of Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur. This unique month of September we are given this extra time to set aside old angers and make peace with old enemies and try and find our charity to finally forgive. On Slichot we ask God to forgive our mistakes but first we must forgive others.

This is the final act of *tzedakah* that we can give the world, a second chance for a relationship with us. We ask God to give us another year so we begin this by taking it upon ourselves to give others a new opportunity to come back into our lives. We come together as a community to pray, so let us do it out of love and not spite, let’s rebuild bridges that have fallen and build new relationships that seem distant from us. This is the greatest act of giving a person can do, rekindling a flame in someone that had appeared burnt out due to bad feelings.

Let us stand together and cling to God as Jews and human beings united through the act of giving. Take this time to connect with others and build and create something positive for the New Year.



Rabbi Jeffrey Lipschultz is the spiritual leader of Temple Beth Sholom in Chula Vista. He welcomes your thoughts at dvjewish@rof.net

The Jewish Spiritual Quest

Rabbi R. Zev Wellins, D.D.

They Seek and Fail

Today's Jews hunger for spirituality and are hoping that Judaism will be able to provide a framework that will give meaning and purpose to their lives. Some of them are reaching outside of Judaism only because when they reach inside, their own faith fails to provide what they need when they need it.

They expect a religion, any religion, to help them answer the "big questions" of life and death and the mysteries of existence, as well as to give them comfort in times of pain and distress. When they realize that something is missing in their lives, they turn to their rabbis for guidance on their spiritual quest or for counseling in developing a personal relationship with God. They turn to their congregation for help in welcoming them into a sense of community and for direction in filling the gap left by social isolation. Many of them come away from the experience empty handed and broken hearted.

They are often met in these attempts by what they perceive as disingenuousness, unresponsiveness, or ineffectiveness. This is not done intentionally, but rather comes as a result of impersonal and institutional style behavior practiced by rabbis, synagogue staff, and even other congregants. Thus, the process of alienation begins and these Jewish seekers become increasingly distanced from their God, their People, and their own Jewish identity.

Spiritual Judaism is at the Center

Rabbis are sorely distressed by this syndrome and suggest that it is one of the most damaging cancers to threaten the body of Judaism today. How do we treat the disease? How do we cause this "exodus" to go into remission? As Jewish leaders and teachers, we feel compelled to find a cure and to then put the remedy on the market for distribution to our spiritually suffering Jewish family.

Given the sum of the wisdom derived from our combined personal experiences, the encyclopedic knowledge gained from our teachers and texts, and

the collected understanding gleaned from the sechel (intuitive knowledge) gifted to us by our students, we urge the development of Centers for Spiritual Judaism to aid in the healing of our faith and of our people. We firmly believe that Judaism's new frontier lies in an exploration and evolution of Jewish spirituality. Spiritual Judaism is a dynamic force that will ultimately propel ongoing development in all areas of Jewish thinking.

The Search for Shalom

Seeking the "spiritual" meaning of a given ritual, custom, or belief is not a new idea in Judaism. It is one of the most pervasive elements in Jewish cultural history and has been part of the Jewish thought system since its origins. It is widespread in the Biblical and Talmudic commentaries, in the Midrashic legends and Aggadic folklore, as well as in the mystical teachings of Kabbalah.

Finding the path to enlightenment and achieving "mystical transcendence", linking one's finite self to the infinite and eternal, is a basic need of every human being. Spiritual Judaism seeks to revitalize and recapture the hearts, minds, and souls of disaffiliated Jews who have been too long without faith in their faith, without belief in their beliefs, and without inspiration in their spiritual search.

Jewish spiritual seekers want and need help in their quest. They must be taught how to use what we have called Spiritual Judaism. Those searching for a Jewish anchor in the secular world need assistance with their spiritual tools, such as personal prayer, meditation, imagery, and relaxation techniques.

This apparatus can in turn be used for self-discovery, spiritual development and transformation, and energy direction; the goal being to facilitate completeness in healing (refuah sh'leimah), which will thereby enable them to attain a wholeness (sh'leimut) of mind-body-spirit. With this completeness or wholeness comes a harmony of the energy of being, which we call shalom - peace.

When a believer turns to their spiritual support system in times of dire emotional need and they receive no succor, no comfort, no direction or hope – what

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The Jewish Spiritual Quest continued from page 8

good is it? It is bound to become alien to them and their hearts are no longer bound to it! We pray that Spiritual Judaism will endow these Jews with a system of practice and belief that will truly become a part of them. We hope that it will penetrate to the innermost reaches of their hearts, and afford them a deep wellspring of spiritual strength with which to face their journey in the world.



Dr. Wellins is staff Rabbi and Jewish Spiritual Counselor for Hospice Care of Southeast Florida, Rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Boca Raton and Executive Director of: The Center for Spiritual Judaism, based in Miami, Florida. You can reach him at: (305) 385-4353; email: rebzev@bellsouth.net.